

Section Four

Reflections on the Stigmatine' Founder's First Constitution: *Missionarii Apostolic in Obsequium Episcoporum*

A. Apostolic Missionaries

Introduction:

[1] Fr. Bertoni received the honorary title of "Apostolic Missionary" from the Holy See with a rescript dated December 1817. This was given to him because of Parish Missions preached under the direction of a Monsignor Louis Pacetti in May of 1816. Shortly thereafter, all parish missions were forbidden by government decree, which remained in force all throughout Fr. Bertoni's entire life.

[2] A discussion in the Stigmatine community has existed through the years, and there are two positions regarding the precise meaning of the Stigmatine Apostolic Mission:

[a] One of these would interpret Fr. Bertoni's ideal of Apostolic Mission as restricted primarily to the preaching of Parish Missions, as the central apostolate to which all else would be subordinated. This seems to have been the position of Fr. John Mary Marani, the Stigmatine Founder's first successor as Superior General, and for many years his confessor. However, there are several statements from Fr. Marani which may not be contradictory, but do present some difficulty in interpretation:

(1) A Report of Fr. Marani, dated December 14, 1853. In this report addressed to the civil and religious authorities, Fr. Marani wrote - naturally 'hiding' the real purpose of the Stigmatine community: "... the scope of the Institute of Don Bertoni is that of assisting the Bishop in his needs, and therefore, also the Pastors, in their necessities and needs. Fr. Bertoni was most responsive to them..."¹. In this statement Fr. Marani does not specify what these ministries are.

[2] In a later document, called a *Compendium*, written some six months later, there is a different presentation of the Stigmatine Apostolic Mission - for some conferees, to be understood that since Fr. Marani was writing to Church authorities, he could pull out all the stops, as it were, and relay the "true" physiognomy of the Community. Fr. Marani wrote:

The members of this Community are called Apostolic Missionaries for the assistance [**obsequium**], i.e., the help [**auxilium**] of the Bishops, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph her Spouse ... This Society proposes for itself the purpose of assisting [**obsequi**], i.e., helping [**auxiliari**] the Bishops in those areas in which they need help on account of the changing times and changing circumstances... The principal areas in which the Sodality offers its help [**auxilium**] are, **in addition to the [parish] missions**, the following...[there is found here a lengthy list of apostolic services]..."²

There are some distinct additions here: a preference for the word **auxilium** over the Founder's preferred **obsequium** - and the addition of the **praeter missiones** - meaning that the central ministry of the Stigmatine Community would principally be the Parish Missions, and then

¹ cf. CS II, pp. 142, ff.

² cf. CS II, pp. 155, ff.

everything else. Fr. Marani repeated this in a no-published document dated December 21, 1853: "... the schools are only accessory to the established goal of Fr. Bertoni..."

This insistence on Parish Missions then became repeated fairly often during Fr. Marani's administration which lasted from 1853-1871, when he died. A good example of this would be the short work Fr. Marani wrote to give a resume' of the Community, with the purpose in mind of obtaining Church approval. this work was entitled ***Cenni intorno alla Congregazione***, dated September 30, 1855:

... The Community is not limited to this, or to that type of occupations, or to restricted cases, or matters. Rather, it is meant to serve God in all those areas and in every good work, for the assistance of souls. For this, the Congregation desires to have men ready and prepared, among those who have embraced this manner of living. It is, however, proper to this new congregation that, in addition to occupying itself in the Sacred Parish Missions, that it should teach ... [and then once again there follows a long list of other apostolic activities] ³.

In accord with this idea, the Constitutions of the Founder would be read accordingly. [In another study of this series, ***Fr. Gaspar Bertoni 's Original Constitutions and Fr. Francis Suarez, SJ, De Religione Societatis Iesu*** - it is most evident that the vast majority of these constitutions are copied verbatim particularly in all those sections dealing with the "end", "scope", "Missions" of the Community. [CF # 162, for example, speaks of prayers for the "Missions" - taken word for word from Fr. Suarez, which embodies St. Ignatius' idea of Jesuits praying for their own Apostolic Mission] - and this is interpreted by some confreres to mean "Parish Missions." However, if this position is true - there is hardly any other specific mention of Parish Missions in the Original Constitutions of St. Gaspar Bertoni - whereas he does dedicate a number of Constitutions to the instruction of youth, to the teaching of Catechism, the guidance of seminarians. At any rate, even those familiar with the Stigmatine spirit for years have thought - and still do - that the "Apostolic Missionary" - either originally in the Founder's intentions - or, by force of circumstances, has shifted. For many, the original idea was much broader than Parish Missions.

[b] The second interpretation: and the one better known to most confreres up to the present time, is that "Mission" in Fr. Bertoni's mind, means something more broad. Several General Chapters have looked at it as ***quodcumque Dei verbum ministerium, 'any ministry of the Word of God whatsoever***. . Arguments for this would be, for example - a few years after Fr. Marani's death, a unanimous House Council at the Stimato sent in a petition to the General Chapter, asking that the schools of the Stimato be reopened - and the first reason given was: because *schools correspond to **one of the principal ends of our Congregation, which was born, and became loved, through teaching.***

This document was dated February 24, 1874, less than three years after the death of Fr. Marani - and a good sixteen years before the General Chapter of 1890, when the schools were considered ***an end equal to that of parish missions***.

Furthermore, it is significant that our Founder has not left any description of the Parish Missions, how they should be conducted, what preparation for them, and the like - in such sharp contrast to St. Alphonus and St. Paul of the Cross. Their congregations have among their principal works the preaching of Parish Missions - and, as would be expected, a good part of their original Constitutions is dedicated to the particular manner of conducting them.

...

³ cf. CS II, p. 177.

