

LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

**TO VERY REV. PIERINO MORENO, CRS, GENERAL SUPERIOR
OF THE SOMASCAN FATHERS**

1. Five hundred years ago, was born in Venice St. Jerome Emiliani: this event leads us to reflect on how God made use of a simple man, that he had consecrated unreservedly, as a tool to enhance its glory and make it a sign of 'love he brings to his children, especially the most abandoned.

We, therefore, as we partake of the joy of the Order of Clerics Regular Somascan and other religious families who follow the saint as their guide and model, we take the opportunity offered to us to show how much estimated to have the Church for apostolic work, that they perform, and express the feelings that suggests this event. We strongly urge them to persevere on the path marked by him always and everywhere, and to arouse the flame of evangelical charity, of which burned St. Jerome, father and refuge of the poor.

The path taken by him fascinated his contemporaries and never ceases to fascinate even the men of our time. After being released from prison through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1511 during the war known as the "League of Cambrai," pleased the merciful God to wage perfectly the heart and draw him to himself with holy inspirations from the cares of the world. He then devoted himself with all his strength to lead a truly Christian life and to achieve their spiritual development.

2. For the disposal of God walked for new roads: in 1532 he was called to Bergamo by the Bishop of that city to organize works of charity in that diocese; therein therefore expected to carry out its healthy activity for the benefit of orphans, the sick, widows and prostitutes.

In the countryside, then found another form of poverty: religious ignorance. Then organized the true catechetical missions, for which he also served his boys as new apostles of the Gospel. At the end of 1533 he left Bergamo and undertook in the same works in Milan, Como, Pavia, Brescia and Verona.

In 1534 he retired to the small village of Somasca, where he spent his life lending his aid to orphans and the poor, healing the sick, teaching catechism to farmers in absolute poverty, penance, solitude and contemplation of divine realities. In January of 1537, and took care of those affected by the plague, he also fell in this disease, due to which he died in the Lord on the night between 7 and 8 February. His last words were: "Follow Christ, serve the poor. Jesus, Mary. "

On 14 March 1928, Pope Pius XI, of happy memory, proclaimed St. Jerome Emiliani "universal patron of orphans and abandoned youth." So his limitless charity and his intercession with God extends right even with all the boys and girls of today, who are in conditions of poverty.

Stimulated by the urgency of the need and the reality of daily life the holy man drew inspiration from the Gospel continually striving to bring man to God, by promoting the material and spiritual conditions. For him, the man is realized in his life as a Christian, to animate all stages of education, taking into account the natural inclinations and encouraging, in a responsible manner, the development of skills largite to each by the Heavenly Father.

St. Jerome devoted himself entirely to this lavishing extraordinary to others the love that comes from the love of God and feeds on it, which requires loyalty, willingness to sacrifice and dedication to the death, love, full of understanding and attention, but at the same time strong and able to push to perform their duties.

To all those, therefore, who are engaged in the field of education address Our paternal exhortation to

follow this master, and love with all my heart the little ones to whom they are committed to give their lives for them, as did St. Jerome.

3. This extraordinary man is the founder of the religious order of the Fathers Somascan. When he began his work in aid of orphans, he was convinced that people were needed they were always available and fully prepared for this, without being bound by other commitments, as he too was stripped of everything.

By priests and lay people who, moved by the Spirit of the Lord and fascinated by his example, joined him, came the "Company of the Servants of the Poor," which was approved in 1540 by Pope Paul III in 1568 and was inserted by Pope St. Pius V Orders of Clerks Regular.

A month before his death, St. Jerome traced to these children the following rule of life: that they have offered to Christ, living in his house, eating his bread, we fans call "servants of the poor" of Christ. To be faithful to this vocation, they shall be full of charity, humility, meekness, gentleness, patience, understanding of human frailty, zeal for the salvation of sinners, devotion, humiliation, poverty, purity, obedience to the rules of Christian life and to the pastors of the Church, filled with a burning desire to attract men to God

Moved by the founder of which was burning, the Order then dilated spaces of his charity, and besides commitment to assist orphans and abandoned youth, helped set up seminars in the diocese according to the Tridentine decrees, education and education of young people in schools and colleges, the care of souls in parishes and in the priestly ministry.

In this century, the Order has crossed the borders of Italy and founded homes in Spain, in South, Central and North. Have also arisen other religious families that are inspired by the charism of St. Jerome.

Dear children of St. Jerome Emiliani! We urge you in your earthly path that you keep your eyes fixed to the foundations of your Order "that are resplendent with holiness and perfection of life" (cf. Fonti for the history Somaschan, 7, p. 11).

As was usual to urge your father, trust in the Lord merciful and have hope in him alone, for all those who take refuge in him will not remain confused forever. Then the Lord will fill you with his love and will continue to be glorified in you by means of your dear and beloved father. And because you deserve it easier to obtain this grace, worshiped with sincere devotion to the Mother of Graces, St. Jerome, who freed from the bonds of earthly pursuits.

4. This saint—as already mentioned—lit by his example of love for the brethren of Christ even tinier the mind of many lay people. These animated by a strong commitment to truly Christian life, formed associations, called in Italian "Companies" among their members that welcomed people from all walks of life.

They were intended to make them members of the true Christians according to the Gospel through an intense religious life, which exercised diligently works of mercy towards the poor and the abandoned. They, for their part, strove especially to give rise in Italian schools of Christian doctrine, which contributed largely to the religious revival of the Italian people in the sixteenth century.

Today, in the light of Vatican II, even the faithful who do not belong to the clerical state or religious bought a greater awareness of being called to participate in the mission for the sanctification of the world and manifest Christ through the witness of their lives and with the light of their works.

The wonderful example of St. Jerome Emiliani, secular and animator of lay people, help them to understand more deeply the words of Christ, who wished to be identified with the smallest of his brothers, and will encourage them to engage in works intended to relieve human needs , works held in particular honor by the Church.

Therefore, if we look at the spiritual journey of St. Jerome, this is manifested as a saint capable of stimulating the men of our time. He hardly speaks to them urging them to embrace with sincere charity and help those who pay with the works in the straits, especially the younger ones. May the celebration of the fifth centenary of his birth to shine the light again that inflame, enlighten, sustain us the people of God!

While our soul echo these sentiments, I wholeheartedly impart to you, dear son, and to all thy brethren the apostolic blessing, we wish to extend to all other religious families, which St Jerome as their mentor.

From the Vatican, 11 January 1986.

JOHN PAUL II