

BICENTENNIAL BIRTH-BAPTISM OF BLESSED LUIGI MARIA MONTI

May 2025

Reflection

In the heart of the Immaculate Conception

1- Blessed be the Mother of God and our Mother.

On December 7, 1880, the *"Consecration of the Congregation to the Heart of Mary"* took place. It was in the evening: *"At First Vespers the coronation was made in the Chapel to the Holy Image, with a Silver Crown (worth 71 lire), which was blessed by Pope Leo XIII in the morning, together with a white silk belt, reserved in pro memoria for the Superior General when he receives the Holy Vows on the altar; this is the first belt to be worn by the Brothers."*

Luigi Monti, together with Fr. Angelini, solemnly crowns the statue of the Immaculate Conception and places a *"silver heart"* around the neck of the Virgin, with the *"names of all the Brothers then alive"* written by Brother Girolamo Pezzini. Then he says: *"In this heart we will enclose our names, as a consecration of all the Brothers and the whole Institute to the Heart of Mary"*. The precious and artistic silver diadem sealed *"the conclusion of the Spiritual Exercises preached by a Jesuit, Gualandi, to 64 friars 'all reconciled, moved and hopefully bearing great fruit. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 'a vestment, the triennial renewal of vows of six Brothers and five perpetual professions' (Coriddi, Fabbi, Orlandi, Pezzini, Mannetti). 'The feast was held with the greatest decorum and to the greatest satisfaction of all' (Giampetruzzi, Diaries, 65-66).*

The celebration of the Resurrection by Pope Leo and Father Luigi as Superior General called for *"putting an end to the conflictual phase of the old conceptionists, apostates and rebels, with their insane attempts, threats and revenge, even to the point of quarreling among themselves: thus they themselves were instruments of their own defeat, thanks to the heartfelt prayers to the Immaculate"* (Spreafico, *Father Luigi M. Monti Founder*, 1940, 254-263).

"Being in the Heart of Mary" is a memory of people consecrated to the fidelity - testimony of charity with an eye to the future: *"This day of solemnity will be held every 25 years; in memory of the coronation of the Immaculate Mother, crowned Queen and Sovereign of the Institute that, after 23 years of life, begins to be born: for the excellent vocations, to be the Institute free from all ties and removed from all struggles"* (Giampetruzzi, *Diaries*, 66). In fact, *"to be in the Heart of the Immaculate Mother"* is *"to be reborn in freedom"* and *"to feel a living part"* of a history to be written every day.

"Being in the Heart" is not just a relic kept in the Saronno Historical Museum, but the sign of the *"Heart of the Founder in the Heart of the Immaculate Mother"*. Brother Virgil Santambrogio, the second of the first four orphans taken in by the Blessed, testifies: *"Standing next to him in the chapel (at that time there was an oil painting of the Immaculate Virgin Mary with open arms), I saw him several times reciting prayers and especially when he sang little songs to Mary and St. Joseph, turning his ecstatic eyes with a smiling gaze to the picture of Mary and St. Joseph"* (Positio, 1993, *Extrajudicial Testimonies*, 529-530).

In the *"Silver Heart"* was not only Luigi Monti's name, but that of all the Sons of Mary in those years and the years that would follow. It was a gesture of *"gratitude to the Blessed Mother after the Chapter and for the great love that Father Luigi had for the Institute and for the perseverance of all the Brothers"* (Perniola, *Testimonies*, Arlati, 251-252).

"Ecstatic eyes and smiling face" describe the deep Marian devotion of the founder and of his religious family, but also the heart and face of a Church: *"What is said of the Church can also be said of Our Lady, and what is said of Our Lady can also be said of the Church"* (Pope Francis).

Luigi Monti, as a "son", imparts to his service to his neighbor the maternal spirit of Mary as a sign-model of *"welcoming, understanding, cherishing in the secret of the heart the words and gestures of further self-giving"* in that *"discontinuity that becomes the answer to 'Who is my mother and who are*

my brothers? if not those who do the will of God'" (Mk 2:33-35). Dynamics that the Founder translates by bringing together the maternal and paternal spirit to "educate and heal oneself to be a free person. A process that Mary was able to embody by loving her Son, not because he was her own, but only because he was free" (Recalcati, The Law of Desire, 224).