1. **Fr. Bertoni's Own Words:**

a. There is much evidence that the Stigmatine Founder was deeply influenced by St. Ignatius of Loyola and his sense of "Apostolic Mission":

Introduction to the Retreat: In a visit with a few companions to the altar of St. Ignatius, I experienced much devotion and recollection, great interior sweetness, some tears, even though the visit was brief. It seems as though the Saint was welcoming us, and invited us to promote the greater glory of God, like he did, and by the same ways,, even though not all those means that he was able to employ...⁴

In a letter to Mother Naudet, Fr. Bertoni wrote:

Fr. Galvani is totally Ignatian. He has offered me the Stimate as an opportune place to establish a Congregation of Priests who would live under the Rule of St. Ignatius...⁵

c. In a document that has come down to us under a descriptive title in the Stigmatine Founder's own handwriting, ***Autografo del Fondatore***, the Stigmatine Founder offers this general presentation of the basic Stigmatine purpose, without any specification of ministries:

[1] The purpose of this Union, or Congregation of Priests is to serve God, our Lord, and His Church gratuitously, in so far as any expectation of earthly reward is concerned.

[2] In all ministry on behalf of souls to abide strictly by the direction of the bishop, and to obtain from him the general faculties and permissions.

[3] To be ready to answer any call of the bishops to preach, to hear confessions, to give instructions, whether in the city, or in the country, or in any place of the diocese, in the seminary, or to the laity.

[4] In order to do this with greater dispatch, it is necessary to be free from the particular and perpetual care of souls in parishes or fixed places, especially where it may entail the obligation of residence to which an ecclesiastical dignity is attached.

[5] For the attainment of this end, each one is to attend seriously to the perfection proper to our state.

[6] Furthermore, all are called to apply themselves earnestly to the acquisition of all the ecclesiastical sciences, especially moral theology.

One of the great "principles" of Fr. Bertoni is the two-fold increase: growth in spirituality, and development of intellectual competence, to serve the varying and changing needs of the bishops, **'anywhere in the diocese or the world.'**

d. In his Original Constitutions, there is one rule that seems to go to great lengths to describe the multiple and varied services to which the Stigmatine Congregation is called to dedicate itself in the assistance of Bishops - a rule almost totally taken *verbatim* from Suarez' Commentary on the Constitutions of St. Ignatius:

The scope of this community is to offer service [***obsequium praestare***] to the Church, under the direction of the Bishops, through the various and proper tasks of its

⁴ cf. MP, September 15, 1808.

⁵ cf. Letter 54, August 17, 1816.

vocation. This is at times a very difficult thing. Should it seem to be exposed to dangers when this lofty ideal is compared to human frailty, nonetheless this proposal of our devotion is not imprudent or temerarious - and for these reasons:

first, because this vocation is entrusted not to human strength, but is left up to the grace of the Holy Spirit to be carried out: 'He who has begun and inspired this work, He Himself will carry it to perfection' - if He is not hindered by us. For this is the special grace of this vocation, and it is superior to all dangers and difficulties.

secondly, by this goal that we have, we do not propose to expose ourselves to dangers, nor ever to go to one place rather than to some other one. We propose to follow the direction of the Bishop whom the Holy Spirit has placed to rule the Church of God. This is a cautious means to employ, to keep from erring in the ways of God. It is in the providence of religion that takes over, both in disposing and preparing members, as well as in choosing them, confirming and supporting them in all hope" [CF # 185].

2. In Fr. Bertoni's actions: In his broad vision, the charism of the Stigmatine Founder has room for the talents and good will of those who really desire to serve the Church through the Bishops. The following are just a few examples taken from our early history:

a. Fr. Modesto Cainer: perhaps because of a total lack of self-confidence, and also because of enormous personal difficulty, Fr. Cainer experienced in various phases of the priestly ministry, he never felt up to accepting the office of a regular school teacher, or confessor. And the Stigmatine Founder never forced him to do so, and was content in asking him to fill in once in a while as a substitute teacher...⁶.

b. Fr. Michaelangelo Gramago: we have this extraordinary description of him:

...The dread of public speaking actually took his breath away, and this happened each time the Founder asked him to teach catechism at the Most Blessed Trinity Parish - the excessive hardship that this caused him really made him sick. Fr. Bertoni was most pleased with his heroic efforts to obey; however, he never again forced this hardship on him..."⁷.

c. Fr. Louis Bragato: a real indication for many interpreters of the extent of the Stigmatine Founder's ***obsequium Episcoporum*** was his willingness and decision to sacrifice his better man for the needs of the bishop, the Church, over the particular needs of the Stigmatine Congregation. A good example of this happened in July 1835. The Bishop of Verona had been asked to obtain an Italian speaking Court Chaplain for the Royal House of Hapsburg, in Vienna. Fr. Bertoni responded by offering Fr. Louis Bragato, his close friend and confidant. The incident is noted in the hold House Chronicle:

...Since it is the will of God, manifested through our most zealous Bishop, that our brother, Fr. Bragato, be taken from us, and leave for assignment in Vienna. Tomorrow, July 6, 1835, he will leave on the express. We will all pray for him so that God might indeed bless the work that he is going to undertake. 'Hallowed be Thy Name!' Thy Will be done!

A few months later, Fr. Bertoni wrote to Fr. Bragato:

... your person, which was the dearest and most useful that we have...⁸.

⁶ cf. *Memorie intorno ai Padri e Fratelli*, 1866, p. 47.

⁷ cf. *Memorie intorno ai Padri e Fratelli*, p. 53

⁸ cf. *Epistolario*, p. 311.

There is no doubt that in the struggling community of the Stimata at that time, the absence of such a valid collaborator, must have left a deep hole⁹

d. Fr. Matthew Farinati: In 1817, the Vicar General of the Diocese, Monsignor Dionisi, asked Fr. Gaspar to send one of his priests to assist those with typhoid fever in the public prisons. Fr. Bertoni accepted this invitation, and among all who had volunteered for it, he assigned Fr. Farinati. Father went most willingly to carry out this ministry of charity. However, from this work in the prison compound, Fr. Farinati contracted an illness which led him to an early grave. Fr. Bertoni always envied the lot of Fr. Farinati, who was called to sacrifice his life in the exercise of his ministry, and to die a martyr of charity¹⁰.

3. Some of the 'Varied and Proper' Ministries of Fr. Bertoni's Own Life: these were either conducted by him personally, or authorized by him for the early Stigmatine community:

a. 1800-1816:

Assistant in his home Parish of St. Paul's in the 'Campo Marzio' section of Verona:

- 1.] Indefatigable studies¹¹;
- 2.] Preacher, confessor, catechist¹²;
- 3.] The "Missionary to the Youth" - the Apostle of Youth. The Oratories. Retreats at the seminary for priests and seminarians¹³;
- 4.] Spiritual Director at the Convent of Blessed de Canossa. Bishop's consultant for theological matters.

