

SAINT JOSEPH CAFASSO PROTECTOR FOR THE YEAR 2011



Dearest Confreres,

I have the pleasure of announcing to you that, in agreement with the Consolata Missionary Sisters, Saint Joseph Cafasso is proposed as the special protector of our two institutes for the year 2011.

I have no doubt that this choice will be acceptable to everybody. Cafasso, as we know, by the will of our Father Founder, has always had a special place in the life of our missionary family, so much so that from the beginning, we have called him “our uncle”. In addition, on June 23rd this year, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of his holy death, an event that saw us committed and we intend to keep experiencing for a long time his remembrance and grace. It has seemed quite right to us, therefore, to entrust to his protection the next year, during which we will be celebrating the XII General Chapter.

In this letter, I would like to offer some reflections on St. Joseph Cafasso, starting though from the point of view of Allamano himself. I wish, that is, to make a family conversation: it is our “Father” who talks to us about his “Uncle”. We know how much the Founder has identified himself with the spirituality of Cafasso. No one else, therefore, can speak with competence about the sanctity of Cafasso more than our Founder and thus present him to us not only as a protector but also as a model.

PROGRESSIVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNCLE

It is well known that Allamano has personally made a gradual discovery of the sanctity of his uncle. He had met him only once, in Castelnuovo, when he was seven years old. That meeting has taken up, probably only afterwards, a special meaning for him, almost an omen, so much so that when he returned to his hometown in 1925 for the celebrations in honor of the new Blessed, he wanted to show the exact location of the room saying: «It is here where I received his blessing».

In his testimony to the canonical process of beatification of Cafasso, Allamano has explained how he had become gradually in spiritual harmony with his uncle: «From my early age, hearing how well the Servant of God was spoken of at home and by his fellow citizens as an exemplary and charitable priest, I admired him; this admiration increased when, attending my secondary school at

the Salesian Oratory, I heard him being proposed as a model by Don Bosco. Later on, as a seminarian, due to my many contacts with the priests of the diocese, my esteem for the Servant of God increased further more. Having become a priest in 1873, due to my increased communication with priests, especially at the boarding school, where I used to go to hear the conferences, I learned to esteem him even more. ».¹

So much was the appreciation that the Founder had developed for his uncle, that he was not satisfied to just know him and admire him on his own. Soon he thought it would be a great gift to the Church, especially to his fellow priests, the spreading of his knowledge. Following the advice of Don Bosco and other eminent priests, he got busy collecting a multitude of witnesses. In his enthusiasm, he even had the courage to start writing a biography of his uncle, though he did not consider himself to be a writer. After filling 33 pages, however, he gave up, explaining that the main reason, besides his many pastoral duties, was «his inability to well express the respect and reverence that I observed in those who had known him».²

The initiatives which the Founder has promoted in favour of Cafasso have been many. It is sufficient to just remember them at a bird's view to realize how important this project was. First of all, the exhumation and re-composition of the body (1891), then the edition of the meditations and instructions of the spiritual exercises to the clergy (1892-1893), the biographies written at his request, first by Can. James Colombero (1895) and then by the Theologian Luigi Nicolis di Robilant (published posthumously in 1912), in the end, the transfer of the body from the cemetery to the Consolata Shrine (1896). The initiative for excellence that has kept him busy beyond all his expectations was the cause of beatification, which began on February 16, 1895 at the ecclesiastical tribunal of Turin in 1899 and then moved to Rome, of which he was officially the Patron and, in practice, the real driving force behind every movement.

Considering such dynamism, a question may arise: why has the Founder committed himself with such passion and energy to promote the awareness of the sanctity of his uncle? Perhaps he himself wondered about it, because he felt the need to confide it in a simple way to our brothers during one of his Sunday conferences: «I introduced this process, I can say, not because of affection or kinship, but for the good that the glorification of this man can bring about, so that those who will read his virtues, will become good priests, good Christians and you will become good missionaries».³ Can. N. Baravalle testified that during the discussion of the cause of beatification, he was heard saying: «I myself, as a relative, should not even be involved in it, and it is not this the spirit that motivates me; I do so as Rector of the boarding school, having succeeded him in the teaching and training of the clergy, it is my duty to inform the clergy of the virtues and the sanctity of Cafasso»⁴. Fr. Domenico Ferrero, in his memoirs, reported this confidence that he heard from the Founder: «Oh! If it were only for the reason that he is a relative, I would not have done all this! It is to give glory to God; I started it myself because... as it is! If there isn't somebody at the head who is interested in it, these things do not progress».⁵