Marian devotion and veneration were mediated by the "first image" of a *"Madonna in silk robes"*, characteristic of the so-called "clothed Madonna". It was composed of *"a structure of pieces of wood and made to be clothed by the nuns. It was placed above the altar of the private chapel of Santo Spirito, inside a niche"* (Perniola, *Testimoni*, Arlati, 251).

It is the *"Madonna of the origins"* who, from this place of foundation, becomes a maternal face that accompanies the life and work of the Congregation. In fact, she was the last to leave the Santo Spirito Hospital on October 31, 1889: *"We have taken away what belongs to us. The last to remain is our Immaculate Mother, who will move to our house in Piazza Mastai next Monday with our dear Brother Fortunato Fabbi. Let us pray for our enemies, and the Lord and the Most Holy Mother will obtain great good from it"* (Giampetruzzi, *Letters*, Vol. II, 244-245).

Father *Stanislao Pastori*, in celebrating his 50 years of profession and 52 years of religious life, in 1938 decided to save the "Face" of that Madonna, giving it a "body," following the features of the Immaculate of S. Capparoni. The reconstruction in polychrome wood, was entrusted to expert craftsmen from Trentino, but the face, the look, the hand on the chest, for the viewer, are on the right, while the lily is held by the left arm-hand.

In 1938 it was placed in the Chapel of the *"Immaculate Conception Apostolic School"* or *"Collegetto,"* opened in 1926 and then moved in 1933-34 to Via Monti di Creta, on the premises of the old "Sanatorium of Father Sala." The statue of the Immaculate Conception was placed in the chapel, inside a central niche, above the altar, with the inscription at the top *"Tota pulchra es Maria et macula originalis non est in te."* Face that accompanied *"Aspirants and Brothers in formation,"* praying to her as *Sister and Companion in life*. Mother's gaze on boys divided into *"Immaculatines, Aspirants and Postulants."* Formative and vocational path that ended at the age of sixteen with the wearing of the religious habit and entry into the Novitiate, and then continued in the works.

With the construction of the *"Immaculate Conception Apostolic School"* in Velletri (Via di Cori 18, RM), the original statue of the Immaculate Conception followed the religious community and the 70 aspirants and postulants.

Inaugurated on March 19, 1963, feast of the Patron Saint Joseph: the Immaculate accompanied *"the youngest in formation."* The statue was placed in the center of the back wall of the hexagonal-shaped church. The Brothers were called *"Blue Brothers"* because of their blue habit, cinched at the waist by a white sash.

Among the Congregation's vocational initiatives was the *"Marian Day,"* first launched on May 28, 1928, with the presence of Bishop *Anastasius Rossi*, Patriarch of Constantinople, and was so 'memorable' that it was repeated for many years, to *"celebrate and honor Mary in the best way."* The day was marked by a visit to the churches in Rome dedicated to Mary and a papal audience: Pope Pius XI appreciated the speech delivered by young *Giuseppe Mitti*, who asked in conclusion for a *"blessing to fortify the vocation and intentions to work for the kingdom of God"* (Carrazza, *The General Government*, 412-413).

In the year 2000, celebration of the Jubilee of the Third Millennium and commemoration of the centenary of the Founder's death, the *"Historical Museum of Father Monti"* in Saronno was inaugurated. Here arrived, where it is still preserved, the *"first statue of the Immaculate Conception with the Heart and Crown,"* a sign and testimony of the Congregation's journey and the vocation of so many Aspirants and Brothers who honored her, prayed to her, laying their names in that Heart. In this Museum are also preserved the very small lists of names of religious who have repeated the rite of *"being in the Heart of the Immaculate."*

The most significant prayer from the origins is the ejaculatory: *"O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you. Blessed be the holy and immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother."* The Founder could write on January 5, 1882: *"Tomorrow, January 6, the feast of Epiphany, the name of our Mother Mary, Mother of God, will be added. And this will be recited as much in the Chaplet of the Immaculate Conception as in the recitation of the"*

Holy Rosary. The addition was established by the Holy Father Leo XIII. That of Our Mother Mary, we added it as a sign of gratitude and affection as Our Mother who freed us and the Institute from so many hardships, consolidating it with the approval of the new Constitutions (Dec. 8, 1881)" (Giampetruzzi, Letters, vol. I, 235).