Assistant in the Parish of St. Firmus 'Major'

- 1.] Spiritual Director of the local clergy¹⁴;
- 2.] Leader of theological discussions for priests¹⁵;
- 3.] Varied Ministry in the Diocesan Seminary¹⁶;
- 4.] Hospitals and Prisons¹⁷;
- 5.] The Parish Mission at St. Firmus' [May 4-26, 1816]¹⁸.

b. The Stimata: 1816 - until the closing of the Schools

- 1.] Teaching school - November 1816¹⁹;
- 2.] Marian Oratories²⁰;
- 4.] Confessor and Spiritual Direction of priests and religious²¹;
- 5.] Other varied apostolates:
 - a.] Ministry of the Word - to various groups, but especially to Priests and Seminarians; Novenas, Octaves, Tridua, Spiritual exercises,

⁹ cf. Nello, *Modello di Sant'Abbandono*, p. 174.

¹⁰ cf. *Breve Cronaca*, II, pp. 27, ff.; Nello, pp. 173, f.

¹¹ cf. Stofella, *Life* pp. 48, ff.

¹² cf. ib., pp. 51, ff.; cf. *Pagine di Vita Cristiana*, Sermons from his early priesthood.

¹³ cf. Stofella, pp. 54, ff.

¹⁴ cf. ib., pp. 75, ff, 89.

¹⁵ cf. ib., p. 78.

¹⁶ cf. ib., pp. 79, ff.; 94, ff.

¹⁷ cf. ib., , p. 100.

¹⁸ cf. ib., pp. 115, f.

¹⁹ cf. CS I, p. 414; CS II, p. 25; Ep, p. 238; BC I, p. 66; Stofella, o.c., pp. 136, ff.

²⁰ cf. Stofella, pp. 143, ff.

²¹ cf. ib., pp. 151, ff.

Meditations, examinations of Seminarians' Vocations; assistance to the sick and dying; specialized catechetics.

b.] Ministry of the Press²².

c. After the Closing of the Schools at the Stimite:

- 1.] Spiritual Direction, Confessor ²³;
- 2.] Marian Oratories ²⁴;
- 3.] "...Especially Christian doctrine..." ²⁵;
- 4.] Seminary Professors;
- 5.] Specialized ministry among the priests and seminarians.

4. The Testimony of Fr. John Baptist Lenotti, a Novice of the Founder: Frs. Marani and Bragato came to the Stigmatine Founder as ordained priests - while Fr. Lenotti, his second successor, was trained by him in his Novitiate. Fr. Lenotti has left some important lines on discerning the real intention of Fr. Bertoni for his community. Fr. Lenotti served as Novice Master from about 1855-1865, and during these years he delivered a number of 'Domestic Exhortations' on the Original Constitutions of Fr. Bertoni. Here are a few of his ideas:

... An Apostolic Missionary is a religious - soldier [endowed] with a spirit of sacrifice... of generosity... **Paratus ad omnia** [prepared for all]... we are Missionaries, not only when we are actually engaged in the field of battle, for example: in the pulpits, in the missions, or in the confessional - but also while we are at home...²⁶.

... It is seen clearly that Fr. Bertoni's intention was that of instituting a Congregation, which, just like the Company of Jesus which is in a special way dedicated, oriented toward the service [**ossequio**] and the dispositions of the Roman Pontiff - our Congregation is dedicated and determined in a most special and outstanding manner to the service and assistance [**ossequio**] of the Bishops. However, there is this difference: that while the Professed of the Company of Jesus do make a vow of obedience to the Roman Pontiff, our Professed do not make a vow of obedience to the Bishop. However, they do strive in every way to help him, to assist him obsequiously, as all our members are in a particular way dedicated to him .

... my brothers, it is necessary to learn how to manage well the Divine Word, by study and with holy readings, and to employ it well according to the circumstances: in the confessional, in the prisons, in the pulpit, on the rostrum, from the altars, in giving Missions, Retreats, conducting the oratories, while being engaged in friendly conversations.. ²⁷

We are Missionaries to serve God, our King, Jesus Christ, our Captain - and to serve the Church, our neighbor, by prayer, good example, study, preaching.. ²⁸.

What is the purpose of our Congregation? Therefore, let us strive to carry it out through this mans of private conversations, etc. How much good can we accomplish in this way! By this means of private conversations what enormous good for souls did not St. Francis Xavier accomplish, that **great Apostolic Missionary** ...! ²⁹.

²² cf. ib., pp. 153, ff.

²³ cf. .BC I, p. 67.

²⁴ cf. ib., pp. 67, ff.

²⁵ cf. ib., pp. 69, f.

²⁶ cf. CS III, pp. 404, ff.

²⁷ cf. CS III, pp. 409, ff.

²⁸ cf. CS III, p. 411.

²⁹ cf. CS III, p. 531.

It is interesting to note that St. Francis Xavier was not engaged in Parish Missions and yet merits the title "Apostolic Missionary".

5. The Testimony of Some Contemporaries of Fr. Bertoni, his ecclesiastical superiors with whom his plan was shared, or to whom it had been submitted:

a. Monsignor Belloni, the Vicar of the Cathedral Chapter of Verona :

... they are priests who, by their special ecclesiastical profession, dedicate themselves and spend themselves exclusively for the assistance [*ossequio*] of the Diocesan Ordinary, for the greater glory of God and the good of souls. They do this at any time, and in every area of the sacred ministry, in accord with the needs. They give retreats to the Clergy, or to the people, are dedicated to catechetics in any church where they may be sent, in the explanation of the Gospels, in the various novenas, or octaves, and in the assistance of the sick, or those in prison, for the conversion of the wayward. They give of themselves based on the most healthy principles, showing prudent and tireless zeal ...³⁰

b. Bishop Joseph Grasser to whom Fr. Gaspar confided his whole apostolic dream. On June 18, 1831, Bishop Grasser wrote a letter of recommendation to the Holy Father:

