

Presentation

The new edition of the volume *I primi Missionari della Consolata in Kenya 1902-1905*, which I am very pleased to present to the public in its English version with the title, *They Took with Them Fine Seeds*, was long solicited by the Missionaries of Kenya. Their need to go back to the origins of their mission is born of a strongly felt need to rediscover as well as deepen their own identity.

They desire the present study to unearth the rock out of which they were hewn as Consolata Missionaries, and to shed light on the profound meaning this mission has had in the cultural, social and human context of the places where it was born and became extremely influential.

This need of identity remains a fundamental value for all members of our Institute, and there can be no identity except by way of a true and acknowledged link with its historical evolution.

Kenya has been the privileged place where the Mission of the Institute was realized, through the work undertaken in that country, but even more so because of the fact that Missionaries were formed in that country and departed from that country carrying the original inspiration and have influenced almost all the foundations in the different continents where the Institute is still active today. The pioneers for new destinations and new contexts had all gone through an extended experience in the Kenyan missions.

To say Kenya, therefore, does not simply mean speaking about a specific locality where our missionary history had its origins, but rather speaking about a common spirit transmitted to the entire Institute.

This is the reason for which my thanks are due to the missionaries of Kenya and, especially, to Fr. Stephen Okello who has been the most ardent promoter of this project, although my thanks extend also to all those who have encouraged and supported it. My thanks go in a very special way to Dr. Peter Munga who has financed this publication as well as so many other works realized by Consolata Missionaries in Kenya.

The present volume, which is the fruit of painstaking research by Fr. Alberto Trevisiol on the diaries of Missionaries, sheds plentiful light into the depths of the Missionary sentiments of those who took the first steps in the apostolate in Kenya.

Receptive to an expressed will of the Founder, Blessed Giuseppe Allamano, even in a context where writing was very difficult due to lack of materials and of time at their disposal, the missionaries nonetheless left behind a day-to-day record of their involvement in the realities where they were work-

ing, in order to “create an environment” for announcing the Gospel. They welcomed Africans and, above all, Africans welcomed them with benevolence and intelligence in such a way as never to confuse them with colonialists who were gradually expanding the exercise of their social and political pressures on the land.

Although in the course of time the missionaries would manifest all their cultural inadequacies and all the limitations and prejudices of Europeans towards Africans, yet by getting to know them through the daily contact provided by “village visits” and by living with the people, they learned how to expend their life for them.

The result was an evangelization of the territory entrusted to them where many local churches were born, the same that today provide ninety percent of the current Consolata missionaries to whom is entrusted the new identity of the Institute and its new missionary engagement.

It is for this too that I whole-heartedly thank Fr. Leonardo Sileo, the Rector of Pontifical Urbaniana University, for his willingness to support economically the publication of this volume.

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