Giaculatoria approved by Pope Leo XIII and confirmed by Pope St. Pius X, who maintained the "indulgences for religious and also for the sick, orphans and those who participate in the prayers made in the communities of the Concettini."

With this gift the extraordinary year of 1904, the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the ordination of the first two priests, came to an end. The Superior General, Father Girolamo Pezzini, joyfully greeted the Brothers "invoking the Immaculate Virgin, our Mother, that she may continue to shower her heavenly blessings on each one, and to surround the beloved Institute with her valid and maternal protection" (Carrazza, After the Founder, 70-71).

2. The Eye of the Immaculate Mother on the children

Images and statues of the Immaculate adorn the chapels and churches of the Congregation. One notable example is the polychrome wooden statue in Saronno, which, alongside the statue of Blessed Monti (2003), characterizes the sanctuary and crypt. Two statues are placed in niches on the side of the apse that holds the Crucified-Risen Christ (1996). Together, they form a rarely beautiful and deeply spiritual image, a vortex of faces, arms, and symbols that provides a spiritual refuge where prayers and songs express the hope of finding grace, health, blessings, and strength to start again.

Before the faces of the Immaculate Mother, the Risen Christ, and Blessed Luigi Maria Monti, a "traditional and innovative evangelical spirituality" matures, intersecting and renewing itself through the prayers of the *"Tribute of Praise to the Immaculate"* and the *"Coroncina dell'Immacolata,"* which hang on the left side of the blue habit with a white band of the Brothers. The prayer of the *Rosary and Marian antiphons* also shape the rhythm of daily life. These looks of faith, devotion, and love continue to animate the "demanding charity" toward the sick and orphans.

It is said of the Founder that he *"always had on his lips the Sub Tuum Praesidium, as well as the Remember addressed to Mary and Saint Joseph"* (Perniola, *Testimonianza a Guglielmotti*, 284). In fact, he called the Immaculate *"the Patroness of the Institute"* and Saint Joseph *"the Provident."* In their honor, he wanted all feasts to be distinguished and preceded by Triduums and Novenas. On the doors of the house in Saronno, he placed two statues with the words *"Posuerunt me custodem."* The Founder's entire life was a hymn of loving devotion to the Immaculate, whom he honored and called *"Mother."* Every evening before going to bed, he blessed the brothers and the houses of the congregation with the statue of the Immaculate (Positio, 1993; *Informatio*, Cesana, Pastori, 194–195).

The Founder's devotion was filled with deep joy when Pope Pius IX donated the picture of the Immaculate Conception by Silverio Capparoni on July 15, 1877, and placed it *"on the altar of the chapel of the general house in Piazza Mastai,"* the first House of the congregation (April 17, 1977). It was also a gift from the "Pope of the Immaculate." Later, Luigi placed the *simulacrum of the Child-Immaculate* in the chapel (October 1894), a gift from the De Rossi family. The presence of the *"Mother of God and our Mother"* supported the daily lives of the religious who served the sick and orphans. Additionally, the founder held dear a small statue of the Immaculate Conception that Pius IX had given him personally. He always carried it with him during his travels and made us kiss it when we entered the room, saying, *'He kisses the Madonna that gave us Pius IX'* (Positio, 1993; *Informatio*, Mandelli, 196).

Devotion expressed during particular moments, such as the Month of May, when the founder asks that *"fervor and enlightened charity make sweet violence to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary so that they may grant, increase, and maintain the religious spirit; provide the Institute with good and holy vocations, as well as material means, so that it may expand ever more for their greater glory"* (Giampetruzzi, *Letters*, Vol. II, 382–383).

3. Spirit of Sonship

The name *"Son of Mary"* evolves into *"Son of the Immaculate Conception."* This reflects the Founder's maturation from being born to Christian parents and baptized on the same day, to remaining *"a son and heir by the grace of God"* throughout life (Gal 4:7). A *"Son of the Immaculate"* who learns to *"love not with words, but with deeds and in truth"* (1 John 3:18). This human-spiritual reality expands through the apostolate of assisting and serving *"the sick the poor of Jesus Christ, like a loving mother, lifting them up, relieving their pains with love, and helping them with all their needs day and night."* A *"consoling angel who welcomes with love and compassion"* (Constitutions, 1900).