... We testify that Fr. Bertoni is a Priest of holy life, endowed with outstanding doctrine and charity, who has made himself all things for all, especially in the training of Seminarians, in the giving of retreats, spiritual direction, the instruction of the youth in catechism and virtue, and is outstanding for his assistance to the clergy...

c. Bishop Mutti the next Ordinary of the See of San Zeno testified:

...Fr. Gaspar Bertoni's Congregation has no other purpose than that of offering **any kind of spiritual service to the Diocese, in accord with the wishes of his Ordinary...**³¹

d. Bishop Riccabona has left this testimony:

From its beginning, this congregation has never ceased from existing and of showing itself most dedicated to **any ecclesiastical ministry whatsoever** [*qualunque*] to which they might be invited by their Bishop ... they are assiduous in hearing confessions, preaching, in giving missions, and especially in giving retreats to the clergy, in explaining the Catechism, in observing all the Feasts in the Marian Congregations in their two churches, in assisting the dying, those in prison, those condemned to capital punishment; furthermore, they supply in the Seminary as Professors of philosophy and theology ... and they render their services to the great satisfaction of all ...³².

e. Fr. John Perrone, S.J.: this theologian, praised by Cardinal Newman, was one of the Consultors for the old S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. He was assigned the task of reading and evaluating the Stigmatine Founder's Original Constitutions. Among his remarks, he stated the following:

... The end of this Union is to supply Bishops in whose dioceses this Union might be found, with Evangelical workers, who are always prepared for every request of these

³⁰ cf. *Novissima Positio super virtutibus*, Jan. 11, 1966, p. 14.

³¹ cf. *Summarium Additionale*, Doc. XXIII, p. 250; cf. also CS II, p. 149.

³² cf. *Summarium Additionale*, Doc. XXIII, p. 251; cf. also CS II, pp. 151-154.

bishops, in the judgment of their respective superiors, to offer **any ministry whatsoever** that the Bishops might choose to ask them...³³

6. Jesuit Influence: the Apostolic Mission of the Stigmatine Congregation seems to be the same as that of St. Ignatius, keeping in mind the more limited 'means' that the Stigmatine Founder believed he would have at his disposal. A brief look at St. Ignatius' ideal might shed some light on our own:

a. The 'Formula 'of St. Ignatius:

Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, His Spouse, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth, should after a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, poverty and obedience, keep what follows in mind: He is a member of a Society founded chiefly for the purpose to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine - by means of:

- public preaching
- lectures
- and any ministration whatsoever of the word of God;

and further, by means of:

- the Spiritual exercises,
- the education of children and unlettered persons to Christianity,
- and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful, through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments.

Moreover, this Society should show itself no less useful in reconciling the estranged, in holily assisting and serving those who are found in prisons and hospitals, and indeed in performing any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good.

Furthermore, all these works should be carried out altogether free of charge and without accepting any salary for the labor expended in all the aforementioned activities.

b. The entire Part VII of the Jesuit Constitutions is dedicated to the 'Missions' - in this broader Ignatian sense. In this section, there is an important Constitution that serves as a guide-line in the actual discerning which ministry should be chosen with such an open and broad apostolic ministry:

To proceed more successfully in this sending of subjects to one place or another, one should keep the greater service of God and the more universal good before his eyes as the norm to hold oneself on the right course. It seems that in the vineyard of the Lord, which is so extensive, the following procedure of selection ought to be used. When other considerations are equal, that part of the vineyard should be chosen which has the greater need ... consideration should also be given to where the greater fruit ... [to go places] where our indebtedness is the greater ... to do the more universal good, the more it is divine ... for that reason, preference ought to be shown to the aid which is given to the great nations, such as the Indies, to important cities, or to universities which are greatly attended by numerous persons..³⁴

c. The Jesuit *Epitome* 'to the Constitutions describe 'Mission; as follows:

³³ cf. CS II, p. 167.

³⁴ cf. Constitutions SJ, # 622

By 'missions' are meant those apostolic expeditions, undertaken by order of the Supreme Pontiff or, of the Superiors of the Society, for the ever greater glory of God and the assistance of souls.

The 'Missions' are among the principal ministries of the Society; and therefore, all the members ought to be sent on them, and be always ready [*semperque parati*] to travel to different places, and to live life in any part of the world, where the greater service of God [*maius Dei obsequium*] might be hoped.³⁵

...

Summary

[1] As an instrument of Church renewal, the Parish Missions have long served as a privileged means, and may soon reappear as such, as in the life of St. Anthony Mary Claret³⁶. The "Mission" idea came to him through St. Alphonsus Liguori. He, like St. Paul of the Cross, established his community basically for the Parish Mission Apostolate. In his turn, St. Alphonsus did not create the Parish Mission, but this particular form of preaching was very well known in the Naples area ...³⁷ As is known, St. Gaspar Bertoni received the title Apostolic Missionary from the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, December 20, 1817. In his second Constitution [CF 2], Fr. Bertoni quotes at some length from this Decree, in describing the **Modus** of the **Finis** [his first Constitution] for his Congregation: ***Apostolic Missionaries for the Assistance of Bishops.***

[2] St. Ignatius, however, had a broader concept of "Apostolic Mission" - even though the saint never formally defined the term. Nonetheless, the entire Part VII of the Jesuit Constitutions [## 607-654] is dedicated to the Distribution of the Incorporated Members [i.e., the 'Professed'] in Christ's Vineyard and their relations with their Fellow Men. The first two chapters of this Seventh Part are:

Chapter I: Missions from the Holy Father.

Chapter II: The Missions received from the Superior of the Society.

a.] The Stigmatine Founder developed this Seventh Part of St. Ignatius' Constitutions by following a most developed Jesuit Commentary on the Ignatian Rule by the Jesuit Theologian, Fr. Francis Suarez, entitled ***De Religione Societatis Iesu***. For the Stigmatine Founder, St. Ignatius' Part VII is Part IX of the Original Constitutions of the Stigmatines. The reason for the numerical difference is that Fr. Bertoni wrote in as separate "Parts" of his Constitutions some matters that for St. Ignatius were entitled *General Examen and its Declarations* and *Particular Examen*, including ideas such as Admission of Candidates and Formation. Immediately after his explanation of "Mission", the Stigmatine Founder following St. Ignatius, as Part X describes the important Union in the Congregation.

b.] In the Stigmatine Original Constitutions [## 161-163], following Suarez very closely, Fr. Bertoni explains the 'means' by which the Congregation is to work for the salvation of

³⁵ cf. Epitome, # 612.

