

MESSAGE TO THE VERBUM DEI MISSIONARY FAMILY

On May 21st, we just celebrated Jaime Bonet's 90th birthday, and on the 31st we will celebrate the anniversary of his priestly ordination. These two events are an invitation for me that I want to share with all of you: a call to renew our vocation and mission.

These celebrations are an impulse to go to the root of our life of following Jesus: the living and personal encounter with Him, Jesus of Nazareth, who introduces us to the filial relationship with God, our *Abba*, and gives us the Holy Spirit. Our faith is not an ideology, but a person: Christ that lives; Christ, with whom we can talk, share, chat, and converse. Jesus, our traveling companion; the Trinity in us, the best travel companion¹.



The lifestyle to which we aspire, especially as members of the Fraternity, is that of a contemplative-active life that is fully apostolic-missionary (cf. CFMVD 1), as we have seen in our founder. His contemplative life is not the result of special techniques, but of the awareness that God is a living person, who seeks dialogue and to live with each one of us in a familiar and close manner. It is the goal of our spiritual exercises:

"It is about reliving each day our consecration to the divine Persons more abundantly and consciously (...) That is why our exercises would focus on the shared-life with the divine Persons, as alive and conscious as possible, who with us and in us live as if in their own home and personal property, completely theirs"².

The mode of prayer that we have all inherited from Jaime is not a purely intellectual meditation but a meditation on the Word that ends in affective contemplation that unites us with Love and integrates our whole being. I invite you to read the prayer number 34 in the book *A Solas*. Recalling his conversion 50 years ago, Jaime writes:

"... the date of our betrothal is approaching, in which we made an eternal promise, a definitive covenant. Since then, we spent many nights together, with no business to deal with, but simply to enjoy and to get drunk, to drink and be soaked with your love (...) Therefore, Lord, that is the flavour, the party atmosphere, the festival and delightful dinner of the golden wedding anniversary, since we made the mutual declaration of love and sealed the promises with life even beyond death. We are now about to reach fifty years. (...) Anniversary of a marriage in a major key, always *in crescendo* of loves, of Love, to give to all"³.

To renew and revive this experience, we need spaces of desert. Jaime writes at the beginning of the exercises in 1990:

¹ Cf. CFMVD 69; EFAMVD 30.1

² BONET BONET, Jaime, *A solas. Oraciones de un evangelizador*. Isabel Ma. Fornari, edit., Fundación Barceló, 2015, p. 159.

³ Id., p. 79.

"My Jesus, excessive worries divert my strong connection with you. You have given me the grace to say goodbye to everything and embrace You. I need your Person, for full union with you. A faithful response to your insistent call demands it of me. A love of gratitude, of growing affection, of sincere friendship; graft my life in yours so that I may live the same life"⁴.

This experience, quite special to the context of the spiritual exercises, is to be prolonged in everyday life. To renew this encounter, we need to prepare the heart every day: silence at night to make room for Jesus and His Word, and to spend the last moments of the day dialoguing with him; spending some time at the beginning of our exercise of prayer simply becoming aware of the presence of the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Mary who also eagerly await that special time of fellowship with us ...

I think the best way to congratulate Jaime is to take the baton and receive his inheritance of an existence that is summarised "in a continuous life of prayer and close union with Him"⁵. It is our whole life, not just special moments, which "are lived around the tabernacle, and the day gives the turn to night and the night to the new day, in a continuous succession of loving dates with Jesus in the Eucharist"⁶, not only to "adore" him but to talk with him and imitate him, to follow him with all our being:

"We note that our intimacy and mutual enthusiasm with Jesus would remain halfway and that such a dialogue and love would be very mediocre and childish if we simply adored the Eucharist, admiring the height of Jesus' love to the end as we just watch and admire. We would be very far from the ideal and goal that Jesus aspires in us in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and in his permanence in the Tabernacle. Jesus more than worshipers and admirers, aims for and seeks determined imitators"⁷.

My prayer is that all of us who form the Verbum Dei Missionary Family can help each other in this journey. Each one from their state of life and from their place in the Family share this spirituality and this mission that focuses on the Word of God; we share the aspiration to be perfect in love, and to proclaim the Kingdom with our word and our life – and that we might come together, in Jaime's dream and in his own thanksgiving:

"...This life hidden with you in God truly excites me, without anything or anyone, not even my little quirks, can distance me from a practical, living, and total love, between you me. Thank you, Jesus, for this desire that you have placed in me to be one with you. Thank you, dear Mother, thank you. I feel infinitely happy with you. I do not deserve it. Thank you. *Magnificat anima mea Dominum...*"⁸

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President VDMFa

4 Id., p. 38.

5 EFMVD 86.

6 EFMVD 223. This is the reason why all our times of prayer, our hours spent in prayer, are "holy hours". May every hour of our day be a "holy hour"!

7 EFMVD 224.

8 *A solas*, p. 38.