This spirituality of charity takes shape in the intense gaze between Mother and Sons-Brothers, and vice versa, a vital sign to *"read the events not outside, but inside."* Just as at the beginning of creation, the Spirit wraps her in the "cloud" of his presence so that the Son may live in her and she in Him. Mary receives the Word in her own flesh and puts herself at his service" (Pope Francis, 2025). For this reason, the Brothers should *"cultivate those attitudes which contribute to establishing a constructive dialogue with people"* (Const. 109-110). In his constant exhortations, the founder often said *"the Institute belonged to Our Lady, and whoever touched it ended badly"* and *"the Institute would always triumph over worldly things. He was not troubled because help came from heaven: Our Lady would provide"* (Positio, 1993; Informatio, Guglielmetti, 202–203).

In 1903, Brother Girolamo Pezzini, the first successor of the Blessed in the governing of the Congregation, proposed to build a *"Chapel"* in Saronno to celebrate the Immaculate Conception in the *"first house opened by Father Monti for orphans."* The Founder wrote to Pezzini that it was *"a special grace of Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph."* On September 8, 1905, Pezzini, ordained a priest six months before, blessed the foundation stone, laid at the bottom of the excavation, entrusting himself completely to the providence and goodness of benefactors to build the *"Church of the Orphans."*

The *"spirit of sonship to the Immaculate"* characterizes the congregation's daily work in fraternity between the religious and those they assist. This spirit was communicated by the Founder to Father Dossi soon after his arrival in Rome on April 26, 1858: *"The only consolation is to think that I have not ceased to be a son of Mary and am now a son of the Immaculate. It seems to me that I have gained the title of Son of the Immaculate Conception, for I can say that I am the son of the Virgin, Queen of Heaven and Earth. I repeat, this consoles me greatly"* (Giampetruzzi, Letters, vol. I, 7–8).

In another writing, he explained his choice of the name "son": *"For years, I have been Son of Mary, and I always want to be Son of Mary. A servant who commits a fault is thrown out of the house, but a son is not, because he is a son."* Therefore, I will always say, *'Sons of the Immaculate'* " (Giampetruzzi, History of the Pious Institute, 16). A translation of Jesus's call: *"Abide in his word to know the truth that sets you free, not as the slave who does not remain in the house forever, but as the son who remains there forever"* (Jn. 8:31–35).

This sonship the founder found in devotions such as the *"Tribute of Praise to the Immaculate,"* which he *"recommended so much and so often in enthusiastic words. He wanted it recited devoutly with due pauses"* (Perniola, Testimonies, Guglielmetti, 284). This call became especially significant during the talks in the chapel and refectory. *"As an expert pilot, he knew how to safeguard his ship through his reasoning and high teachings."* This description brings to mind the small painting that the young Brother Stanislaus Pastori gave to the Founder. In it, he stands on a boat, the Congregation, which sails safely into the future under the gaze of the Immaculate Mother.

That is why he couldn't tolerate the shortcomings of charity, which he forcefully called out. *"We are here to help the sick, and we must love one another. We are Sons of the Immaculate, and in her institute there must always reign peace, concord, and charity. We must bear with one another, forgive one another, and make ourselves everything to everyone in order to bring everyone to Jesus Christ."* He concluded by reciting the *"Sub Tuum Praesidium,"* saying, *"Our Immaculate Mother will take care of us"* (Perniola, Testimonies, Longhi 290–291).

4. Dynamic Spirituality and Mary Conceived Without Sin

The Rule of Life considers the Immaculate Conception as a *"woman present"* in the lives of the Brothers who *"continually invoke her throughout the day and in ordinary and extraordinary situations, expressing a dynamic spirituality and strength to live their vocation faithfully"* (Norms 67).

While *devotionalism outside of history and reality* is often attributed to the past, exploring the path of *"Montian spirituality"* reveals a spiritual quality of Brothers committed to combining *"science and dedication."* This quality transcends technical-practical assistentialism. *The Brothers see Mary as a model of religious consecration because "she is the most vivid image of the sublimation of love in the service of Christ and of the brothers"* (Const. 18.43).