³⁶ cf. J. M. Lozzano, CMF, *Mystic and Man of Action - St. Anthony Mary Claret - A Study in the Development of His Spiritual Experience and Doctrine.* tr. by J. Davies, CMF, Chicago" Claretian Publications 1977.

³⁷ cf. Lozzano, p. 209; cf. also P. Hitz, CSsR, *To preach the Gospel.* New York: Sheed & Ward 1963, pp. 107-110.

humanity. In this section are explained ***the various and proper ministries*** of the Stigmatine vocation [cf. CF # 185].

c.] Like St. Ignatius, Fr. Bertoni has a very broad concept of ***the ministry of the Word of God***. For example, he states:

Furthermore, the principal end of our Congregation is the conversion of souls; an end which in good part the Congregation intends to achieve through conversation with its neighbors, by speaking to them with gentleness and discretion about spiritual matters. Hence, the religious confreres are to draw much profit from the conversations they have among themselves - most often, these should be about the things of God [CF #255]

These "Private Conversations" were thought of by St. Ignatius as one of the privileged means for continuing the good effects of preaching. It was a means much employed in the early Stigmatine community.. The Stigmatine Founder thought also that regular letters among the confreres assisted the bond of unity in that charity can be attained in living the sublime ideal of a united plurality, each with a different area of appreciation, dispersed anywhere in the diocese and the world. Fr. Bertoni himself was a great letter write.

d.] One of the basic Stigmatine Apostolates is that of serving the Church in the Ministry of Reconciliation. Therefore, the Ministry of the Word of God was admirably exercised here, in being a 'friend' to the penitent:

First of all, to carry out completely the office of Confessor, often it is necessary to treat familiarly with the penitents, even outside of Confession: either for their instruction, or their Spiritual comfort - as also to keep them in the practice of frequent Confession and in living a good life... [cf. CF # 227].

3. Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical, ***Evangelii Nuntiandi***, [December 8, 1975] highly praises this form of evangelization: the Holy Father stated that along side the proclamation of the Gospel made in the usual manner, this other form of transmission of the Word, person, to person, remains most important.

... The Lord Himself often made us of it - as witness His personal conversations with Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, with the Samaritan woman, with Simon, the Pharisee, and with others - as with the Apostles. In the last analysis, is there any better way of transmitting the Gospel than by sharing with others one's own experience of the faith? It should not happen that with the urgency to announce the Good News through to the masses, this should lead to the neglect of that announcement by which the persona. conscience is reached, deeply moved by a most extraordinary word that one individual receives from another. We cannot praise sufficiently those priests who, through the sacrament of Reconciliation, or through pastoral dialogue, show themselves ready to guide others in the ways of the Gospel, to confirm them in their efforts, to lift them up should they fail, and to assist them always with discernment and availability³⁸.

4. Following the choices made by the General Chapter of 1970, there are three particular areas of the Ministry of the Word evident to our Stigmatine history, that ought to be within the competence of the community. The Congregation of the sacred Stigmata is being called now to serve the Church under 'any ministry of the Word of God, whatsoever; but particularly in these three areas:

- preaching;
- assistance of priests, seminarians and religious;

³⁸ cf. EN # 46

- rw apostolate to the youth ³⁹.

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B. The Apostolic Mission of Preaching

This field of the Sacred Ministry is most evident in the Stigmatine Founder's own life, as well as found in his words:

God raises up in the Church individuals then illumined by the Holy Spirit, or preachers to correct and repair, put to right the scandals, disorders, weaknesses of Prelates...⁴⁰

He saw the preaching vocation as a whole vocation:

We intend to speak here about a vocation vested with special circumstances... this is the vocation of the new ministers, endowed with the new spirit and called by the Holy Spirit, the Innovator and Restorer of all things, to renew and restore His ministry, and through this - the Church. This He will do by abolishing the old human spirit, exciting the new and divine spirit, based on the indefectible rectitude and firmness of the First Rock ⁴¹

On this reading [I Samuel] we say that the actual carrying out of the vocation of the new ministers is rather their cooperation offered to Divine Providence in the reform of His elect - both of the People as well as of the Minister. Their task is to put aside the old spirit, hardened and rebellious against His light. This cooperation flows from the innovation of the divine spirit, which comes through the grace of the Holy Spirit, Creator ...The Spirit sometimes illumines even those outside the faith, as the Book of Job says: 'He smashes great men's power, without inquiry, and sets up others in their places' [Jb 34:24]/ Also, the Book of Wisdom: 'In each generation she passes into holy souls, and makes them friends of God and Prophets' [cf. Ws 7:27]⁴².

These "New Ministers" will be called to assist in the renewal of the Church:

This is the reform that shows how capable these Ministers are, full of gratitude to God for having illumined them. They are most ready for their great fervor, even when they are newly converted, to serve God in great undertakings..

The ideal of the Ministry of the Word is: Not to preach to the pocketbooks, but to the minds; not to the ears, but to the hearts; not to be praised, but to be followed; not to draw attention to themselves, but to draw their listeners to Christ. From this faith, they will not be separated even in death ... they have espoused the truth with the ring of faith. This is the character of these ministers, renewed and reformed by the new Spirit with firmness and constancy. They do not pervert the series of truths, saying that some propositions are true, but leaving others aside, or by suggesting rather doubtful propositions which admit of false explanations... It is so necessary to speak clearly and openly...⁴³.

³⁹ cf. CF ## 163, 164; Commission of the IXth General Chapter, 1887

⁴⁰ cf. Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, Commentary on First Kings - Mss B # 5110.

⁴¹ cf. Fr. Bertoni's Meditations to the Seminarians of Verona, on First Kings - Mss B 11]

⁴² cf. Fr. Bertoni, Meditations on First Kings - Meditation 20. Mss B 703

⁴³ cf. Nello, II-II, pp. 250, ff.

