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The joy of the mission

Our Founder, Father Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, was always very conscious of his missionary vocation and throughout his life he was able to transmit this missionary spirit to his spiritual sons and daughters. He showed exceptional courage when, at the very beginning of the SAI, he began a mission in Assam, in Northeast India. We know that he had very few members at that time, all gathered in Rome.

In his speech when sending the first missionaries to Asia, we can discover the feeling of joy that was in his heart, beyond that of the pain provoked by any separation from brothers: *"But we are filled with joy when we remember that they are leaving to announce in Asia, cradle of civilization, to announce the crucified Christ. Through our confreres, the first to be sent on mission by our Society, the peace, the good news of the gospel will be brought to these peoples. This joy must far outweigh our pain!"* (Chapter Talk 1890/01/17). Father Francis Jordan experienced joy every time he fulfilled what he knew to be the will of God in his life. Obviously, the long discernment of his vocation as founder by which he went through had strengthened his faith and his confidence in divine providence. *"With the lord on my side, who can oppose me?"* we can read in his Spiritual Diary (I/I). To experience joy beyond grief in mission, we must be deeply rooted in the love God has for us when he sent His beloved Son, to save humanity. The passion to live the Gospel in various situations comes only from this motivation according to Fr. Jordan. In fact, he writes, *"Let your zeal always proceed from the love of God, and let it be ordered by prudence, constancy and justice"* (SD I/137). Such assurance in life can only produce joy in daily actions in the mission.

When Father Jordan sent the second group of missionaries to Assam, he addressed them very meaningful words that he drew from his own experience of the joy of a missionary. He pointed out three precepts without which we can never experience the joy of the mission: a) fidelity to the teaching of the Church; b) great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles; and, c) fidelity - obedience to superiors (see Chapter Talk 1890/12/12). He reassures them that by faithfully following these three precepts nothing can take away the joy of being sent to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel and the good results will follow. *"If you observe them correctly, I can promise you true peace here on earth and the success of your efforts"* (Chapter Talk 1890/12/12).

Only in this spirit of our Founder can we experience joy in the mission. Moreover, he himself noted it so well in his Spiritual Diary when he says, *"As long as there is one person on earth who does not know God and does not love Him above all things, you dare not allow yourself a moment's rest ... Woe to me, Oh Lord, if I do not make you know to all!"* (SD II/1-2).

Finally, I want to share with you my joy of being a missionary. In my mission land, 99% of the population are Muslims. When I went there, I realised that everything was different from what I had experienced before. It was another way of life and faith. I thought, "Why has the Lord given me this mission?" Then, I was praying in the light of the experience of our Founder. I was enlightened. Now, I am able to respond to

those who ask me the question: "Is it reasonable to work for so few Christians in a Muslim country?" My answer consists in the parable of our Lord of the lost sheep (Mt 18: 12-13):

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off".

Therefore, we can not abandon these few Christians who are living in this country, they deserve our attention. Today, I experience the joy of being a missionary.

During this year we celebrate the Centenary of the death of our Founder, we should interiorize this missionary spirit of our Founder in order to experience the joy of a missionary. Therefore, we will be able to stand firm during the difficult moments so as not to fall into discouragement. Through his intercession, may we be missionaries in the different situations of the apostolic life.

"Yes, this apostolic spirit we, all of us, have to try to acquire more and more."
(Blessed Mary of the Apostles, Letter of 28 June 1900)

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