



CONGREGAZIONE delle SCUOLE di CARITÀ ISTITUTO CAVANIS

J. M. J.



Il Preposito Generale

MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD FATHER ANTONIO ANGELO CAVANIS

“This is the day that the Lord has done for us; let us rejoice and rejoice” Psalm 117

Dear Laity, Benefactors and Collaborators Cavanis

God the Father in his goodness on a certain January 16, 1772 in the city of Venice, blessed the birth of a child who, in his plans, was destined to carry out great works of charity as a priest and as the founder of a Religious Institute that would welcome, protect, instruct and educate children and young people with fatherly love. His father John wrote in his diary: *“Praying the Lord God to bless him, so that the joy of his birth may grow more and more and he may reach the vigor of the Christian life, always grateful to God and to people. Amen”*. We, their spiritual children today, have the grace to celebrate this anniversary with a grateful heart, with the responsibility to face the present challenges and a confident outlook towards the future.

A true and fruitful celebration always requires an examination of personal and institutional conscience, as a condition for discovering perspectives and working tirelessly on medium and long-term goals. We are living a privileged moment for the Church with the synodal path proposed to us by Pope Francis. I believe that the questions asked during his homily on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord this year can help us to reflect honestly on our journey of faith, where we are in our vocation and commitment to the charism. It is not so much a question of whether the glass is half empty or full, but how long we manage to keep it. Our baptismal and religious consecration, which inserts us into community life, is above all to encourage our conversion to a lifestyle that is God’s way and not ours.

We cannot be content with a lack of knowledge of the sources of our charism. What do we really know about Father Antonio’s life? Do we have time and availability to read and reflect on the history of his vocation, on how he was educated, on the events of his life, on his priestly ministry before founding the youth association of the Marian Congregation, on his relationship with his brother, on his responsibility as a director of the school, as superior of the religious institute, of his correspondence and writings? Do we know and are inspired by the way he heroically lived the virtues? Can the pedagogy of family education of gratuitousness, of fatherhood, of the synthesis of the formation of mind and heart still serve as a reference? What prompted him to dedicate his whole life and endure to the end? He was the first to lead the way. I propose that in this year of celebration of the Jubilee we commit ourselves to truly know the virtues, sufferings, struggles and joys that permeated the life of Father Antonio. We must feel him alive, walking with us and having something to tell us today. Our Cavanis vocation is closely linked to the trajectory of his vocation.

He left us an example of how to evangelically embody the commandment of Jesus, which shines like a beacon that guides ships during a storm, in the middle of a darkest night: *"Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are like them"* (Mt 19:14). He made the preferential option for the poor, like Jesus, and was far-sighted in the revolutionary choice of the education of the popular classes, as a privileged means of helping them to become free in the broadest sense of the word. Children and young people who need a good domestic education are numerous, not only in poor countries but also in affluent societies. Thanks to divine Providence, the Cavanis Institute has never lacked generous people who have come to the aid of fragile young people, with their availability, talents, prayers and economic resources. It is possible to welcome many children and young people only thanks to the collaboration of you benefactors and collaborators. May God reward you with what you need most. We cannot lose the true sense of gratuitousness that is fundamental to be considered as Cavanis educators. Cavanis gratuity has been, is and will always be the free and personal delivery of our lives. Our employees who receive a salary also participate in this gratuity. A true Cavanis educator cannot be a simple clerk. The love with which one is educated is priceless. Life is generated with life. Jesus enriched us with his poverty (2 Cor 8:9). Members of a work or activity who do not cultivate the virtues of vigilance, patience, solicitude, hope for fruit (strength and courage) and prayer (charity) (Cfr. *Positio*, p. CXV) are doing a sterile job, building something that sooner or later will crumble because it is based on sand. Holiness never expires and never goes out of fashion, and it is the soul of our apostolate.

Consoling his brother Marco after his disappointment in raising funds to pay the huge debts of the school, Father Antonio wrote: *"You see, here is written our history, in these words: Make us joy for the days of affliction, for the years in which we saw misfortune. (Ps 90:15). And what do all these beautiful no of marquises and earls mean? That the Work will fall? At all! Other, much more. It means that it is troubled, and that is why God wants to protect it and make it great. I assure you that I am not upset or afflicted. I am in beautiful peace, without worries, without fear, and I rejoice with my children who since yesterday have been doing the spiritual exercises, where they also pray for you and wait for you with all their hearts to listen to your teachings on the greatness of the spirit, at least in the last days of their retreat"* (*Positio*, p. XCIX).

Let us ask for grace, and let us make ourselves available by all means, to remain with body and soul in the Schools of Charity and acquire the virtues that our Venerable Fathers left us as an example, under the protection of the Mother of the Schools of Charity and our Patron Saint Joseph Calazanzio.

Sola in Deo sors!

In the fraternity of the Venerable Fathers Antonio and Marco Cavanis.

Rome, 16 January 2022



Manoel R. P. Rosa

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