

Conforti: Circular Letter #7

Parma, Italy Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul January 25, 1929

In Omnibus Christus! Christ in All!



The Superior General of the St. Francis Xavier Foreign Mission Society

to the beloved confreres in the Vicariate Ap. of Cheng-Chow

May the Lord be blessed! Last November I was able to be with you, to accomplish the visit required of the Superior General by our constitutions, I was unable to do this earlier for reasons well known to you and independent of my good will.

During the visit I was able to tangibly experience God's protection and the efficacy of the prayers of so many good people who prayed for me. Please join me in a prayer of thanksgiving.

Looking back on the fine days we spent together, I must congratulate you on the great work which you have accomplished. I wish to thank you, along with your Vicar Apostolic, for all of the kind attentions which you had for me, they remain a treasured memory for the rest of my life. I cannot forget all of the various functions I attended with your Christians; I cannot help but admire their deep-rooted piety and their clear profession of faith, which must be doubly difficult at this time of internal struggle in China. Please thank them for me and assure them that I pray for them every day that the Lord may strengthen them in their desire to live a truly Christian life, and that he may abundantly reward the labors of those who sacrifice themselves for them in the apostolic ministry.

Confident in the power of divine grace, I trust that the visit produced good fruits. These fruits will endure if you, while working for the sanctification of others, nourish your spirit by meditation, the examination of conscience, spiritual reading, frequent confession when possible, and especially by the devout celebration of Mass from which we obtain strength, energy and every good.

Let it never happen that while working for the salvation of others your own is neglected, this should be foremost in your mind. The omission of the exercises of piety, or to perform them perfunctorily, experience teaches, is to slide backwards significantly without being aware of it. I mention this because it is here that we discover the secret of apostolic success and personal spiritual profit.

During the visit, I was aware that there were clouds disturbing the fraternal harmony which should be ever present in your midst, hence, preserve peace in charity at any cost, so that you may all be but one heart and one soul.

Be ever united, as one, with the Vicar apostolic who rules the territory in the name and authority of the Vicar of Christ. Show him love and respect, your obedience should be prompt, generous, constant

without remarks, observations, complaints. Help make the burden of his episcopal cross lighter, in this way you will have the blessings of God, which will make your ministry fruitful. Never forget the words of our constitutions: "missioners should remember that the characteristics of the children of God are discipline, obedience, love, from these depend order, harmony, prosperity of every society. Hence they should nurture in their hearts and show by their deeds a profound veneration and attachment for the August Head of the church, infallible teacher of truth, and have due respect for bishops, successors of the apostles, who continue the work of Jesus Christ on earth."

Be united, as one, with the religious superior also. He represents the General Direction of the Institute to which you gave your name. He is the unifying bond between your ecclesiastical superior and the society to which you still belong and depend for the preservation and nourishment of that spirit which should be the life of your life as apostles of Christ. To him you owe obedience by virtue of the vow which you made on profession day, and by which you sacrificed your free will to God. This may be the greatest sacrifice of all, but it is also the most meritorious and glorious.

Be united also, as one, among yourselves, let your motto be: "all things done in love". The love of Christ is to be the constant rule for your mutual relationships. Always avoid murmuring, complaining, peculiarities, suspicions, mistrust, these things extinguish the sacred flame and foment division to the detriment of fraternal support and harmony, which provide energy for doing good. Mutual esteem, reciprocal support, salutary competitiveness foster greater union of spirit. There is no place for distinctions between the old and the young; we are all brothers in Christ Jesus.

I also found some irregularities with regard to the evangelical poverty, which we vowed. Remember what is written in the constitutions: "The missionary ought not to consider as personal whatever he uses for his keep, food, clothing, other needs; such things belong to the Institute or to the Mission to which he belongs, he should be satisfied with what he has been given for his personal requirements." It is this effective and affective detachment, which constitutes the virtue of poverty, which we must profess. Hence no one should buy, exchange, sell things without due authorization, or else we are ignoring our vow. No one should use gifts received except in conformity with canonical regulations. We should be satisfied with the money received for our upkeep and ministry, even though this may entail some limitations. A poverty, which lacks nothing, is a paradox, a farce and such certainly does not please the Lord. Let everyone give an account to the proper authority regarding his administration.

Remember the particular goals to which our Institute tends, the preaching of the kingdom of God among the infidels, all of our energies should be so channeled. Whoever seeks different goals, no matter how praiseworthy these may be, is falling short of his vocation. Let no one be drawn after other mirages, it is this unity of purpose which guarantees the growth and success of our society. We consider ourselves voluntary victims for the conversion of the poor infidels, hence, we should treasure the sufferings, privations, setbacks experienced for this holy cause, thus do we follow the example of generous apostles and martyrs who preceded us in this glorious adventure.

Your apostolate will be fruitful to the extent that you confirm your work by your holy example. People believe more what they see in witnesses than what they hear by preachers, says the proverb.

The Chinese people enjoy a keener sense of observation than other people, you know this better than I, and nothing escapes their observation. May nothing ever be observed in your conduct, which stridently contradicts what you preach. This would perhaps forever alienate from our faith, some who might be disposed to embrace it, or cause others who have accepted it to abandon it. Be vigilant then, as the Apostle tells us, to avoid every hint of evil, which might, in any distant way, be of scandal or shock to souls.

I do not wish to belabor this point, it suffices to recall the words of the constitutions: "the missionary is to be always mindful that his conduct must everywhere be a continual preaching, the eloquence of which stems from our example. It will be so if, in all of his contacts, he thinks of how Christ would have acted, the missionary is ever to be his follower and faithful copy. If we follow this norm, we will always measure up to the role we have of being heralds of the gospel.

Before closing this letter, I wish to thank Bishop Calza who for so many years also acted as religious superior in the vicariate. The Society can never forget all that he so well accomplished on behalf of the confreres in China despite his poverty. Words do not suffice as thanks, I ask the Lord to hear and grant all of the aspirations of his apostolic heart.

May the Lord bless you, grant you joy in your ministry, affirm you in your desire to serve him for life in the vocation which you have accepted for the salvation of souls and the preaching of the kingdom of Christ.

Affectionately in Christ Jesus,

+ Guido, Archbishop/Bishop
Superior General

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