

Introduction

A book lies within the life-story of a man, and no book expresses his life totally. This is even more true for the multifaceted history of a group of people dedicated to the Mission. The narrated story is always incomplete, because it brings together only the life that is attested by documents, to which actual life can never be entirely reduced. This book is aware of this as well as other limitations, which are the result of the author's inability and of the fact that the story told is still in motion, tending toward future goals.

It is therefore not intended as "the history" of the Consolata Missionaries in Kenya, but rather as a glimpse of it. It is an attempt to present the birth and early evolution of the Churches of Nyeri, Meru and Marsabit under the guidance of the Missionary Bishops of the Consolata and the establishment of the "Kenya Region" in the wake of the unfolding events and changing circumstances.

In Kenya, we find the roots of the missionary identity of the Institute of the Consolata where they are spread out in depth. This book's objective is to trace some of these roots through the work of the missionaries who have given birth to new Churches.

Whoever – through criticism, clarifications, and further research – would bring to light other such roots, apart from providing a service to the truth, would be enriching this research and making it less inadequate. Already now, such a person receives my sincere thanks.

The access to the documentation entrusted to the archives by the protagonists of this book has determined its present form, which differs from the original project.

Initially, the General Office of Formation and Studies had asked for a more rapid presentation of the presence and the activities carried out by the Consolata Missionaries in Kenya and in three other circumscriptions, with the aim of drawing up a profile of their history to be placed in the hands of the IMC students. At the same time, the General Office for Pastoral Care had also begun to compile a historical-geographical atlas of the missions of the Institute. The progressive exploration of the sources diverted the work plan towards a broader development. The content of this book would need to be integrated with other works in order to draw an exhaustive picture of the service carried out by the Missionaries of the Consolata.

The widening scope of the research on Kenya explains the postponement of a similar presentation of the work carried out in other countries. In any ca-

se, the author was deeply touched and emotionally drawn towards the fragility and heroism demonstrated in the mission by ordinary people, who were yet capable of great things.

The author intends to express his profound gratitude to the missionaries who are the protagonists of this book and to those who are not mentioned in it, even though they were the first to till the field entrusted to the Institute.

I warmly thank all those who have helped me over the years: Fr. Giuseppe Inverardi who believed in this work more than I did; Fr. Candido Bona who revised it, in good part, with observations of his own; Fr. Pietro Baudena and Fr. Pietro Trabucco, for having revised some sections; Fr. Gottardo Pasqualetti, who improved it competently and did not only provide me with corrections; Fr. Corrado Rosci, who facilitated the consultation of the Roman archives, and all those who have worked to ensure that the book was the least incomplete possible. I also thank Miss Rosanna Cruciani for her diligent and generous collaboration, Fathers Mario Biestra and Cesare Giulio to whom we owe the maps of this volume.

For the English edition of this work, I am indebted to various people. My profound thanks are due to Dr Peter Munga who has financed its publication and to Fr. Stephen Okello who introduced me and my work to him. I would like to place on record the assistance of Mrs. Gemma Debono for her keen and patient revision of the entire text. My sincere thanks are due also to Fr. Luís Ribeiro Gomes Tomás and his collaborators who provided the final touches from a linguistic point of view. Mrs. Carmen Sceppacerca's service was invaluable in controlling and doublechecking the archival material used in, and referred to, in this volume. My thanks are due also to Prof. Gaetano Sabetta for all the technical help he has so generously tendered in preparing the digital copy of the work used for printing. My thanks go in a very special way to Prof. Benedict Kanakappally without whose interest, encouragement, and assistance the English version of this work would have perhaps not gone into print. With utmost patience, he has gone through the entire text to ensure the accuracy of the English translation with respect to the Italian original and has contributed considerably to refining the final product. Even with a two-decade long friendship between us, as colleagues at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, no thanks can be deemed too much for Prof. Kanakappally's service.

For me, this work is intimately associated with the memory of my Mother who even on her deathbed was concerned about its progress.