Based on St. Gregory the Great, St. Gaspar Bertoni 's hope was for a band of competent, specialized ministers of the Word, to assist in the necessary renewal, purification of the Church.

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C. The Apostolic Mission to the Clergy, Religious, Seminarians

Fr. Bragato spoke of the years during which Fr. Bertoni came to the Seminary of Verona to preach to the Priests and Seminarians. A part of Fr. Bragato's testimony reads as follows:

... It was used to make such a deep impression on me [during the Retreats preached by Fr. Gaspar in my seminary years] when I would hear of the fruit that the priest was called upon to give by his example: that integrity, seriousness, holiness, that he ought to inspire in all. And this is just what I saw in Fr. Bertoni ⁴⁴.

Fr. Bertoni lived in a period of intense renewal in the Diocese of Verona under a succession of Benedictine Bishops. Fr. Ceresatto wrote about the Stigmatine Founder:

As far as the clergy of Verona is concerned, Fr. Bertoni was called by Providence to be their Apostle ... His preached Meditations and Instructions on First Kings resembled a trumpet call concerning the urgent reform of the priestly spirit ⁴⁵.

Good example, the witness of the priestly and religious life, was the "second purpose" for which Fr. Bertoni established the Community ⁴⁶

D. The Apostolic Mission to the Youth: Oratories and Catechism

Fr. Giacobbe, the Stigmatine Founder's first biographer, stated in the Diocesan Process:

I can recall how Fr. Girardi, Pastor of St. Paul's on a First Communion Day, gave to Fr. Bertoni the responsibility to begin a youth group. From this, Fr. Bertoni began the Marian Oratories which then spread to other Dioceses.

...

Therefore, Fr. Bertoni served as the Apostolic Missionary in the quality of Preaching he offered the diocese in which he was born, lived, died and always loved - with a few outside forays in his life-time. He was likewise the Apostle to the Clergy, Seminarians and Religious and served as the Apostle of Youth. He dreamed for a good part of his life of a truly dedicated, competent, available group of Apostolic Missionaries for the Assistance of Bishops, anywhere in the Diocese or the world.

He expressed this in some of his Prayers:

Grant that we might come to know the spirit of your Spouse, the Church, so that by knowing her, we might love her; by loving her, we might desire her; and by desiring her, we might open our mouths to recommend her, and our hearts ...

⁴⁴ cf. Stofella, *Life of Fr. Bragato*, mss. f. B. - Nello II-II, p. 588.

⁴⁵ cf. Ceresatto, *Life of the Founder*, pp. 172, ff.

⁴⁶ cf. Nello, "The Plan of Renewal of the Priestly Ministry", p. 221.

We adore Your most wise government, and we pray You to have us imitate Your Spouse in being conformed to her in everything, and truly to respond to these words of yours ...: 'Whoever wishes to come after Me, let him take up his Cross...' ⁴⁷.

His spirituality saw a key aspect from the life of Jesus in His personal relationship to His Father:

The correspondence of the elect is manifest with obedience to the Church, diffidence toward oneself, and confidence in Christ, and with working in accord with discipline ⁴⁸.

The sacramentality of God's Will was clearly the needs of the Bishops:

'Take command, God, as befits Your power, that power, God, You have wielded on our behalf' [cf. Ps 67:28] - so that as we receive the mission, from that one font, through the Catholic Bishops, and sharing in the jurisdiction of that one High Priest, and font of all jurisprudence in our Church, we, too, might share in His firmness ⁴⁹.

The Stigmatine Founder nourished a high ideal for a select group of Ministers truly dedicated to the Cause of the Lord:

The Lord separates and distinguishes in His army a division of perfected workers, in the confession of the true faith, and in the exercise of all the virtues ... This will be a division of heroic workers, imitators of the Apostolic Life. So, with this army of exemplaries, united together to come to the help of their neighbor, and to weaken the forces of evil ... ⁵⁰.

The Stigmatine Founder was deeply committed to community life, for the sake of prayer and apostolic preparation. He also saw great strength in united forces that come together:

In preaching and joining with companions and disciples of the same spirit... In this society there should be order; a freedom in all and obedience in all ⁵¹.

In Fr. Bertoni's apostolic dream, the Stigmatines are called to be Missionaries - living the life modeled on the first Apostles - their obsequium to the Bishops flows from Christ's loving obedience to His Father.

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E. *In Obsequium*

This expression, which appears in Vatican II, was very dear to the Stigmatine Founder. Some initial idea of it may be had by looking at the use the recent Council made of it:

... Hearing the Word of God with reverence [obsequium] and proclaiming it confidently..."[cf. DV 1].

⁴⁷ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Mss B 4933; 4693.

⁴⁸ cf. ib., Mss B 4997.

⁴⁹ cf. ib., Mss B 6282.

⁵⁰ cf. ib., Mss B 6585.

⁵¹ cf. ib., ## 6918; 6920.

... The 'obedience of faith' [cf. Rm 16:26; cf. 1:5; 2 Co 10:5] must be given to God Who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission [**obsequium**] of intellect and will to God who reveals, and freely assents to the truth revealed by him...]DV 5].

The consideration of the word, which is most difficult to translate into English, will follow these directions:

- in Sacred Scripture;
- in the Eucharist;
- in St. Ignatius;
- in Fr. Bertoni.

1. Usage in Sacred Scripture: While the contexts in these texts may not help much, perhaps a general idea might be obtained by citing the few texts in which **obsequium** is found:

2 K 5:1, ff.:

Naaman, army commander to the king of Aram, was a man who enjoyed his master's respect and favor, but the man was a leper. Now on their raids the Arameans had carried off from the land of Israel a little girl who had become a servant of Naaman's wife..

The text here is not asking one to become a "little girl" in regard to the Church, unless in the context: 'Unless you become as little children...' However, it is asking the total self-giving of the slave in the interests of the Church - the great model here could be Paul, the 'slave/servant of Jesus Christ.'

Jn 16:2:

They will expel you from the synagogues and indeed the hour is coming when anyone who kills you, will think he is doing a holy duty for God.

