**VOCATION AND FORMATION**

**July Retreat Material for the 125 years of the Jubilee of the MSF Congregation**

The main purpose of founding our Congregation is to seek and educate (train) future missionaries (cf. LEB: 3.5.1908; L'Oeuvre de la Sainte Famille , 1902, p. 11; Const. 1895, n. 16) . The celebration of the 125th Jubilee invites us to return to the source, back to the base. In addition to promote vocations, both for the Church and for the Congregation (DU. 08) and to pay serious attention to initial formation and ongoing formation (also for the various congregations and dioceses; cf. DU. 09), it is essential that we live the religious and priestly vocation through the witness of life which can be reliable and exemplary (DU. 010). This is what is commonly called exemplary apostolate! The passage from Luke 5: 1-11, which is the biblical reference for this July retreat, underlines the invitation of Jesus to live deeply, duc in altum. Not only by fulfilling duties and obligations, but by interpreting every event and reality, in order to reach human, Christian and religious maturity. From day to day growing towards maturity, as demonstrated by Christ (Luke 2,40,52; Eph 4,15-16).

Just a small sharing, every day, when I personally pray and draw strength from Father Berthier, this brief prayer is very useful: *"O Cher Père Berthier, en mon nom parlez au Père céleste et obtenez-moi un esprit missionnaire qui chaque jour imprègne tout mon être imitant ainsi le modèle silencieux, la Sainte Famille de Nazareth sous la protection de la Vierge Marie de la Salette et obtenez-moi tous les biens que j'en ai très besoin". "O dear Father Berthier, speak in my name to Heavenly Father and provide me with a missionary spirit that permeates my entire being every day, thus imitating the silent model, the Holy Family of Nazareth under the protection of the Virgin Mary of La Salette, get me all what I really need."* Contemplating and deepening the theme of vocation and formation, the inner fire (Jer 20.9; Luke 12.49) of our missionary spirit is inevitably rekindled! This presupposes that we have finished (done well) ourselves, supported by the three vows, we go out of ourselves and we must move quickly with availability for missionary task. In this way, like the contemporary fruit of initial and ongoing formation, together with the confreres we participate in the mission of our missionary Congregation (Const. 81).

The following two quotations from Father Berthier's Words of Wisdom (n. 108 and 111), are very stimulating as a summary of the study of the theme of this month's retreat: “*The spirit of each priest will encourage him to devote himself attentively to formation and to dedicate his whole life to it, if his superiors consider it suitable* ”(Const. 1895, 155). "*While in scholasticate it is very appropriate to learn to use “weapons” which will then be used to do good. First of all, those who have received the ordination learn well to celebrate the Eucharist and try to celebrate it in a pious way. They train to preach well in plain language and in accordance with the needs of the people. They must be able to use what is necessary to prepare the most efficient homilies for the people*" (Const. 1895. 252).

**Questions for reflection:**

1) How can I concretely live a reliable and exemplary life?

2) Remaining faithful to the call and being involved in initial and ongoing formation, what have I felt and what can I improve in order to feel responsible for maintaining and supporting the vocation of the confreres?

P. Antonius Marga M. MSF