

□ Reading time: 3 min.

A confrere told me, "Father, we only need your closeness, your listening, your prayer. This consoles us, encourages us, and gives us strength and hope so that we can continue to serve the young, the poor and wounded, the frightened and terrified!"

On March 25, 2025, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary. One of the most significant solemnities for the Christian faith. On this solemnity, we remember the initiative of God who becomes part of that human history that he himself created. On that day in the Holy Eucharist, we recite the Creed, and when we profess that the Son of God became man, we believers kneel as a sign of amazement at this wonderful initiative of God before which we can only kneel.

In the experience of the Annunciation, Mary is afraid: "Do not be afraid, Mary," the Angel tells her. After she has expressed her questions, being assured that it is God's plan for her, Mary responds with a simple phrase that remains for us today a reminder and an invitation. Mary, the Blessed among women, simply says, "Let it be done to me according to your word."

Last March 25, the Lord knocked on the door of my heart through the call that my brothers at the 29th General Chapter addressed to me. They asked me to make myself available to take on the mission of being Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales. I confess that at that moment I felt the weight of the invitation, moments that disorient because what the Lord was asking of me was not a light thing. The point is that when the call comes, we as believers enter that sacred space where we strongly feel the fact that it is He who takes the initiative. The only path before us is to simply abandon ourselves into the hands of God, without ifs, ands, or buts. And all this is naturally not easy.

"You will see how the Lord works"

In these first weeks, I am still asking myself like Mary, what is the meaning of all this? Then little by little I begin to arrive at that consolation that one of my Provincials once told me: "When the Lord calls, it is He who takes the initiative, what is done depends on Him. You just keep yourself ready and available. You will see how the Lord works."

In light of this personal but very broad experience, because it concerns the Salesian Congregation and the Salesian Family, I immediately turned to my dear Salesian

brothers. From the first moment, I asked them to accompany me with their prayer, their closeness, their support.

I must confess that in these first weeks I already feel that this mission must be inspired by Mary. After the Annunciation by the Angel, she set out to help her cousin Elizabeth. And thus, I set out to serve my brothers, listening to them, sharing with them, and reassuring them of the support of the entire Congregation, especially for those who live in situations of war, conflict, and extreme poverty.

I was struck by the comment of a Provincial who is experiencing an extremely difficult situation with his confreres. After a very fraternal conversation, he said to me, "Father, we only need your closeness, your listening, your prayer. This consoles us, encourages us, and gives us strength and hope so that we can continue to serve the young, the poor and wounded, the frightened and terrified!" After this comment, we remained silent, he and I, with some tears falling from his eyes and, I must say, also from mine.

After the meeting, I remained alone in my office. I asked myself if this mission that the Lord is asking me to accept is not perhaps that of making myself a brother alongside my brothers who suffer but hope? Who fight to do good for the poor and have no intention of stopping? I felt a voice inside me saying that it is worth saying 'yes' when the Lord knocks, whatever the cost!