The Latin Vulgate translation here is **obsequium** . Again, it is not that **obsequium** is asking for fanaticism - but, all authentic service in the Church indeed is a sacred service. Even in English, 'service' can mean military, social, enforced, free, devotional, etc. The service of the Church in Fr. Bertoni's heart was indeed a holy deference toward God.

Rm 9: 4:

I would willingly be condemned and be cut off from Christ, if it could help my brothers of Israel, my own flesh and blood. They were adopted as sons, they were given the glory and the covenants, and the ritual was drawn for them, and the promises were made for them...

Here the English translation does not assist us much, in that it better reflects the original text and not the Latin translation. However, the ideal of St. Paul in the earlier part of the text does offer an ideal for the Apostolic Missionary.

Rm 15:31:

But, I beg you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Spirit, to help me through the dangers by praying to God for me. Pray that I may escape the unbelievers in Judea, and that the aid I carry to Jerusalem may be accepted by the saints. Then, if God wills, I shall be feeling very happy when I come to enjoy a period of rest among you. May the God of peace be with you all.

Again there is some insight offered to us by the English translation. Paul was convinced that what he was bringing to Jerusalem was indeed worth while. All that is in the Stigmatine Founder's charism would encourage each of the Apostolic Missionaries to the thought that no matter how poor they make one think that the 'gift to Jerusalem' is, that in God's eyes, it is united to Jesus through consecration, and hence, is most worthwhile. Furthermore, there is the characteristic of the early Stigmatine community here, that of sincerely praying for the Mission of one another.

2 Co 10:5:

Our war is not fought with weapons of flesh, yet they are strong enough in God's cause, to demolish fortresses. We demolish sphisstriess and the arrogance that tries to resist the knowledge of God: every thought is our prisoner, captured to be brought into obedience to Christ ...

The great struggle in the Apostolic Mission must be waged in hope. The ultimate reason for the confidence of the Stigmatine Founder was the Resurrected Christ. In his charism, the obedience to the Bishops, he thought of, in faith, as obedience of Jesus Christ to His Father, through the Holy Spirit.

Ph 2> 17, 20::

And then, if my blood has to be shed as part of your own sacrifice and offering - which is your faith - I shall be happy and rejoice with all of you, and you must be just as happy and rejoice with me... It was for Christ's work that [Epaphroditus] came so near to dying, and he risked his life to give me the help that you were not able to give yourselves...

The two-fold use of the term again offers us some insight into our service of Jesus Christ through the Bishops of the world. On the one hand, the ***obsequium episcoporum*** will always be a sacrifice, an offering, an oblation in faith, hope and love. In some senses, the attitude of faith does demand the 'surrender' of the intellect and will, the abandonment of one's entire self to God. It is toward this ideal that we are tending toward the ideal of the Stigmatine Founder.

Secondly, the ***obsequium*** does involve risk - for some it meant the gift of their lives, as in the example of Fr. Matthew Farinati, Fr. Cesare Dolzani, Fr. William Contino: these last two mentioned, II World War casualties - and the many Stigmatines who persevered through to the end in a monotonous, though, necessary, useful apostolic service.

Rm 12:1: this may offer us the most important text in this regard]:

Think of God's mercy, my brothers, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God.

The 'body' here indicates the whole human person in relation to the world. Through the 'body', our whole existence, the 'world' we all are, offers to God a certain 'area' of each of us, individuals, unique personalities, made to the image and likeness of God. This holocaust that each one is invited to offer of himself, is unique. All 'sacrifices' in the Old Law came to be associated with the memorial of ancient Israel something that commemorated a past event, tried to improve a present, and instilled hope for the future. What happens in such an offering is that what was originally liturgical, turns into fervent eschatology. In sharp contrast with the bloody sacrifices of ancient times, this one is more closely united to the Eucharist. This is a living sacrifice, oft-repeated, and gradually becomes more and more identified with that one sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

What was at one time liturgical, in the formalized consideration of that - something reserved for special times and for the sacred confines of the Temple, this becomes extended to the monotony of the routine, of all of our human lives. This broadened idea of 'offertory', 'sacrifice' would replace any restricting mentality that would reserve prayer totally to the Temple. 'Worship' is now joined to life. There really cannot be any divorce between what is celebrated on the altar, and the life that is lived. It might be said more drastically that either the whole of our Stigmatine lives is worship, and that the assemblies we lead, the classes we teach, the sacramental acts we administer, the discourses we deliver, and all the various aspects of the Ministry of the Word of God that we offer - provide inspiration for an ever further response. Otherwise, there might be a real risk of allowing the apostolate to become more self-serving than a genuine oblation, offertory, ***obsequium***. Liturgy alone cannot sustain the Apostolic Mission - even though the Mission certainly will forever need re-charging, nourishment and inspiration. It will be 'confronted' when the Apostolic Missionary truly listens to the word he serves.

Here, in St. Paul, the underlying idea is that the total offering of the Stigmatine life is also 'worship'. What is at stake here is the deeper meaning our Founder had of 'devotion' taken from St. Thomas:

... True devotion consists in the decisive will that is ready to give itself to God, and to be dedicated to those things which pertain to His service⁵².

Veneration takes place 'unspiritually' unless there is conversion of heart, and, in our charism, one that inspires renewed apostolic zeal. Authentic worship will always mean agreement with God's Will, His praise in thought, will and action. Authentic praise of the Stigmatine will mean to accept the cure of each one's own sorrowful Stigmata - a truly Apostolic Missionary life is the response to the message of the Sacred Stigmata.

St. John reminds us:

God is spirit, and those who worship, must worship in spirit and in truth ...[cf. Jn 4:24]

Adoration of this kind is the Eucharistic Liturgy, which can never be considered as just a ceremony offered by a single celebrant. It becomes alive when all truly 'participate' in it by conversion, and the willingness to be distributed. Even ancient Israel was told:

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart, to sing the praises of God, who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light [cf. Ex 19:6; cf. Rv 5].

...

3. The Stigmatine Life and the Eucharist:

In a certain sense, it may be said that the vocation of the entire Church - and hence, of all of us - is Eucharistic. The terminology of the Eucharist is used so often to describe our vocation in particular. One example of this may be found in the Decree of the Council on the Missions:

... Missionaries should fully understand that their life has also been consecrated to the service of the missions ... by means of the ministry of the missionaries - which deal principally with the Eucharist as the source of perfecting the Church, they are in communion with Christ, the Head, and are leading others to this communion ...[AG 39]

⁵² cf. Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, *Pagine di Vita Cristiana*, p. 203.

