

ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST CENTENARY OF OUR FOUNDATION (AN EXTRACT)

The Foundation of Father de Mazenod, a small mustard seed thrown into the ground in 1816, grew, flourished, and developed into a large tree, because it was inspired, it was fueled and maintained by a great compassion for sinners and a tireless zeal for their salvation.

Christians, and especially priests, assembled to honor and console Our Lord, are never more closely united than when working to stoke the fire of divine love that he came in person to light himself, and which his Heart would like to see embrace the whole world.

Zeal is for religious Societies a principle of constantly growing vitality, and let's say it, of universality and immortality. As long as the apostolate is directed to the poor, the ignorant and the most abandoned sinners, it produces men burning with such ardor that they are ready, according to the energetic expression of our holy Founder, "to sacrifice their fortune, talents, ease, even their lives for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the good of the Church, and the sanctification of their brethren" [...]. The zeal of Father de Mazenod and his disciples was increasingly fruitful and blessed the more it vividly reproduced the zeal of which our Lord during His public ministry had set an example for his twelve apostles. [...]

The Lord has done much for us. Let us then respond generously to this good action. He did a lot for our Congregation, let us be devoutly thankful; let us be united by a holy zeal to keep the religious spirit that our revered Father has given us, that our older fathers knew so well how to receive and retain. Let us stir up the love of our beloved family, the love of our brothers, in an affectionate submission to our superiors and our Rules, so that the wishes of our beloved Father when dying may be fulfilled: "Zeal for souls ... Charity ... Charity ... Charity"

But, on the occasion of the first centenary of the Congregation, if we need to remind ourselves that noblesse oblige and that as sons and brothers of the saints, we must work to be saints ourselves, we also no less imperatively must kneel before Our Lord, first to thank Him for the graces he has showered on the Congregation and ourselves through it; then we must ask forgiveness for any negligence that may have marred our life and grieved his Heart; finally we must beg him to continue to be as generous to us as he has been up to this day. [...] Humbly prostrate before the Divine Heart, let us repeat with all the fervor of our souls: "Remember our Congregation which from its inception was your possession." Let us go to him, under the auspices of His Holy Mother who deigned to adopt us as her sons and who honors our name, since it proclaims forever the first of her privileges. (Circular No. 113, December 23, 1915, *Circulaires administratives*, 3, p. 268-269, 287-288)