Message of the Superior General
ON THE 139th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION
of the CONGREGATION

"Enlarge the Tent": 139 Years of Mission, Toward the 140th Anniversary

On November 28, 1887, Saint John Baptist Scalabrini began a work destined to span continents, cultures, and generations. The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles was born with a clear mission: to accompany migrants, safeguard their faith, and defend their dignity. Today, 139 years after its foundation, we remember with gratitude all those who have helped write this history, as we embark on **the journey toward the 140th anniversary**, which will be celebrated on November 28, 2027.

"Enlarge the space of your tent, stretch out the coverings of your dwelling without holding back, lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes" (Is 54:2).

The invitation of the prophet Isaiah resonates with particular force on this anniversary. **The tent is the image of a home that knows no borders**, opens itself to encounter, and finds its very reason for being in its willingness to welcome others. It is also the symbol of a Church on the move, capable of reaching people wherever they live, suffer, and seek hope.

Scalabrini understood that the migrations of his time called for a new and structured response. Faced with the suffering of those who were leaving their homeland, he knew how to turn compassion into action, giving life to a work that would gradually reach new countries and continents.

To enlarge the tent, then, means recognizing that every person, regardless of origin or circumstances, possesses an inviolable dignity. This awareness opens up greater space for fraternal coexistence, solidarity, and social justice, as Pope Leo XIV reminds us in his encyclical letter *Magnifica humanitas*, no. 81: "A decisive test of social justice today is the situation of migrants, refugees, and those forced to move because of poverty, violence, climate change, and environmental disasters." In the Scalabrinian mission, as "*pilgrims of hope, walking in charity*" alongside migrants, refugees, and seafarers, we are called to recognize and accompany people experiencing other forms of mobility, such as fishers and their families, and those facing new forms of insecurity and uprootedness. Enlarging the tent means having the courage to discern these new realities and seek appropriate pastoral and missionary responses in order to build relationships of fraternity and justice, combat exclusion, and restore hope to those living in vulnerable situations.

The image offered by the prophet Isaiah gives us further guidance: **enlarging the tent also requires strengthening its stakes**. Openness to new realities must go hand in hand with being firmly rooted in the Word of God, in the life of prayer, and in the charism we have inherited from our holy founder, Scalabrini. Strengthening the stakes also means caring for the quality of our religious life, communion and co-responsibility in fraternal life in community, initial and ongoing formation, and the sustainability of our missionary works and presences. It is not enough to pitch new tents: we must create the conditions for them to become places of encounter, fraternity, and Gospel service. These are the foundations that enable us to face the challenges of the present without losing our identity.

Safeguarding our roots, then, means recognizing ourselves in a charism and a shared history, shaped by the witness of generations of missionaries, religious, and laypeople who have given concrete expression to the Founder's insight. We have sought to express this bond between past, present, and future visually through the **commemorative logo** which, together with the traditional *Humilitas* emblem, will accompany the celebrations from November 28, 2026, to November 28, 2027. The number 140 is intertwined with the infinity symbol, evoking the continuity of the Scalabrinian charism, while the unfinished stroke suggests a journey that remains open.

This will not be a new thematic year, but a time of **commemoration and gratitude**, to remember our origins, revisit the history of the Congregation and the witness of those who have gone before us, and set out again with renewed confidence, allowing the Spirit to guide us toward new missionary horizons. The celebrations will be part of the journey of the **Scalabrinian Vocation Year**, which began in April 2026 and will conclude in April 2027 on Good Shepherd Sunday. The remembrance of our origins will thus be joined to reflection on the value of the vocation and mission we have inherited and on the importance of accompanying new generations.

It is particularly significant that on the very day of the 139th anniversary of the foundation, the decree formalizing the establishment of a new Scalabrinian missionary and vocational presence in Timor-Leste will be signed. With this decision, the Congregation enlarges the space of its tent in a tangible way, opening a new missionary horizon in another country. This is not merely a geographical expansion, but a renewed missionary impetus, an expression of the vitality of a charism that, 139 years after its origins, continues to open new paths and respond to the challenges of human mobility, in creative fidelity to the prophetic insight of Saint John Baptist Scalabrini.

The celebration of the foundation thus becomes an occasion to renew our fidelity to the Gospel and to the spirit of Saint John Baptist Scalabrini, aware that his insight continues to challenge us in the present and point to new paths. We entrust this commemorative journey to his intercession, so that every missionary may live his vocation generously and recognize, in the experiences of migrants, an ever-renewed call to bear witness to the love of Christ.

Father Leonir Chiarello, CS
Superior General

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