ALLAMANO, A “DON CAFASSO REDIVIVUS”

Before proposing Cafasso as a model to others, we must recognize that the Founder has proposed this model to himself and that in a quite effective way. You cannot, in fact, fully understand the spiritual personality of Allamano without taking into account his deep harmony with his uncle, to

¹ Testimony at the process of Cafasso, Archives of the Consolata Shrine.

² Testimony at the process of Cafasso, Archives of the Consolata Shrine.

³ IMC Conferences, I, 192.

⁴ N. Baravalle, Testimony, IMC Archives.

⁵ D. Ferrero, “Memoirs of the Most Venerable Father”, IMC Archives.

the point that more than one of those who have known both of them, have defined him as a “Don Cafasso redivivus”. So, for example, Don Edward Bosia, speaking of the activity of the Founder at the boarding school, said: «The Servant of God [...] kept and matched the spirit of Blessed Cafasso, so much so that they used to call him Don Cafasso redivivus».⁶ Note that this witness shows not only his opinion but also that of others.

In fact, that the Founder himself reflected in himself the spiritual figure of Cafasso was perceived by many. Pope Pius XI himself, in his “congratulatory letter” to the Founder for his 50th anniversary of priesthood (1923), has made a statement that might seem to be almost an official recognition: «Your illustrious uncle Joseph Cafasso seems to have left you heir of his spirit».⁷ Blessed Luigi Boccardo, who lived in close contact with the Founder as a spiritual director of the boarding school for priests, did not hesitate to say: «You could repeat about him, almost literally, all that was written about his blessed uncle».⁸

We could continue reporting similar testimonies, always quite flattering for Allamano and, let us admit it, even for us, but I limit myself to just these two that I take from the letters sent to Allamano on the occasion of his 50th anniversary of priesthood: «Heir to the spirit of your worthy Uncle, Ven. Cafasso, you have carried out your great work in the holy concealment of humility».⁹ «We all shall unite around your Venerable Uncle and we will make sweet violence on him so that he may obtain opportune graces for you [...]. For you who reminds us of his holy priestly life».¹⁰

Needless to say that we gladly join this choir, because we are very much convinced that no one, better than our Father, has walked the path of holiness of Cafasso. He, however, thought it otherwise, certainly out of humility. Fr Domenico Ferrero has revealed a detail that in fact indicates the inner attitude of the Founder, in comparison to his uncle: «On the occasion of an academy held in honour of the newly blessed Cafasso, among other things, it was mentioned that now the Servant of God was his sole kin heir. This sentence deeply impressed him, because responding to us at the end of the academy, with an accent full of conviction, besides other things, he said: “Being his kin heir for me is a humiliation”».¹¹

CAFASSO, THE MODEL PRIVILEGED BY THE FOUNDER

In his circular letter of July 14, 1963, Fr Domenico Fiorina, then Superior General, made a statement of a general nature which I think we all share. He wrote: «The doctrine of the Father is formed on the spirit of priestly holiness of his holy uncle, St. Joseph Cafasso, developed by the graces and correspondence of his priestly soul».¹²

To this statement I would like to add two points, which I think are enlightening for us. First, the Founder did not limit himself to take up and propose to just repeat the spirit of Cafasso, even if he says some expressions of his uncle almost literally, but he has personalized it and made it his very own. It follows that Allamano has made an independent progress, distinctive, albeit often inspired by his uncle, who was for him a first quality model. In addition, he has taken a step further because he was able to express this spirit in the spirit of the mission. In a sense, we can say that the Founder has adapted the thought of his uncle, meditated again by him, to the vocation of his missionary sons.

⁶ E. Bosia, Testimony at the process of Allamano, I, 71, IMC Archives.

⁷ Letters, IX/2, 163.

⁸ S. Solero, “Commemoration speech on the occasion of the transfer of the body of Allamano”, IMC Archives

⁹ Card. C. Laurenti; letter of August 26, 1923; cf. Don B. Matta, letter of September 18, 1923, IMC Archives.

