



Congregazione dei Missionari di N.S. de La Salette
Piazza Madonna della Salette, 3
00152 Roma - Italia

Tel. 39-06-53270101 – Fax. 39-06-532-73516
E-mail: msgenadmin@gmail.com

**175th Anniversary of the Apparition
1846 - September 19 - 2021**

"Well, my children, make this known to all my people"

(Blessed Virgin Mary at La Salette)

Dear Brothers,

The 175th anniversary of the Apparition, offers a propitious and happy occasion for me and the General Council to send to all of you, wherever you are in the world and in whatever ministry you are involved in, the most beautiful and fraternal wishes of a holy and fruitful Jubilee celebration in full compliance with our Rule of Life which reads:

«Mary, invoked with the title of "Our Lady of La Salette, Reconciler of sinners", is the Patroness of our Congregation. The anniversary of her apparition is solemnly celebrated by all the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette». (Rule 2 cp)

1. Return to the source

This Jubilee celebration involves us all and spurs us to return to the roots of our charismatic spirituality which finds its reason in the Apparition of the Beautiful Lady on 19 September 1846 and which was animated yesterday and continues to be animated today in our life as La Salette religious and the Priests.

The return to the sources is easy to say but challenging in its concrete realization. In fact, it implies a courageous ability to read and grasp in depth the meaning and relevance of the message that Our Lady left to Maximin and Melanie in order to continue to transmit it in its entirety to the men and women of our time thirsting for God, for his Word and a reconciled life.

It is a mission and a commitment entrusted first of all to each of us but also to the numerous and varied group of La Salette Laity who, now are present in all our Provinces and Regions, on zeal with enthusiasm and a particular dedication to the cult and devotion to Our Lady of Reconciliation on all levels and environments, in the family and in the workplace as well as in cultural formation and political commitment, in social and charitable activities and in the animation of movements and parish communities.

Being a La Salette today means being called to manage with responsibility and fidelity a spiritual and Marian heritage originating from the prodigious event of the Apparition, of undisputed ecclesial significance, which we welcomed and inherited from those who preceded us in the religious and priestly life of the La Salette. It is up to us today to fully transmit to the new generations of Christians and to the young La Salettes, the charismatic richness handed down to us until today.

After his pastoral letter of 19 September 1851, which decreed the veracity of the Apparition and consequently its official approval by the Church, Msgr. Philibert de Bruillard, bishop of Grenoble, issued, on May 1st 1852, a second pastoral letter in which, in addition to the

construction of a Shrine on the place of the Apparition, he announced the constitution of a group of diocesan missionaries, "destined for the service of the Shrine, welcoming pilgrims, preaching the Word of God, exercising the ministry of Reconciliation, administering the Eucharist and being for all, the faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God and the spiritual treasures of the Church.

These priests will be called the "Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette". Their institution and their existence will be like the Shrine itself, a perpetual reminder of the merciful apparition of Mary ".

This text is the constitutive and programmatic act of the mission entrusted to the small missionary community, which had been installed on the Holy Mountain in a stable manner in 1852.

2. A pilgrim community

After a few years of reflection, prayer and discernment made in the light of the message of the Beautiful Lady, Fathers Archier, Berlioz, Albertin, Bossan, Buisson and Petit, the diocesan priests, requested and obtained from Mgrs. Ginoulhiac, the new bishop who succeeded Mgrs. De Bruillard, to make the first religious vows in his hands for a year thus officially beginning the journey our Congregation in the Church. This historic event took place in the Bishop's House Chapel at Grenoble, on February 2, 1858, the Feast of the Purification of Mary and of the Presentation of Our Lord in the temple. These priests are therefore the pioneers and the first religious of our Congregation and we are today their natural heirs. Our sincere and everlasting gratitude goes to them at this moment.

Living religious consecration in community in the light of the message of the Beautiful Lady was a choice that influenced from the beginning not only their personal and missionary life but also that of those who would have followed their example over time, strongly attracted and fascinated by the abundant tears that fell on the face of the Virgin and from the final invitation of the same addressed to the two little shepherds, Maximin and Melanie: "Well, my children, make it known to all my people".

In this way the Church, with the constitution of our Congregation, has been enriched with a new "religious and apostolic family, dedicated to the ministry of Reconciliation" (Rule: 1). The Apparition, therefore, must be considered by all of us to be the reference founding event of our presence in the Church as Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette. For this reason we have the right and the duty to remember and celebrate this extraordinary spiritual and ecclesial event that has marked our existence forever.

