

COMMISSION
for the
ORIGINAL CONSTITUTIONS
of the
FOUNDER

From October 2 – 12, 2003, a Capitular Commission gathered at Waltham MA. Its purpose was 'to study the *Constitutions* of the Founder in a scientific manner, as the prime Document upon which Fr. Bertoni wished to form his Institute [**General Deliberation, 9**]. The following members took part in this meeting:

Fr. Anthony Piccirillo, Vicar General;
Fr. Gianpietro DePaoli, from the Sacred Heart Province;
Fr. Joseph Henchey, from the Province of the Holy Spouses;
Fr. Albert Francis Mariani, from Holy Cross Province;
Fr. Bruno Facciotti, from the Province of St. Mary of Hope.

Each of the members was called upon to present to the group the work he had prepared in writing, the subject-matter being in accord with what had been previously agreed to among them:

Fr. Gp Depaoli: presented a two-fold study:

1.] 'Mission', Popular Missions, Apostolic Missionary
2.] Apostolic Missionaries for the assistance of Bishops. The plan of St. Gaspar Bertoni as understood by his sons.

Fr. B. Facciotti: presented a synopsis of the various texts, preliminary drafts, of the *Original Constitutions* drawn up by St. Gaspar Bertoni. [This work remains incomplete].

Fr. J. Henchey: 'St. Gaspar Bertoni and his *Original Constitutions*: A Study of the Sources and Content.

Fr. A. F. Mariani: A Historical-Scientific Research Project: On the Interpretation of the End" and the "Manner" of the Founder's *Constitutions* [**Deliberation 9**].

The invitation of the Council of Superiors [Sezano, September 2002], asked the Commission 'to make every effort to bring out more that which unites the members of our Congregation, rather than to maintain personal opinions which divide us, and to present the results of their research in a language understandable to all the Confreres.' The Commission members, through a fraternal dialogue and loyal exchange of views, have gathered here the essential points of their agreement, for a reading of the *Original Constitutions*. There follows here their agreement on a synthesis as well as a few proposals.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT

1. The **Apostolic Mission** is, as it was for the Apostles, a participation in the Mission of Christ; for every person and for every Institute, this constitutes a mandate of unique originality.

2. The translation made by Fr. Bertoni regarding the practical insertion into this Apostolic Mission is provided by the **figure of the Apostolic Missionary**, in his being conformed to Christ and to His Mission.

3. The *portrait* of the Apostolic Missionary is progressively depicted in Fr. Bertoni through a **series of spiritual, mystical and apostolic experiences** culminating in the Mission at St. Firmus. However, this had already begun during his years as a seminarian, 'in wishing to lead a religious life', in teaching catechism to the children, his dedication to the Marian Oratories, his work at St. Sebastian's, in the 'model, or the symbol', that the Lord showed him, in the translation of the relics of St. Gualfardo, in his commitment to the spiritual direction of the Sisters in the Convent at St. Joseph's, in his experience noted in his Diary, 'Look at This, My heart', in his meetings with other priests, and his Retreats for them, his cooperation in the formation of seminarians, and in his dedication to the schools at the Stimate.

4. The originality of the *figure* of the Missionary in Fr. Bertoni's Plan is given in the coming together of the two elements of CF 1: **Apostolic** and ***in obsequium Episcoporum***.

In the word **Apostolic** here reference is being made to the commitment of the Apostolic Missionaries in an organic activity of evangelization [in support of the ordinary pastoral activity], according to the demands of times and places. This commitment is characterized in the words ***in obsequium Episcoporum***, which expresses communion and the apostolic service to the Bishops.

5. The **Modality** [*modus* : CF 2] – Fr. Bertoni found the modalities of the ecclesial service for the Apostolic Missionary in the Decree he received from the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith and he offers these for the reflection of all of his sons:

*The Manner: under the direction and dependence of the ordinaries of the places where it will their task to give Missions. To these Ordinaries, the men must obey in all that pertains to the exercise of the **Apostolic Mission**, in receiving from them the permission, with the necessary faculties, and always observing their dispositions regarding the place and the time for exercising that ministry. [From the Decree of Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith. December 20, 1817].*

6. The *munus apostolicum* [= the apostolic service]. The plan of Fr. Bertoni opens up into a vast ministerial horizon: the celebration of the sacraments [CF 162]; service to the Christian Community, contained in the formula *Verbi Dei quodcumque ministerium* [CF 164], and the Christian formation of the youth [165-166]. Fr. Bertoni, at the same time, in order to guard the missionary dimension of the *Euntes Docete* [cf. Mt 28:19], 'does not admit of the ordinary care of souls' [CF 290]

A ministry translates the ideal of the Apostolic Missionary of Fr. Bertoni the more it is inserted into the dynamic ecclesial plan of evangelization, and/or of re-evangelization [diocesan or national projects pertaining to the Christian communities, the Clergy, religious institutes and youth groups].

7. **St. Gaspar Bertoni**, formed in the Ignatian spirituality from the time he was a young seminarian, under the direction of Fr. Galvani, cultivated a profound love and zeal for the Church. He was given the title 'Apostolic Missionary' through the Popular Mission in which he participated at St. Firmus. He was likewise a missionary to the youth, a guide and director for the clergy, a convinced supporter of the need of the renewal of the Christian community. Imbued with the Word of the Lord, he prophetically noted the need of responses that would be more adequate to the needs of the times: he fathomed the more deeply with his friends from the clergy the study of the theology of St. Thomas and the Moral of St. Alphonsus. And in a series of intensifying mystical and apostolic experiences, that Plan for a Congregation of Apostolic Missionaries matured. Fr. Bertoni remains the 'living rule' for all his sons; in his *Constitutions*, his missionary spirit is transparent as there is the oft-repeated demand for a spiritual and doctrinal perfection, toward which it is required for each to tend in an incessant way.

8. The *obsequium Episcoporum* is, in the first place, a service and communion with the Bishop, an expression of ecclesial availability and confident abandonment to God. There is also further contained here the commitment to a preparation that would be lived to the greatest extent possible, asking each confrere to tend to the perfection of his ministry, that is called to mind in the formula, 'Apostolic Missionary.'

9. The Congregation, **in its history**, was not always able to give evidence with equal fullness the richness of Fr. Bertoni's original project. This was due to a variety of factors: sometimes the social, cultural and religious context; or, due to the limited resources available. At some times, the Congregation was more greatly expressed in commitment to schools and to the Christian education of the youth; at other times, in the Holy Parish Missions; and at times to formation of the Clergy and work in seminaries; at times, too, in the ordinary care of souls, and to the Missions '*ad gentes*'. However, it is only just to recognize that the Congregation has conserved in its quest and also in suffering, the desire a more faithful translation of its charismatic identity.

PROPOSALS

1. To publish in a kind of pocket edition, by June 2004, the *Constitutions* of the Founder in the various local languages.
2. To publish the *Synopsis* being prepared by Fr. B. Facciotti.
3. To publish before the next General Chapter of 2006, the Founder's *Constitutions* of the Founder [in Latin, the local languages, with notes, references and introductions.
4. To publish a text containing the contributions of the studies, [as these were presented at Waltham] for a better understanding of the *Original Constitutions*.

The Commission submits to the judgment of the Superior General, for an eventual approval, these POINTS OF AGREEMENT and PROPOSALS.

In gratitude to the Holy Spouses for their assistance, our wish is that the work that unfolded here might be useful for the benefit of the entire Congregation.

Waltham, October 11, 2003.