



**CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE MINISTER GENERAL
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXV ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIT**

B. S. SS. T.

Dear brothers and sisters,

the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of SIT is a moment of grace for the Trinity Family, a precious opportunity to express our gratitude to the Holy Trinity and at the same time to strengthen the bonds of communion among all members of the Trinity Family.

When we talk about persecuted Christians, we must recognize that this is the deepest core of

our charism. There are various organizations, foundations, and associations that deal with persecuted Christians, but our Order is the only one that by its charism, spirituality and proper rule deals with persecuted Christians.

Our commitment to those who suffer because of the faith represents a return to the spiritual and apostolic origins of the charism of our Founder St. John de Matha. Moreover, as is now known to all, taking care of persecuted Christians means responding to one of the most complex and urgent challenges of the present time. For several decades, in fact, the phenomenon of religious persecution and in particular persecution of Christians has been steadily and vertiginously increasing. The latest reports tell us of 360 million Christians suffering discrimination and persecution at various levels, up to and including martyrdom. One out of every seven Christians suffers heavy discrimination because of fidelity to the Gospel.

SIT is, ultimately, an expression of our creative fidelity to the origins of our religious family and is our response to the cry of pain of so many of our brothers in the faith, innocent victims of blind violence, which is all the more heinous the more it shields itself from the religious message.

SIT is, moreover, a dynamic reality, an ever-open construction site, capable of generating new ideas and creative initiatives to draw attention to a phenomenon completely forgotten by the media and public opinion. Through the SIT and its communication channels, the Trinitarian Family wants to tear open the “complicit silence” and the veil of indifference with which the suffering of so many Christian communities who are denied the most sacred and most human right at the same time: the right to celebrate and live their faith in freedom.

1. GRATEFUL MEMORY OF THE JOURNEY MADE IN THESE TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

The SIT was established by the Extraordinary General Chapter of 1999, celebrated in Ariccia (RM) in the context of the celebration of the 8th centenary of the approval of the Rule and the 4th centenary of the Reformation. This decision is, moreover, the mature fruit of the synodal journey that the Trinitarian Family has made especially through the Intertrinitarian Assemblies of Majadahonda in 1986, Paris in 1993 and Ariccia in 1999. But its deep roots are found in the impulse given by the Second Vatican Council to religious life and it represents a mature fruit of that renewal called for by the Council, which is authentic when it leads us to grow in fidelity to the original inspiration of our religious family.

Its aims are well described by its own statutes: “In a world where many people suffer persecution or discrimination because of their faith in Christ, Trinitarians wish to welcome their yearnings for liberation and to listen to their cries for hope, rendering a service of mercy”¹.

John Paul II approved this important initiative and underscored its value in these words:

In the light of this heroic witness, you want to prepare concrete projects with which to introduce yourselves into the new millennium. In particular, you have thought of establishing an international body of the Trinitarian Family, through which you would be able to intervene more effectively in defense of those persecuted or discriminated against because of their religious faith and fidelity to Gospel values or their conscience. You gave the new body the name “International Trinitarian Solidarity,” intending to involve the entire Family in service to so

¹ INTERNATIONAL TRINITARIAN SOLIDARITY, *Proper Statutes*, n. 1.

many suffering and unfortunate people, who in their misery sigh toward an 'epiphany' of Christ the Redeemer"².

The establishment of the SIT aroused great enthusiasm throughout the Trinitarian Family, which took the form of numerous initiatives of awareness and solidarity.

In these twenty-five years, thanks to the great work coordinated by successive presidents, this body has grown considerably both in the involvement of every expression of the Trinitarian Family and in collaboration with various bodies, religious congregations, and dioceses.

Reviewing the journey of these twenty-five years, we can see with joy that sensitivity and dedication to persecuted Christians has grown considerably.

I would also like to highlight two important initiatives promoted by SIT in these years: the establishment of the Week of Prayer for Persecuted Christians from October 17 to 23 each year, approved by the 2016 General Congregation; and the recovery of the figure of the Procurator of Redemption in our Constitutions.