The life testimonies of the Brothers embody the mystery of the Immaculate Mother. *"Father Luigi kindly told me, 'You may draw the teeth now, but remember not to demand anything from the poor. Do everything for the Lord. Providence will not lack for us.' I took this advice literally and put it into practice with the poor. I preferred dirty shoes to clean ones and always cherished those who were poor, even if they were full of lice. Indeed, they were always my favorites"* (Perniola, *Testimonies*, Longhi, 292). The same Brother recalls that, in Santo Spirito—the cradle of the Institute—he often exclaimed, *"Oh, Immaculate Virgin, Star of the Sea! Oh, Immaculate Virgin, or Our Immaculate Mother!"* In 2000, Pope St. John Paul II described Luigi Monti as follows: *"A splendid figure of a consecrated layman, a religious, and an apostle of charity, whose ardent love for the Immaculate Virgin led him to render heroic service to Christ among the young, the poor, and the suffering."*

The path of being *"credible and generous witnesses of the gospel of charity"* began with Pius IX's gift of the *"House in Piazza Mastai"* and the *"Picture of the Immaculate Conception"* in the ancient Trastevere area. *This area was the first in Rome where the cult of Mary spread, thanks to the basilica of "Santa Maria in Trastevere" and the famous "Madonnelle," Marian shrines that the population erected throughout the centuries to consecrate the "Eternal City to the Madonna."*

5. The Oval of the Immaculate

According to the Marian tradition, a devoted life is one that is engaged in the present and mediates between humanity and science, a process of *"transforming, converting, and healing the whole person."* This concept is directly recalled by all Popes who have encountered the religious and works of the *"Sons of the Immaculate Conception."*

Everything starts with God's gaze, which makes *"irruption in the human circumstance of Mary, becoming an integral part of it and provoking human freedom to recognize and welcome love in order to address it to others."* After all, *faith is nothing more than the conscious experience of being boundlessly in love, placed in God's love and filled from within by that love. God places signs of love and pours out a love that makes us capable of recognizing and responding to him* (Segoloni Ruta, *L'amore viscerale*, 8.19).

Silverio Capparoni's *Oval of the Immaculate* has become an iconic symbol and a memory of a story of love and signs that have illuminated the path of entire generations. The story began on July 15, 1877, when Luigi Monti wrote a letter to Pope Pius IX to thank him for his constant interest, help, and benevolence, as well as for his invitation to persevere. This unexpected gift depicts *"the gentle, white-clothed figure, cloaked in a blue mantle."* *She appears from a celestial background surrounded by cherubim. With one foot, she crushes the serpent's head. Her left hand rests on her breast, and her right hand holds a lily, symbolizing virginity — chastity. A long, white veil partly covers her head and falls broadly behind her shoulders. Everything is suffused with a veil of mysticism that invites prayer"* (Luigi Zamperetti, *L'Orfanello dell'Immacolata*, no. 11, 1938, p. 37).

After a few years in Rome, the Oval of the Immaculata was transferred to the first orphanage dedicated to the Immaculate Conception in Saronno. *Pius IX's Immaculate Conception was venerated here first in the Institute Chapel and then in the "first church," which was also dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.* From 1910 to 1920, Brother Edmondo Mitti was the superior. *He made the church the center of his activities, transforming it into a "little Roman basilica." He did this by organizing the Marian and patron saints' feasts to the best of his ability and by embellishing the church with draped*

damask, lampstands, and special lighting on the Oval of the Immaculate Conception. He placed the Oval in the center and above the altar, wrapping it in a grandiose ray. This setting sustained and nurtured the piety of the boys, brothers, and citizens of Saronno (Carrazza, *Prophets in the Ordinary*, vol. I, 143–144).

With the election of Father *Stanislaus Pastori* as Superior General of the Congregation, the history of the Oval of the Immaculate Conception was enriched by further shifts. *"He had the painting brought back to Rome, to the chapel of the generalate, and restored it to its former glory. He protected the painting with an elegant frame and glass. To the church in Saronno, he left an 'artistic and faithful copy of the original.'"*

Moreover, Father Pastori had many images of the Immaculate Conception printed, as well as small pictures containing devout prayers and brief mentions of the Congregation's purposes. The image of the Immaculate Conception was included in the Congregation's emblem along with other heraldic motifs. In the cemetery of Saronno, where Blessed Monti and other brothers were buried, the same image was placed." Capparoni's devotion to the Immaculate spread everywhere, beginning in Argentina, where he promoted the veneration of the Immaculate of Pius IX (Luigi Zamperetti, *L'Orfanello dell'Immacolata*, no. 11, 1938, 38). Today, this precious image is kept at the General House, located at Vicolo del Conte 2 in Rome, after being moved from Via della Luce. For this occasion, Alessandro Gori restored the canvas and frame in 2008.

