

LETTER TO THE ORIONINE FAMILY

Montebello della Battaglia, 31st May 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Orionine Family,

The 14th General Chapter, which began at the shrine of Our Lady of Safe-keeping (Madonna della Guardia) at Tortona, is nearly over. It began near our Founder and his first companions, Fr Sterpi, Fr Pensa, Fr Goggi and Canon Perduca. Encouraged by our family saints, we began the work of the chapter with the desire of following in their footsteps, although in a very different social, Church and economic times. We wanted to continue to be a sign in the world, as servants of Christ and the poor, and absorb the fullness of the great charismatic richness which our history has handed on to us. That is why we valued the meaning of the place where we are in, and started the Chapter in the same room in which the first General Chapter was held and which elected the first successor of Don Orione.

During the last weeks we have tried to dream of a new Congregation, new in its fidelity to the charism, in fraternal communion and apostolic zeal. In order to make this a reality we returned to the dream of Don Orione where many people, of every race, nation and language, were gathered, as one family, under the blue mantle of Mary. Those persons, protected by the blue mantle, remained with their culture, their own language and the colour of their skin but were united. We too, belonging to different Provinces, have experienced the joy of meeting each other, and of work which has required us to welcome and bring together our gifts and our limitations.

A particularly positive moment of the Chapter has been the participation of the Sisters, the Members of the Orionine Secular Institute, some friends of the Orionine Lay Movement and fellow-workers. Their presence has renewed the joy of belonging to one Family which is energised by one charism which it is called to bring to the whole world, “*with the speed of people who are in a hurry*” (Pope Francis to the participants of the 14th General Chapter). In fact, our charism is a gift which we cannot keep to ourselves and, so that it does not become weak, needs to travel along all the roads of the world, towards the little ones who are in the midst of the flames of new times.

We have desired to incarnate our charism in the Church and world of today and so we have tried to express Lines of Action which highlight our identity as *Servants of Christ and the poor*. This means holding together, as Pope Francis recommended, the spiritual tensions present in our identity when he said, “*You are called and consecrated to God to stay with Jesus (c.f. Mark 3:14) and to serve Him in the poor, in the people excluded from society. In them you touch*

