THE MESSAGE OF THE MAJOR RECTOR

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WHEN THE LORD KNOCKS

A confrere said to me, "Father, we just need your closeness, your listening, and your prayer. This consoles us, encourages us, and gives us strength and hope so that we may continue to serve the young, who are poor and wounded, afraid and terrorized!"

On March 25, 2025, the Church celebrated the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary. This is one of the most significant solemnities of our Christian Faith. On this solemnity, we commemorate God's initiative to become part of the human history that He Himself created. On that day, during Holy Mass, we recite the Creed and when we profess that the Son of God became Man, we believers kneel as a sign of awe at God’s marvelous initiative, before which we have no choice but to fall to our knees.

In the annunciation experience, Mary is afraid: “Do not fear Mary,” the Angel tells her. After she expresses her question and is assured that this is God's plan for her, Mary responds with a simple phrase that remains for us today a reminder and an invitation. Mary, the Blessed among women, simply says, “Let it be done unto me according to your word.”

This past March 25, the Lord knocked on the door of my heart through the call that my brothers at General Chapter XXIX addressed to me. They asked me to make myself available to take on the mission of being Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales. I confess that then and there I felt the weight of the invitation and had some disconcerting moments because what the Lord was asking of me was no small thing. The point is that when the call comes, we as believers enter that sacred space where we feel strongly that it is He who takes the initiative. The road ahead of us is just simply to abandon ourselves into God's hands, with no “ifs” or “buts”. Of course, none of this is easy.

**“You will see how the Lord works.”**

During these initial weeks, I have still been asking myself, like Mary, what does all this mean? Then, slowly, the consoling words that one of my Provincials once told me began to come: "When the Lord calls, it is He who takes the initiative; what is done depends on Him. You just keep yourself ready and available. You will see how the Lord works."

In the light of this personal but very wide-ranging experience, because it concerns the Salesian Congregation and the Salesian Family, I immediately turned to my dear Salesian Confreres. From the very first moment, I asked them to accompany me with their prayers, their closeness, and their support.

I must confess that in these first weeks I already feel that this mission must be inspired by Mary. She, after the Angel's annunciation, set out to help her cousin Elizabeth. And so, I set out to serve my confreres, to listen to them, and to share with them and reassure them of the support of the whole congregation, especially for those living in situations of war, conflict, and extreme poverty.

I was struck by the comment of a provincial who is experiencing an extremely difficult situation with his confreres. After a very fraternal conversation, he told me, "Father, we just need your closeness, your listening, and your prayer. This consoles us, encourages us, and gives us strength and hope so that we may continue to serve the young, who are poor and wounded, afraid and terrorized!" After this comment, we remained in silence, he and I, with a few tears falling from his eyes and I must say from mine as well.

When the meeting was over, I remained alone in my office. I asked myself if this mission that the Lord is asking me to accept is but to be a brother alongside my brothers who suffer but who hope, and who struggle to do good for the poor and who have no intention of quitting? I could hear a voice inside of me telling me that it is worth saying ‘yes’ when the Lord knocks, whatever it may cost!