6. Desiring and hoping to be with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

The Founder entrusts himself to Jesus, the Immaculate Mother, and St. Joseph, who are inseparable in carrying out divine designs and the work of charity. He is certain that *Jesus, Mary, and Joseph* will never abandon the Congregation because *"favored with an apparition,"* he can firmly affirm that: *"Jesus and Mary assured me that everything will triumph. They are guarantors, and the protection we have received up to now is indisputable proof of this"* (Giampetruzzi, *Letters*, Vol. IV, 91–92).

The Rule of Life prescribes to *"deepen the mission of Mary in the history of salvation with a profound study"* (Const. 93) and urges the Brothers to be courageous disciples and apostles in proclaiming salvation and healing; thus, they should focus on the essential and an apostolate of prophetic life.

The Founder writes, *"Let our enemies be unleashed against us, but they must remain broken at the feet of our Mother, who holds the Head and Father of all enemies under her Virginian foot"* (Giampetruzzi, *Letters*, vol. IV, 91–92). The image of Mary crushing *"the serpent-dragon"* with her foot is powerful and increases prayer and devotion to the Immaculate Mother, who interprets victory over *"the enmity and snare of evil"* (Gen. 3:15). At the Last Supper, Jesus reveals that *"the Scripture must be fulfilled: He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me"* (Jn 13:18).

The Founder describes his struggle after receiving the orphan Edward Epiphanius, to whom he had *"promised to be his father": "This son was lost forever, but by the extraordinary grace of Mary Most Holy, he is alive and saved. So be on your guard against the devil, who is still alive and trying to regain what he has lost"* (Giampetruzzi, *Letters*, vol. I, 255–256).

His reminder about the *"lack of religious spirit"* and the need to *"fear God's judgment for failing to live up to our vocation"* is even more powerful. He urges *"all good brothers"* not to retreat from promising our Blessed Mother that they will reform their spirits. *Let us pray to our affectionate Mother for the prosperity of our poor Institute, which the wrath of Satan never leaves to fight, and for our needs, so that our souls may not perish (even) with the great grace of our vocation to religious life"* (Giampetruzzi, *Letters*, vol. III, 95–96). To the young soldier Brother Stanislaio Pastori, he wrote, *"Let us be consoled by the protection of the Immaculate Mother and the wonders she works on our behalf. The evil enemy is under her feet"* (Giampetruzzi, *Letters*, Vol. II, 395).

This experience continued in Brescia when, on December 8, 1852, at the age of 27, he took the habit of the *Sons of Mary Immaculate*. During spiritual exercises, he wrote, *"My Jesus, I will be faithful to you, and by your holy grace, I want to make myself a saint, and if it pleases you, a great saint."* Then, addressing the Immaculate, he prayed, *"O Mary, look upon me with benevolence; through you, in Jesus, I hope for everything."*

This defines his vocation and choice: *"To remain always a son of Mary."* Before he died, he made his act of love as "son, brother, and father" by recognizing the trio as the "sole founders": *"Jesus, Mary Most Holy Immaculate, and St. Joseph."*

7. Queen and Liberator

"The Pope is me! Be calm," said Pope Leo XIII at the conclusion of the *"unforgettable audience and apostolic blessing"* on July 31, 1878. The founder testifies, *"I had the audience, and he received me as a son"* (Giampetruzzi, *Diaries*, 10). These are authoritative statements after hearing what *"passed in the family"* (Positio, 1993, *Documents*, 439).

On that same day, the Founder announced to the Brothers the end of the *"Institute's long period of suffering. Those who read the history of the Institute will be astonished by the many unfortunate events that were intended to destroy it in its infancy. Now, by a solemn prodigy and miracle of the Immaculate, our Mother and special Patroness, Mary Most Holy Immaculate, who dignifies us with her name and the habit of her color, the Holy See has decreed that the Pious Institute be autonomous and free, as are all other religious institutes, with one head immediately subject to the Holy See"* (Giampetruzzi, *Letters*, Vol. I, 124).