¹⁰ Card. G. Bisleti, letter of July 26, 1923, IMC Archives.

¹¹ Testimony at the process of Allamano, IV, 494, IMC Archives.

¹² D. Fiorina, Circular Letter, in “Bollettino Ufficiale”, N. 27, p. 53.

He was convinced that Cafasso could talk and be a model not only for diocesan priests, but also of the missionaries.

We know that Allamano, as an educator of priests and missionaries, valued highly the “pedagogy of the models.” Obviously the model par excellence was Jesus, then Mary and then St. Paul. However, there was also a series of saints for whom the Founder had a special fondness and he often referred to them as models on account of their specific virtues: St. Joseph, his personal protector, for his deep love for Jesus and Mary; St. Francis of Assisi for his poverty; St. Francis of Sales for his apostolic zeal and gentleness; St. Francis Xavier and St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen for their great commitment to the mission, St. Ignatius of Loyola for his obedience, St. Teresa of Avila for her trust, just to mention a few. For this reason, Fr. L. Sales in his book “The Spiritual Life”, was able to compile the final chapter, “Our models”, in which he listed no less than 15 saints that the Founder quoted most frequently. In this rich list, Cafasso is not included.

Why Cafasso is not listed among the models usually proposed by the Founder? The question is more than legitimate. I think the answer could be this: our Founder was so identified with the spirit of Cafasso, that he considered him to be not just a model of some characteristic virtue, but of all the apostolic and priestly virtues. Just see how many times the name of “our Venerable” or “Don Cafasso” came out from the mouth of the Founder as he spoke of various topics, whether in public or in private. Cafasso, then, is not “a model”, but simply he is “the model” to which we can always turn to. If we read the lectures to the priests of the boarding school we find the same abundance of references to Cafasso. But those references, when he speaks to us, have a missionary connotation. To make myself clear in concrete terms, I wish to consider some examples, choosing among the many possible ones.

To pray: a necessity.

I start from the “need to pray” especially for the missionary. We know that this was the first recommendation that the Founder used to give to those who were leaving for the missions. Well, if we pay attention, we notice that his remarks were usually linked to expressions of Cafasso. We read: «Our Venerable Cafasso, referring to priests, and we say even more so to missionaries, said that they had to be men of prayer».¹³ Actually, Cafasso used a rather curious expression, saying that prayer must be the “job” of the priest. The Founder adds a remark to his uncle’s way of speaking: «The words are somewhat concrete, but as we say: a man does one job or another, likewise we can say in order to express the need for the Priest to pray. If we love prayer then we shall never leave it. [...]. A priest who does not pray much, is not a true Priest. And what about a missionary? What can a person possibly do if he does not even know the means that can help him to be united to God? ».¹⁴

Even then dealing with the need of not letting occupations overwhelm us at the expense of prayer, the Founder was borrowing from the authority of his uncle: «Ven. Cafasso used to say: I am sorry for those priests who have too much work... If you pray more, then you’ll work more, you will be able to learn more quickly... [...]. Ven. Cafasso said: The job of people consecrated to God is to pray. - We must be people of prayer, who address to God all that we do».¹⁵ And again: «Ask the Venerable whether he has ever failed to say his breviary, rosary, meditation because he had much to do! If he did not have time during the day, he would do it during the night. [...] In short, it is very easy to swap things: first of all we ourselves must become saints, [...] and not just work, work, work».¹⁶

Love to Mary: an indispensable devotion.

¹³ IMC Conferences, II, 417.

¹⁴ IMC Conferences, II, 417 - 418.

¹⁵ SMC Conferences, I, 231.

¹⁶ IMC Conferences, II, 608.

