



Rome, 10th October 2023
Feast of Saint Daniel Comboni

“And these remained faithful to the teaching of the Apostles, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers” - Ac 2,42

Dear confreres,

This year is the twentieth anniversary of the canonisation of our Founder. It is a joyful anniversary which invites us to keep the memory, in heart and mind, of the heavenly birth of Saint Daniel Comboni and we want to keep it with a profound sense of gratitude, as heirs to his charism and his passionate fervour for the mission, a gift to all of us and the whole missionary Church.

We are his children and custodians of this charism that we have received as a gift: not a treasure to be kept in a safe, but an authentic source of new life that already wells up in us and brings regeneration for all those with whom we live and work. Animated, supported and driven by the inexhaustible strength of the Holy Spirit, we carry out our evangelising mission as true ‘missionary disciples’ of an ‘outgoing Church’, ‘living stones’, in order to build the Kingdom of God in the world. We live this wonderful work in humility, well aware of our sins, our fragilities and shortcomings, but also with courage to embrace the ‘dream’ that Comboni had about his work: a Catholic work, where all are protagonists, involved and working together (see *Writings*, 944). With this attitude of openness and communion towards all ecclesial and social forces, we want to carry forward this dream with firmness and constancy, with our heart centred in God, with our hands always ready to serve and wash the feet of our brothers and sisters, as Jesus ‘commanded’ us to do.

This year, we can draw fruit – enriching ourselves in a particular way – from the celebration, in October, of the first section of the Synod of Bishops whose title is “*Towards a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission*”. As Comboni Missionaries we want to experience this Synodal moment as a truly dynamic process, imbued with the Spirit which generates communion and encourages every baptised person to go out to others, desirous of meeting Christ the missionary of the Father, in all the geographical, social, cultural, existential, and religious peripheries. As a persevering and tenacious call to open our hearts to the cry of the poor, the marginalised, those discriminated against, the immigrants who invoke and fight for more just and equal societies.

We are invited to support with our unceasing prayer all the people involved in the Synodal process, hoping that the event will be a true Kairos for every heart and for the whole Church. Let us be ready to receive every new inspiration that comes from it, to feel more driven to live our missionary passion with renewed vigour, becoming ever more “holy and capable”, as Saint Daniel Comboni wanted us to be. In this way, permeated by this Synodal spirit, we wish to give greater energy and vitality to our consecration *ad gentes, ad vitam, ad pauperes* and *ad extra*. Constitutive signs of our charism, which must always encourage us to embrace everyone, without exclusion, as a conscious choice, made passionate by the fire of the living love of the Heart of Jesus, and which encourage us towards a true ‘*Revolution of merciful love*’.

In the month of October – the month of the missions – we also celebrate World Mission Day with the title “*Burning Hearts, Walking Feet*”. Pope Francis wanted to recall the experience of the two discouraged and disappointed disciples on the road to Emmaus (see *Luke 24:13-25*). That path which even today marks the experience of some confreres who have lost the internal “fire” of their



consecration. And so, our celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the canonisation of our Founder, our attentive participation in the Synod and our active involvement in World Mission Day are transformed for us into a triple invitation to a life always renewed and inflamed by the shared Word and the broken Bread. May these events rekindle in all of us enthusiasm for the mission and the courage to set out again towards Jerusalem, with the joyful desire to proclaim the Jesus who lives within us.

Courage! Let's set out on the road! The Risen Jesus, with his loving patience, never tires of walking at our side and making our hearts burn within us (See *Luke* 24.32) with the same passion that animated Comboni.

We invoke the intercession of Mary, the first missionary disciple of her Son, and of Saint Daniel Comboni, the great enthusiast of the missionary Church.

We sincerely wish you a happy Comboni Feast Day!

The General Council