The week of prayer for persecuted Christians, represents a moment of communion of the whole Trinitarian Family in prayer and solidarity. Moreover, this beautiful initiative also sees the growing involvement of parishes not entrusted to us and some Dioceses.

The willingness to include the figure of the Procurator of the Redemption in our Constitutions, recognizing his right to participate in the most important moments of the Order's assemblies, is of great importance, because it ensures at the highest levels of our Order's life the attention to persecuted Christians.

As already announced in the last Message to the Trinitarian Family (May 12, 2024), the next General Chapter of 2025 will have persecuted Christians and religious freedom as its theme.

2. OUR PRESENT COMMITMENT

This body, "which defends religious freedom not theoretically, but by caring for people persecuted and imprisoned because of their faith"³, coordinates all activities directed toward persecuted Christians. Its areas of commitment are three-fold: prayer, outreach, and humanitarian aid. Its network extends to 30 countries around the world where the Trinitarian Family is present, supporting various projects in countries with high levels of persecution such as India, Syria Iraq, Ni-

² JOHN PAUL II, *Address to participants at the International Assembly of the Trinitarian Family*, August 26, 1999.

³ FRANCIS, *Address to participants at the "International Trinitarian Solidarity" Conference*, April 25, 2022.

geria, both where Trinitarian men and women religious work directly and in collaboration with other religious institutions, such as dioceses, religious congregations, apostolic nunciatures. The different projects include: provision of basic necessities, schooling, reconstruction of homes destroyed by terrorists, liberation of imprisoned Christians, reception of refugees, promotion of women victims of persecution, spiritual assistance to Christians living in countries where religious freedom is totally absent. In the field of awareness-raising, international conferences on religious freedom and the situation of Christians in particular areas of the world are organized through direct testimonies; training courses for lay and religious people on religious freedom and interreligious dialogue are also offered. Through the media, SIT informs about the most recent cases of religious persecution.

The SIT promotes the dissemination of prayer aids (Stations of the Cross, rosary, prayer vigils) and the Prayer Week Animation Grant for Persecuted Christians. Our current presence in countries where Christians are a religious minority is also deeply connected to this journey.



As we can happily see, all these initiatives, grow communion within the Trinitarian Family and collaboration between different fields of apostolate in the various pastoral, educational and social spheres. All forms of apostolate can feel involved in this common mission. In addition, SIT ensures greater recognition of the relevance of our charism by religious institutions, such as dioceses and Apostolic Nunciatures. Not infrequently diocesan bishops and apostolic nuncios from areas of high intensity of persecution turn to us for support and help. Our charismatic mission is increasingly seen as a valuable service to the universal Church, especially where she is wounded by the madness of violence and religious persecution.

3. FUTURE PROSPECTS

Fortified by this relatively short but particularly intense journey, we can already glimpse and prepare the future of our charismatic action on behalf of persecuted Christians. As Father Bruno Secondin stated, “we are called to inhabit horizons, to explore paths, not just to recycle or to survive. Those who do not anticipate the future will find no place in the future.”

The final document of the Intertrinitarian Assembly offers us important directions for walking together in service to those who suffer because of their faith.

Certainly the next General Chapter will offer us guidelines and directions for the future. In my Message to the Trinitarian Family (May 12, 2024), I have already outlined some areas that require greater commitment on our part, such as formation in interreligious dialogue and the promotion of religious freedom. What we can do in the meantime is to intensify our efforts to publicize both situations of persecution and the projects and activities carried out by the Trinitarian Family to support our brothers and sisters in the faith who are suffering. We have several tools at our disposal and not a little first-hand information and documents that are invaluable for our outreach, prayer and solidarity activities.

Where there is freedom, and in particular religious freedom, peace is guarded and the good of peoples is promoted. In this dramatic hour of human history, marked by numerous conflicts and religious persecutions, may our commitment and the Trinitarian charism be a seed of fraternity and peace for the whole world.

Rome, June 2, 2024

Solemnity of Corpus Christi

Fr. Luigi Buccarello O.SS.T.

Minister General