“Marian devotion” can be a second illustrative example of the Founder’s usual turning to the spirit of Cafasso. Speaking to the people Cafasso asked himself: «Who is Mary? Oh... let me tell you with all the joy of my heart, Mary is our dear mother, our comfort, our hope».¹⁷ And the Founder developed the thought in this way, «Also Don Cafasso used to often say, especially while listening to confessions, “Remember that you also have a second mother, Mary, who loves you more than the first one, though it goes without saying that she does not replace the other”. [...]. A person trusts his own mother and loves her».¹⁸

For Cafasso love of Mary is an indispensable prerequisite for growing in holiness: «In as much as this love, this devotion will grow in [the priest], at the same time all the array of the other virtues will grow, he will become more detached from the earth, more zealous, patient, humble and pure. Therefore when you happen to hear of a priest who is devoted to Mary, look no further, you can be sure that he is good and perhaps he is endowed with an uncommon goodness».¹⁹ And the Founder spoke with similar words: «No one can become holy unless he is a devotee of Our Lady. All Christians, in order to live as good Christians, should be devoted to the Virgin Mary. All the saints did so from the earliest centuries. And more so religious people should do. This is the distinctive character of all the saints. Read also their lives. And this devotion is not only to live as good Christians, but also to climb to perfection; you must be devoted to Our Lady».²⁰ «And first of all to do all of our actions in union with Holy Mary. Ven. Cafasso said that we should take the Blessed Mother as our partner in everything. Partner in everything. Let us take her as a model for all our actions; this means that we do everything with Holy Mary: let us take her as a partner and a model».²¹

Again: «Don Cafasso told his priests: When you go to preach, be in partnership with Our Lady. Go and preach together, and say thus: I will be the voice, while you will do the preaching. He said that the Blessed Mother was his partner. Working together they did everything. He said that she was helping him to do good works. He got the grace, so that the sermon may be impressed in the hearts. I really wanted to remove the word “partner”, yet it was him who said it».²²

Love of God: a binding love.

I like to consider a third example that illustrates the profound spiritual communion between uncle and nephew. Cafasso, during the spiritual retreats to the priests, presented some very rich meditations on the “love of God”. Allamano was enthusiastic about them and he showed what valuable sources of inspiration they were: «Ven. Cafasso in the sermon on the love of God gives many different elements, and among others he mentions these... you see, there is a page, go and read it... That man really understood!... ».²³ «Read that piece of the Meditations of our Venerable Cafasso, that on the love of God, where he speaks of conformity to God's will. That piece is worth a Perù [meaning a great value] ».²⁴

Cafasso spoke of “penitent love”, explaining: «A soul, a heart, that loves, of course, almost necessarily has to cry for the time it did not love».²⁵ The Founder was impressed and commented: «When I consider the prayers of Don Cafasso who was an angel in the flesh, nevertheless in his prayers he always asks forgiveness for the sins of his past life. What sins could he have? Don Bosco said that he believed that he did not have even the original sin. Yet, by just listening to him, he seems to be a great sinner. The Saints believe the small things to be very big».²⁶

¹⁷ Pier Angelo Gramaglia (a cura), Giuseppe Cafasso, *Missioni al popolo, Meditazioni*, Effeta editrice, Cantalupa (TO) 2002, p. 271.

¹⁸ IMC Conferences, I, 397.

¹⁹ St. Joseph Cafasso, *Esercizi Spirituali al Clero*, ed. Paoline, Alba 1955, p. 573.

²⁰ SMC Conferences, II, 271.

²¹ IMC Conferences, II, 594

²² SMC Conferences, II, 304.

²³ IMC Conferences, III, 256.

²⁴ SMC Conferences, II, 412.

²⁵ Lucio Casto (a cura), *Esercizi Spirituali al Clero*, cit., p. 648.

²⁶ IMC Conferences, III, 128.

Both Allamano and Cafasso, however, have focused more on what they called the “binding love” because it exemplified well their personal experience. Thus Cafasso, «Happy we, if we could achieve to thus pour our heart into the heart of God, and unite our desires, our will to his so as to form only one heart and one will: to will what God wills, wanting it that way, at that time, in those circumstances that he wants and to wish everything for no other reason than because God wishes it».²⁷

Same beautiful symphony in the words of the Founder: «Let us comply with God's will, not only in general, but in all circumstances, not a thread, not a word, not a work that is not for you [my God]. That beautiful prayer of Don Cafasso: “I do not want anything but just your will, away from me any other purposes that is not you... I would be a fool if I had thrown to the wind all my hard work...” Read that prayer ... There is gold in it! Eh, if you said it with heartfelt participation».²⁸ And again: «Our Venerable Cafasso said that compliance to the will of God is an act of love of God».²⁹ «The Lord is jealous of our hearts. Let us cut off these threads, and if we are not able to cut them for love, let us cut them forcefully. Ven. Cafasso said to the Lord: Let me find detachment where I feel more affection, let me find humiliation where I look for glory; that I may exist only for You».³⁰

