



Congregazione dei Missionari di N.S. de La Salette
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New Year 2024

***“I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord”
(Luke 2:10-11)***

Dear Brothers,

It brings me immense joy, along with my council, to extend once more to each of you, wherever you may be in the world, in the Provinces or in our missions, in good health or enduring physical and spiritual suffering, as young aspirants, novices, my sincere and fraternal wishes for a Blessed Christmas and a fruitful New Year. May it be filled with the grace of God and the presence of the Blessed Lady, our Mother and Patroness.

The Christmas festivities, occurring at the end of the civil year and the beginning of a new liturgical year, offer us a particularly opportune moment to ideally come together in fraternal embrace. It is also a time to take stock of the passing time, which, in its relentless and swift flow, marks not only the life of the world and the Church but also our personal, communal, and apostolic lives, for better or for worse.

I wish for myself and each one of you that the light of the star that once appeared in the sky of Bethlehem continues to illuminate our religious life today. May it enlighten our personal history, enabling us to see them as privileged places of encounter with God and with our brethren, where the salvation brought by Christ is received and concretely realized.

1. The Religious as a Prophet

During the autumn assembly of the USG (Union of Superiors General) held in Sacrofano, near Rome, focusing on the theme: ***"Synodality: a renewed call to the prophecy of hope"***, it was strongly reaffirmed that by nature, a religious has the uncomfortable and not easily achieved mission of being an authentic prophet in the Church and in the world, primarily through their life and then through their words. Additionally, the religious is the one who also has the challenging and unique task of identifying signs and listening to voices that speak of God's presence, firstly in the everydayness of their own life and then in human existence. In other words, they are the ones who, as prophets, are still capable of perceiving and understanding reality through God's eyes. Therefore, not only must they live by hope but also promote and abundantly sow hope around them.

Furthermore, the religious has the mission in the Church and in the world to discover and indicate new and possible paths to be undertaken together with their community and the people of God to better correspond to the demands and needs of the Gospel. This

synodal journey involves listening, prayer, dialogue, and discernment. Being Church and being a community together must become a habitual way of life to be constantly pursued, a form to be embraced with trust and courage, and a mission to be accomplished with hope and enthusiasm, not alone but together.

The religious life, as a whole, is embracing the longing and dream of Pope Francis to see a Church not only renewed in its structures but above all, more evangelical, poorer, closer to the most vulnerable, committed to going forth, and fundamentally, a missionary Church. Like all religious, we, the missionaries of the Weeping Virgin of La Salette, are called not to shy away from this commitment, which is both personal and ecclesial, but to dedicate all our human and spiritual energies to aligning our charism with the current needs of the Church and the world today.

2. Towards the 2024 General Chapter

As previously announced several times, in a few months, at the beginning of the new year, we will celebrate on Madagascar soil, the 33rd General Chapter of our Congregation. I invite all aspirants, novices, young and senior religious, as well as La Salette Laity, friends, and benefactors, to experience this anticipation and this truly special moment for all of us as a *Kairos*, a favourable time and a propitious occasion, inhabited by the Spirit, for a new beginning in the realm of our religious and missionary life. The Chapter, easily imagined, will urge us to re-appropriate with a new spirit the richness of our charism, to courageously present it, and to vivify it joyfully for all those whom Providence places on our pastoral journey as La Salette religious and priests. This will be a challenging yet healthy challenge for us, one that we must responsibly embrace with much humility and hopeful trust.

3. Italian Province on Celebrations

On the 8th of December, the Italian Province experienced a truly historic, gracious, and joyous moment with the diaconal ordination of Fr. Luca Anderloni, originally from Verona. This event is noteworthy as it occurred more than 25 years after the last priestly ordination. Another historic moment will be the Perpetual Vows of Bro. Antón Rodríguez, a Spaniard, scheduled for the 31st of December this year in our community in Turin. These are two signs of hope, both for the Congregation and for the Italian Province. I wish these two young adults, supported by the affection and prayers of all of us, to remain faithful and steadfast in their religious and missionary vocation under the maternal gaze of Mary.

4. Priestly Jubilee

I take this opportunity to deeply thank all those, near or far, who accompanied me with their affection and prayers during the celebration of the 50th anniversary of my priestly ordination. I carried all of you, without exception, to the altar during the jubilee mass. I also express my gratitude to my fellow brothers, whether living or deceased, who, in one way or another, supported and encouraged me in these fifty years, urging me to live the gift of priesthood as a La Salette Missionary in a spirit of service. I am highly grateful to them for the exemplary nature of their religious life and the testimony of their apostolic zeal, which has greatly shaped my religious and priestly being. May the Blessed Lady of La Salette, our mother and patroness, bless and protect each and every one of them.

5. Greetings

I wish to extend these heartfelt wishes to our La Salette Laity who, wherever they may be in the world, endeavour to spread the message of the Weeping Lady of La Salette and to embody in their lives and in their congenial environments the richness of the charism of

reconciliation. My best wishes also go to the Sisters of La Salette who collaborate with us in many missionary realities and particularly to the La Salette Shrine in France, where together we share the responsibility and challenge of welcoming and accompanying pilgrims who ascend the holy mountain from various parts of the world.

May the birth of the Saviour strengthen our faith, steadfast our hope, and make our charity and fraternal communion visible and joyful.

May the Blessed Lady of La Salette help us joyfully welcome her Son into our lives and our mission, and may she accompany us constantly and tenderly on the synodal journey towards the celebration of the upcoming General Chapter.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Fraternally yours,

Fr. Silvano Marisa MS
Superior General