Love for the Immaculate Mother leads to maturation and purification, especially during times of marginalization and misunderstanding. In this stormy sea, the Founder knows how to find serenity, trust, and security. *"The Queen is enough"* to strengthen his *"filial relationship of total entrustment,"* especially in the face of the *"tremendous verdict"* regarding the priesthood. *"Before the Blessed Sacrament and Our Mother Mary, I offered what was to come, offering myself to Jesus Christ to drink the bitter cup in the garden to the last drop. This morning, during Holy Communion, I was still sad, but my heart was already prepared to accept whatever news came my way. Despite devilish moves, the Institute will triumph with greater splendor in its time"* (Giampetruzzi, *Letters*, vol. III, 105–106).

As a "beloved and protected son," the Founder knows how to look beyond events and people. Indeed, he wisely comments, *"They have done neither more nor less than God has allowed."*

His deep faith relies on providence. *"God always opens a door."* This certainty flows from contemplating the beauty of the Immaculate in contrast to the *serpent-dragon* at her feet. *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; she will crush your head, and you will strike her heel"* (Gen. 3:15). The Immaculate Mother is *"the spiritual strength and awareness that God entrusts to man in a special way"* (MD, no. 30).

In taking care of the well-being of the sick and orphans, the Founder always strives to defend and generate life, even to the point of heroism in following Jesus and Mary Immaculate.

8. The image of the Blessed Virgin Mary is placed in bed

Luigi Monti *"in the chapel makes known to the brothers the facts of the times and the growth of poverty."* He then exhorts, *"The Lord will never fail with his providence, and the Immaculate Mother will never abandon her sons. No matter how much God allows people to be castigated, the sons of the Immaculate will suffer the least."* He builds hope on this confident certainty: *"During the novena and holy exercises for the Immaculate Conception, the fear of the devil's threats disappeared, and perfect calm came over everyone. On the eighth, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Mother, three vestigations were made and five professions (two perpetual), so true joy and peace were felt in the Lord"* (Giampetruzzi, *Diaries*, 213–214).

Founder's life was not without *"assaults from the devil,"* but the *"always vigilant Blessed Mary is victorious, and the Superior can rest peacefully."* Taking refuge in God and clinging to his protectors, *Jesus, Mary, and Joseph*, was a source of strength for him in times of trial. After experiencing Father Angelini's opposition to the priesthood on December 26, 1887, he wrote, *"The superior had a mysterious dream that night. He seemed to be near a ravine, and from there, he saw a beast of immense size that seemed to be a dragon. It fixed its eyes on him as if to say, 'I want to swallow you up.' At such a sight, he was terrified and cried out, 'Oh, my God, my Lord, help me!'"* The animal saw him no more, and he feared it would soon assault and devour him. A few moments later, he heard the beast close by.

The Superior wrapped himself in blankets so the beast would not devour him. Again, he cried out, "O Lord, help! Jesus, my help! O God, my help!" Meanwhile, the big animal approached to take his head. At that moment, he heard a voice saying, "Have faith. I will deliver you. It is I, the Lord, who works for your deliverance from the imminent devouring by the enemy." I answered 'yes', and instantly the monster withdrew. Awakening frightened, he lit the lamp and, to comfort himself, placed the image of the Blessed Mary on his bed. He quieted himself". (Giampetruzzi, Diaries, 161-162).

He embraces his role as "*Son of the Immaculate*" and his work "*for love and in honor of the Immaculate,*" she who "*precedes the whole Church on the path of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ*" (LG, no. 36). It is a vocation of filial love to "*resume life and reign with Christ*" (Rev. 20:4). These sentiments are also attested to and summed up by Venerable *Emanuele Stabulum* in invoking the "*Holy Mother of God and our Mother*": "*You know how much we trust in you. You know our certainty that we can do nothing without God's help and that every grace comes to us through your hands. Now, we need special graces. We recall our love for our sick brothers and sisters, which is nurtured by the certainty of God's love for all people and inspired by Jesus's example, who 'passed by doing good and healing all'*" (Stabulum, Diaries, 1927).

(Prepared by Fr. Aleandro Paritanti)