And finally: «Our Venerable wrote: Union of God's will is to say: to want what God wants, to want it that way, at that time, in those circumstances he wishes; and to want everything for no other reason except for the fact that God wants it».³¹

I think that what I have mentioned so far is sufficient to demonstrate the full harmony that existed between the Allamano and Cafasso. Those who spoke of our Founder as a “Cafasso redivivus” were not exaggerating at all. The ideas that I brought up regarding some points we could also extend to others, for example, to the virtue of hope, modesty, and so on. It would certainly be a pleasant exercise, as well as useful, which we will be able to make, both personally and in community, during next year when Cafasso will be especially close to us as a “special Protector” and also as a “model”.

There is still one dimension of spirituality of the Founder, clearly inherited from Cafasso which I have chosen to leave for last, developing it further. It is sufficient to read the title to understand the reason for this choice.

«TO DO WELL WHAT IS GOOD, WITH CONSTANCY, WITHOUT NOISE»

This is the path to missionary holiness that the Founder has proposed to us with a special intensity. We can almost call it the “heart” of his proposal. There is no need to report his precise words, because we know them by heart. I just note that already in 1902 our Father spoke clearly on this point: «The form that you have to take in this Institute is that which the Lord inspired me with and still does so, and I, terrified by my responsibility, want that the Institute be perfect and live a perfect life. I am of the opinion that what is good must be done well, otherwise in the midst of my many jobs I would have not shouldered also this very difficult one, the foundation of this very important Institute».³² Let us keep in mind this detail: the Institute was just founded and the community was still small. However, even then, the watchword was: “what is good must be done well”. At that time, the Founder had already developed on his own the spirituality of his uncle and, perhaps without realizing it, it was natural for him to refer to it when he had some important advice to give.

In proposing this path of perfection, the Founder realized to be following the footsteps of his uncle. And he explicitly said so, almost as to give a guarantee for his statements: «My years are just few, but were they even many, I want to spend them doing good and do it well; I have the idea of

²⁷ Lucio Casto (a cura), *Esercizi Spirituali al Clero*, cit., p. 656.

²⁸ IMC Conferences, 10.

²⁹ SMC Conferences, II, 410.

³⁰ SMC Conferences, II, 545.

³¹ IMC Conferences, III, 254.

³² IMC Conferences, I, 15.

Ven. Don Cafasso, that what is good must be done well and not in a noisy way».³³ As you can see, this is a linear principle, supplemented by two essential points: “to do well what is good”, but “constantly” and “without noise”.

“To do well what is good”.

This is the principle of asceticism. There is a meditation of Cafasso that he used to leave for the last day of the exercises given to the priests, entitled “Regarding daily chores”, which basically deals with this topic. The Founder has much appreciated it and he has also suggested that it be read in full. I quote some part of it, without changing the proper style of the Cafasso’s language, so as not to take away any element of its vitality: «[...] few of us are called to extraordinary actions, and then even if they are called, these rare and extraordinary things cannot bring about the character and form the texture of our lives; and what would be the use of finally doing well and perfectly a work which is in itself heroic, if after that he then did poorly the others; let us suppose that a person is called by God to leave his homeland, his relatives, possessions, employments, his comforts in order to seclude himself into a cloister, or to go to foreign missions; a great, extraordinary, heroic sacrifice, it is true; one cannot deny it; and [he does so] cheerfully, readily, with all possible virtues, but if after this he did in a mediocre way the ordinary actions of his carrier, can one say, and will he truly be a holy and perfect priest? Undoubtedly No [...].

He who aspires to be a holy and perfect priest should not think of doing great and extraordinary things, but whether they are big or small he should only think about doing them well, and only in this way he will be perfect. [...]. Then let them be works of zeal and glory of God and the salvation of souls, but common, ordinary works; I say “common”, not that these are so by their nature, because the least thing becomes great when it is aimed to that purpose, but I call them common to indicate those that daily are at hand».³⁴

I think this to be the text which, better than any other, expresses the thought of Cafasso, which the Founder usually refers to. Each missionary is called to do so in all circumstances and in any mission in which he may be as well as in every situation as of age, strength and health.

