



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE SONS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE (ST LUIGI ORIONE)**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 27 May 2016*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to meet with you on the occasion of your General Chapter. I greet you cordially, beginning with your new Superior General, whom I thank for his words and to whom I extend my best wishes for his work, together with the Councillors.

We are all on the path of following Jesus. The whole Church is called to walk with Jesus on the roads of the world, in order to meet the humanity of today that is in need — as Don Orione wrote — of the “Bread of the Body and of the divine balm of faith” (*Letters* II, 463). In order to embody your Founder’s words today and to live the essence of his teaching, you have put your identity at the very centre of the General Chapter’s reflection, which Don Orione summarized in the title of the “*servants of Christ and the poor*”. The royal road means to keep these two dimensions of your personal and apostolic life ever united. You have been called and consecrated by God to stay with Jesus (cf. Mk 3:14) and to serve Him in the poor and those excluded by society. In them, you touch and serve the flesh of Christ and you grow in union with Him, always taking care that faith does not become an ideology, that charity is not reduced to philanthropy, and that the Church does not end up by becoming an “NGO”.

Being servants of Christ qualifies all that you are and all that you do; it ensures your apostolic effectiveness and makes your service fruitful. Don Orione urged you to “seek and heal the wounds of the people, to cure their illnesses, to meet them morally and materially. In this way your action will not only be effective, but it will be profoundly Christian and saving” (*Writings*, 61, 114). I encourage you to follow these guidelines; they are ever more true! In doing so you will, in fact, not only imitate Jesus the Good Samaritan, but you will offer people the joy of meeting Jesus and the

salvation that He brings to all. Indeed, “those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew” (*ibid.*, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 1).

The proclamation of the Gospel, especially in our time, requires a lot of love for the Lord, united with a particular initiative. I learned that, when the Founder was still alive, in some places they called you “the priests who hasten” because you were always seen in action, among the people, with the quick pace of those who care. As St Bernard reminded us, “*amore est in via*”, love is always on the way, love is always journeying. Together with Don Orione, I urge you not to remain closed in your environments, but to go “forward”. There is so much need for priests and religious who not only work in charitable institutions — albeit necessary — but who know how to go beyond those boundaries, to bring the fragrance of Christ’s charity into every environment, even those which are farthest away. Never lose sight of the Church nor of your religious community, rather, the heart must be there in your “Upper Room”, but it must then go out to take God’s mercy to all, without exception.

The more you seek to foster your personal commitment to Christ and your spiritual formation, the more your service to the Church will be effective. Witnessing to the beauty of consecration, to the good life of religious “servants of Christ and of the poor”, you will set a good example to the young people. Life begets life, and a holy and happy religious inspires new vocations. I entrust your Congregation to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, whom you venerate as “Mother of Divine Providence”. I ask you, please, to pray for me and for my service to the Church, because I, too, am on the journey. I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, your confreres, and especially to the elderly and the sick, and to those who share the charism of your Institute.