

The Teresian Association, a new path for the laity

On detecting the de-christianizing of culture and of education in his own time, Poveda understands the responsibility of all believers in this matter.

He is aware of the need for training well-formed professionals, ready to be present in the structures of society.

His idea, strong and daring, is for true Christians to become like yeast in the dough. The old and new idea of a spirituality lived in the midst of the world, as the first Christians, inspires the start of the Teresian Association in the year 1911.

Poveda has confidence in young people and in the women who initiate their access to the University. Thus, he opens his first Academy for the students in Oviedo with a handful of young educators. These, externally, are like many other professionals but their style and inspiration stem from the mystery of the God made man:

"In Jesus, under the appearance of just a man, God is present. Likewise, in you, under an ordinary appearance, must dwell the spirit of God".

With this same spirit he establishes other academies: Linares in 1912 and Jaén in 1913. The same characteristics apply to the first University Residence for women in the nation, opened in Madrid in 1914.

"More than ever called to be holy. Solid virtues to be gained even at the cost of life. Without the apparatus that hinders the progress of the Work: the life of the Teresian Association".

Perhaps the apparent paradox of these words of Blessed Pedro Poveda is the key element for the understanding of the charisma that sustains the Teresian Association founded by him.

To opt for holiness, to respond to God who wants us holy: What is so new about it? The fact that the Founder of the Teresian Association was speaking, half a century before Vatican II, to groups of lay people who were investing their lives in evangelization and in human development by means of education and culture.

It was new then, in the year 1911, to see ordinary lay people committed to the call to true holiness not only as individuals but also as an organized body.

Two things could become an obstacle to the intent of the Founder: That the demands of evangelization might tint the secular character of the members. Or that the engagement of the members in the temporal order could tarnish their zest for holiness.

"The work of evangelization we intend to do must be identical to that started by the first Christians, and the means are to be the same they used" (1920)

This is what gave way in 1911 to the Teresian Association. It was a Work for our times, approved as a civic organization in Jaén and recognized among the diocesan associations of the local church in 1917. In 1924 it received Vatican approval as a Pious Union. In the new Canon Law it is today an International Association of Christian Faithful, of Pontifical Right.

Its 3,500 members, inscribed in different associations under the same name, are governed by one and the same statute. All live the same mission and spirituality and carry out an evangelizing task through their witness in family life and in the exercise of their profession in the world of culture and education.