At this point, we have to add something without which the discussion would remain incomplete. Even regarding the “what is good must be done well” the Founder indicates Jesus as the model, quoting the text from Mk 7:37 that he usually reported in Latin: «Bene omnia fecit! - He did well all things». Well, our Founder has taken even this inspiration from his uncle. Here are the words of Cafasso: «[...] but do not believe that it is enough to spend our days in such actions in order to be a good priest, I would say that this would be the minimum: the best or rather the whole point is in doing them well, so that one can proportionally say about a priest what is reported about the Son of God, Mk. Chapter 7, that “he did all things well” ».³⁵ And later on: «In our ministry we represent the person of our Lord Jesus Christ: we work for him, and in his name, [...] in such a way that seeing a priest a person can say: here is another savior, another Redeemer of the world, here is another Jesus Christ, because he was destined and sent to do what Jesus did».³⁶

Likewise this can be said of a missionary brother.

“Doing what is good with constancy”.

And here we have the first important clarification: what is good should be done well, but “constantly”, that is “always”. We have already noted that above in the teaching of Cafasso. Constancy was what the Founder liked most about his Uncle: «The heroism of his virtue lies in his constancy. Heroism is not found in miracles, but in exercising violence unto oneself, in staying firm in one’s own good will, without wasting time: this is our true possession. I more and more admire

³³ IMC Conferences, I, 116.

³⁴ Lucio Casto (a cura), Giuseppe Cafasso, *Esercizi spirituali al clero, Meditazioni*, Effeta Ed., Cantalupa (TO) 2003, p.684-686.

³⁵ Lucio Casto (a cura), *Esercizi Spirituali al Clero*, cit., p. 687.

³⁶ Lucio Casto (a cura), *Esercizi spirituali al clero*, cit., p. 693.

every day the life of this man, because he did not progress by jumps, no, he has always gone on straight; and that was his way forward... and this he did throughout his whole life. Always the same faith, the same love of God and neighbour; always cautious, always right, always temperate... he lacks nothing... [...], he always went forward; he always did everything well»³⁷.

“Doing what is good without noise”.

And there is a second clarification to be added: what is good should be done well, constantly, but “without noise”, that is, with humility, in hiding. Cafasso held some precise convictions: «Here is what is the daily occupation of good priests; nothing extraordinary and dazzling; a priest can spend a long time and even his whole life into such a ministry without the world almost detecting his existence, at least without people praising him and wondering at his doings, and this is a consoling thought. [...]. There are some very great saints before God, [...] whose life was obscure and hidden, whose actions had nothing wonderful to amaze people, nor the world has ever spoken of them. They were great for their holiness, but all their holiness was restricted to small things. They were great for their humility, their humility brought them to always choose the least important tasks and activities».³⁸

The ideas of the Founder on this point are well known to us. He was entirely in harmony with his uncle. And he has taught us to be humble as individuals, and also as Institute. The Founder is our teacher more with his life than with his words. I like to quote a very significant testimony by Can. N. Baravalle, who has thus described the transfer of the coffin containing the body of Cafasso from the Boarding school to the Shrine, on the eve of his beatification, «The Archbishop presided, surrounded also by several Bishops. Can. Allamano was the closest relative of the Blessed One, the promoter of the Process for his Beatification, the Superior of the Shrine and of the Boarding school, and one would have expected to see the Servant of God precede in so much glory, clad with the canonical uniforms, having a place of distinction. Instead, the Servant of God was with us, members of the Shrine, behind the sacred relics, just wearing his cassock, carrying a lit torch. He was suffering, moved and jubilant, but nothing transpired of his holy exultation. He was dragging on so painfully that at one point he had to lean on the torch he was carrying, and I feared that he could faint. On reaching the Shrine, he did not have a distinct place: he vanished, and he did not reappear until after the function to thank the personalities who had attended the function. This, after all, was his purpose, to always hide».³⁹ Note the last words: such was the personality of our Father and he wanted to pass it on to us.