3. A challenging year

According to the directives issued by the General Chapter 2018, with the proclamation of a La Salette Marian Year, each Province and Region had been invited to prepare a program of initiatives "ad intra" and "ad extra" of the community, which provided for formation programs, moments of prayer and reflection on a personal, community and pastoral level, in order to adequately prepare each of his religious to accept and live with renewed enthusiasm the message of renewal and challenge that should flow from the Jubilee celebration of the Apparition.

I hope that this opportunity has been exploited and used to the maximum, despite the inevitable difficulties and understandable limits imposed by the fast and persistent evolution

of the Covid-19 pandemic that has been crossing and scourging the planet for almost two years now.

I hope and pray that the celebration of the 175th anniversary of the Apparition is a marking event, for which to be grateful to the Lord and to the Virgin of La Salette, encourages all of us religious, as well as the laity and faithful devotees of the Beautiful Lady to welcome with hope in the near future as a sure place of presence and encounter with the God of life and of the Promise and to confidently embrace the new missionary challenges with which we should certainly confront sooner or later. We must not passively "guard the ashes" of our past - which would turn out to be wasted and wasted time - but rather devote ourselves with all our strength to rekindle these embers which, as in 1858, has the ability to rekindle the fire of missionary enthusiasm and charismatic that should characterize our entire life as religious and priests of La Salette.

4. Future prospects

The celebration of the 175th anniversary falls at a truly difficult time for the life of the world and of the Church. Insecurity and confusion seem to reign supreme at all levels: social, political and institutional, health and ecclesial. Covid-19, which did not avoid anyone, helped to highlight before the eyes of all, the fragility and precariousness that are inhabiting and going through life and the history of humanity and in some ways even religious life as a whole. In this context of disorientation and crisis, our Congregation is not called to pull the oars into a boat but to place the richness and relevance of the charism of reconciliation that it has drawn from the message of the Beautiful Lady at the service of the Church and of today's society and which has always nourished its missionary and apostolic spirit.

Proximity, sharing, hope and reconciliation are attitudes that, I hope, will be highlighted more in the future by our Congregation in its missionary commitment to human and spiritual promotion in every part of the world where it has been called to announce the Good News. And this is to ensure that Mary's tears, which are also the tears of every man and woman of our time, are not shed uselessly but help us to see the new and the good that are inevitably emerging in us and around us.

I am thinking of Myanmar, following the coup perpetrated by the military at the beginning of February 2021, currently presents itself as a country in a state of siege where fear and insecurity reign and fundamental rights are deliberately and constantly violated;

My thoughts also go to Mozambique where the situation of continuous and unprecedented violence carried out by some Islamist groups against Christian and non-Christian communities and the consequent humanitarian emergency that has arisen as a result of the numerous displaced persons, who from the north of the Region have reached the city of Pemba, they have affected not a little, and sometimes made it difficult, the pastoral service of our confreres.

Of course, I cannot forget Haiti where the killing of the President of the Republic and the recent disastrous earthquake that hit the southwest part of the country literally brought to its knees the already fragile expectations of social and economic development of the country which for several years now has been living in one state of endemic corruption and alarming and progressive poverty.

Our presence in these countries are clearly in difficulty and is meant to be a sign of hope, sowing sentiments of peace and putting in place the paths of integration and reconciliation.

5. Jubilee at the shrine

As previously announced, the General Council as a whole will have the great privilege of participating , on behalf of the entire Congregation, the jubilee celebrations of the 175th anniversary of the Apparition. With Covid-19 permitting, there will be some bishops from the dioceses where our Missionaries work in the world, the Provincial Superiors or their delegates, a limited representation of our missions and La Salette Laity as well as Fr. Agostinus Purnama Superior General of the Missionaries of the Holy Family with his Council and Sister Elisabeth, Superior General of the Sisters of La Salette with her Council. I also take this opportunity to thank all those who have collaborated in making this meeting on the Holy Mountain possible and in particular my gratitude goes to the international communities of the Missionaries and Sisters of La Salette as well as the Association of Pilgrims who will welcome us to the Shrine and who will make our stay enjoyable.

6. Conclusion

In my personal name and in the name of the General Council, I wish all the Missionaries of La Salette, especially the sick and the elderly, as well as our many young people in our formation programs and the La Salette Laity around the world, the Sisters of La Salette, the Missionaries of the Holy Family and all our collaborators, a holy and fruitful Jubilee celebration. May the Beautiful Lady continue to bless us and be for each of us a sure guide in religious life and a caring and welcoming mother in pastoral action.

On September 19, I will take all of you, without exception, in prayer at the feet of the weeping Virgin.

Fraternally yours,



Fr. Silvano Marisa MS
Superior General