



Revitalizing one's vocation: a flame to be nurtured and renewed

Message for the Scalabrinian Year of Vocations

With joy, on **April 26, Good Shepherd Sunday**, the Congregation will officially open **the Year of Vocations**. It will be a time of grace, given to the entire Scalabrinian family, to return to the essence of the call we have received, to cherish with gratitude the gift of vocation, and to reawaken, in each person's heart, the ardent desire to follow Christ along the roads of the world.

Accompanying this journey will be the words of St. Paul to Timothy: **"I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you"** (2 Tim 1:6): an invitation not to let the fire we have received go out, but to renew it every day. The verb Paul uses, "to rekindle," evokes precisely this image: that of a flame that is not extinguished, but which must be revived so that it may burn with renewed vigor. It is the fire of the first encounter with the Lord, of that moment when his voice filled the heart with joy, of the grace received through the Church and entrusted to our freedom. *To rekindle the gift*, then, means returning to the source, renewing our relationship with the Giver, opening our hands before God, and allowing ourselves to be reached once again by his love.

The life and mission of **Saint John Baptist Scalabrini** illuminate our path. Our founder knew how to hear the cry of the migrants of his time and to read in their wounds a call from God. He did not keep the faith as something to be kept for himself, but transformed it into dedication, courage, and concrete charity. He pointed to a Gospel path made of compassion and shared responsibility, to the point of giving life to a mission that still bears fruit today. In him we see the beauty of **a life fully given**: an existence rooted in God and, precisely for this reason, entirely spent for others.

Today, we renew our commitment to proclaim to the world with conviction that **it is worth leaving everything for God**. Not because the Lord takes something away from us, but because He gives everything in a new way. Living for Jesus does not mean fleeing from reality, but choosing what truly matters; it does not mean renouncing life, but entrusting it to a greater love; it does not mean losing, but finding in Him the truest meaning of one's existence. At a time when many seek security, affirmation, or autonomy, it is important to remind young people that **life truly flourishes when it becomes a gift**.

As St. John Paul II said during World Youth Day 2000 in Rome, *"It is Jesus whom you seek when you dream of happiness; it is He who awaits you when nothing you find satisfies you; it is He who is the beauty that so attracts you; it is He who stirs you with that thirst for radicalism that does not allow you to settle for compromise."* This is the challenge to which we are called as Scalabrinian missionaries: **to bear witness through our works that the Gospel is worth living to the very end** and that giving oneself for the Kingdom of God makes the heart profoundly free.

The Year of Vocations will, therefore, be an invitation to all who share the Scalabrinian charism to embark on a journey of **prayer, listening, discernment, and renewed openness**. It will be a favorable time to re-examine one's own story in the light of God's faithfulness, to

rekindle one's first love, to allow oneself to be questioned by Christ, and to renew, with joy, one's "yes."

Let us ask the Lord for the gift of open hearts that know how to recognize his voice and respond with generosity. Let us pray that a **true culture of vocation** may grow in our communities, capable of bearing witness to the beauty of consecration and of accompanying with care those who feel called by God.

We entrust this Year of Vocations to **the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of Migrants**, and to the intercession of **St. John Baptist Scalabrini**, that they may guide the journey of the Congregation and help each one to rekindle what they have received, to remain in God's love, and to live with joy their vocation in service to the Gospel and to the least of these.

The Superior General, Fr. Leonir Chiarello



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