Before concluding this point, I would note again that both Cafasso and Allamano have not been content to just enunciate a theoretical principle. They explained what it means in practice “to do well what is good”. Thus the Founder used to say: «For a servant, says the Venerable himself, it is not enough to serve his master, but he must serve him without exceptions, and serve him in such a way as to please him fully, i.e. promptly, accurately and politely, and with the goal of pleasing him».⁴⁰

And on another occasion: «What is the way, what are the means to do all things well? Let us consider the thoughts of Ven. Cafasso on spending well one’s own day. And if you spend well your day, you will also spend well your weeks, months, years... ».⁴¹ The Founder has adopted the suggestions of Cafasso, proposing and commenting them one by one in view of the missions. They are four: «To do everything as Our Lord Jesus Christ himself would do them; to do everything in that way we

³⁷ SMC Conferences, III, 216.

³⁸ Lucio Casto (a cura), *Esercizi Spirituali al Clero*, cit., pp. 686 - 697.

³⁹ Testimony at the process of Allamano, IV, 113 - 114.

⁴⁰ IMC Conferences, II, 669.

⁴¹ Conferenze, SMC, I, 419.

would have done it when we have to give an account at God's tribunal; to do it as if it were the last one of our lives, and to do it as if we did not have any other thing to accomplish».⁴²

CONCLUSION

In this particular historical moment, complex and difficult for our Institute, we are asked to take the message of Christian "hope" that Cafasso and our Founder propose to us. We know how much our Founder admired this particular characteristic of his uncle. He used to say: «Our Venerable had so much hope, his characteristic, that he was able to inspire even the desperate souls».⁴³ «He had enough confidence for himself and for the others».⁴⁴ It was not just hope in the mercy of God, who forgives those who turn to him, but also confidence in Divine Providence who guides the Church and helps it overcome all internal and external difficulties.

In full agreement with his uncle, our Father wanted to transfer to us this virtue, that we might be an Institute of strong and courageous missionaries, who do not get demoralized when faced with difficulties and who look to the future with confidence: «One never hopes too much because confidence in God does not take away but on the contrary it increases the good which is being done. Therefore why not to trust God? God can and wants to help us, but he wants us to be stripped of ourselves».⁴⁵ And again: «To hope in order to please the Lord; never be afraid to have too much [trust]».⁴⁶ The words of the Psalm 125 (124), 1: «He who trusts in the Lord is like Mount Zion, he can not be shaken, he is stable forever»⁴⁷ were as a slogan that the Founder used to repeat to his sons in view of the mission.

In the year when we carry out our XII General Chapter, it is of great value to have him as a special model and intercessor, particularly for his love of the Church, his care and training of pastors, his holiness manifested particularly in love for every category of poor. May he help us in our intercessions to trust the Lord and the efficacy of his grace in this event so important for our missionary family.

I think that the best way to end this letter is to once again turn to the words of our Founder. He says to us, today, what he wrote to all his missionaries on May 11th 1925, as he had just returned from Rome after the beatification of his uncle: «Blessed Joseph Cafasso is the Patron of the Boarding school where he was the Co-founder, the shining model of pious people, especially the clergy; but he is also our special Protector, and as you say, "Your Uncle", as such you must honour him and imitate his virtues. In heaven he will be a powerful intercessor for all your needs, and being so zealous for the salvation of souls, he will help you in the work of the Holy Missions. [...] I think with this to have obtained for you a great means of perfection, and to have partially completed my Mission for you».

Now our Founder, from heaven, together with Cafasso, shows us a path of spiritual growth, of development of our missionary family and of apostolic commitment, helping us to walk on it, following his spirit, always modern, as true Consolata Missionaries.

Fr. Aquiléo Fiorentini, IMC
Father General

Rome, October 24, 2010
World Mission Sunday

⁴² Luigi Nicoli di Robilant, *S. Giuseppe Cafasso*, ed. Santuario della Consolata, Torino 1960, p. 787.

⁴³ IMC Conferences, II, 337; cf. anche: II, 156; III, 188.

⁴⁴ IMC Conferences, III, 530.

⁴⁵ IMC Conferences, II, 157.

⁴⁶ SMC Conferences, II, 448.

⁴⁷ IMC Conferences, I, 456; cfr. SMC Conferences, II, 440, 447.