In PO, the Church teaches her priests that they in turn, are to instruct the faithful to offer to God the Father the divine victim in the sacrifice of the Mass, and to join to it the offering of their own lives. this is also in line with the thought of St. Paul: 'Think of God's mercy, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings - by offering your loving bodies as a holy sacrifice truly leasing to God' [cf. Rm 12:1, f.]

With these principles in mind, we can very well compare our lives and our vocations to the Eucharist we are offering together. We may consider our lives a religious, as an offertory, a consecration, and a communion.

a. Offertory:

In the sacrifice of the Mass, there is the Offertory of very ordinary gifts - - and maybe, at times, gifts that we feel are not all that valuable. But, in the Eucharist, these gifts do not have extraordinary features about them - they are but the gifts of humble worshippers, wanting to share in the one divine sacrifice. By the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the offertory presents are changed profoundly in the consecration. They still look the same, and maybe even feel the same, and they do maintain more or less the same features and blemishes, but whatever their qualities or defects might have been - these are all elevated then to a higher level of existence and purpose. These consecrated gifts then manifest their basic purpose - that of bringing all of God's People together in a united communion.

These characteristics are a fairly good exemplification of our call from God. We all came some years ago to our Congregations, with our ordinary gifts. Maybe, in our own eyes, our gifts might not have been all that wonderful, or seemed very unimpressive - but, God's view of the world and of everyone in it has so often been different from our own. While we do believe, we beg for some share in God's vision of this world and of one another.

Throughout the pages of the OT, the Lord God of heaven and earth spoke of His choice of Israel, and of individuals in the nation. In the words of Isaiah we read:

... I, Yahweh, have called you to serve the cause of right; I have taken you by the hand and formed you... [Is 42:6]

[You] are my servants whom I have chosen, that men may know and believe me and understand that it is I [cf. Is 43:10]..

From that biblical revelation on vocation, we learn that we are all very ordinary gifts, and that this was the story with his special servant revealed to us in II - Is. The Book of Dt also speaks on vocation in this light:

... If Yahweh has set his heart on you, and chosen you; it was not because you outnumbered other peoples: you were the least of all peoples. It was for love of you... [cf. Dt 7:7].

He is just asking us to believe this again this day. Our offertory gift is most precious in His eyes - because each of us is struggling to give back to Him all that we have and all that we are, or could be.

Another description of our offertory gift from the pages of Sacred Scripture is this familiar line:

...Do not be afraid - he tells us - for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. Should you pass through the sea, I will be with you... Should you walk through

fire, you will not be scorched... Because you are precious in my eyes... and I love you ...
[cf. Is 4:1, ff.]

b. Consecration

The lowly and insignificant gifts of ours are then consecrated. The Lord God told Jeremiah, and tells each of us:

...Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you: before you came to birth, I
CONSECRATED you...[cf. Jr 1: 4, f].

No matter how lowly, or insignificant we may still feel, we are His, and He loves us. Much like a desert eagle - who saw Israel and everyone of us here - struggling in our own wilderness, He has picked us up; He has elevated us and He is directing us toward eternal communion with Himself.

There is no real consecration without some suffering - everything that was consecrated was then set aside for the worship of the Lord. Worship and sacrifice were so intimately associated in ancient times that they were almost confused. Sacrifice is an offering - recalled before our very eyes, in the separate consecration of the bread and wine, to show the separation of the body and the blood during the sacrifice on Calvary. Therefore all of our sufferings in some way enter into the concept of our offering: so, we read in the 3rd Cantic of the Suffering Servant:

...The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue. So that I may know how to reply to the
wearyed, he provides me with speech. [cf. Is 50:4]

In this sense, all suffering has an apostolic value - our entire consecration is a two-fold gift: for God, and for humanity.

Again, these Servant Hymns promise us in the words of God Himself:

... My servant will prosper ... he shall be lifted up, and exalted to great heights...{ cf. Is 52:13]

The lowly gifts are never the same again - consecration is much like a New Creation: The hand of God has reached down and elevated the lowly humanity with us all, bringing it ever more close to His image and likeness. After consecrating us to His service, He invites us to make this perpetual and final - it is the Church that asks temporary profession. Before God, we are trying to give the best that we have.

The final result of consecration - when our offertory is complete, and our sacrifice is truly total - we will be generally liberated from all slavery. We have been called to a service of worship, devotion and continuing dedication - and are being asked to make this last as long as our lives do.

c. Communion

Lastly, our Eucharistic vocation of Hope leads us of its nature to Communion. Our consecrated offertory gifts are meant to serve from now on, in a very special manner, to construct, to build a community: we are meant to 'edify' the People of God, from the experience we all derive of God from our daily struggles. One of the greatest of all of God's servants is the unknown figure in the Book of Consolation of Isaiah. This Servant is told - and these words are being likewise addressed to all of us:

... You are My Servant... in whom I shall be glorified.. It is not enough for you to be My servant ..." [cf. Is 49:6].

He is preparing us for the final revelation of Jn 15, where the Servant is truly a friend. Ours is a ministry and a mission of consolation and hope, first to one another, and then to all of God's People.

...

Conclusion

The Eucharist is a Sacrament of Hope and it is the story of our vocation told in symbolic sacramental manner. If we can believe that, can we not at the celebration of the Eucharist - each one of us - begin anew at this "New and Everlasting Covenant", begin all over again?

Can we not make a new offertory procession of the past? Can we believe once more that God truly loves us all, that He will accept our poor offertory gifts? Cannot God Himself consecrate all of the past - remove all the blemishes - and renew all our good points? Cannot this be our offertory - that will be consecrated - elevated from its defects - so that each one of us might be a Sacrament of Hope and Perseverance for whatever it is that might lie ahead of us?

We can ask ourselves this question addressed to another assembly a long time ago:

...And now, Israel, what does Yahweh ask of you? Only this: to fear Yahweh, your God - to follow all His ways, to love Him, to serve Yahweh, your God with ALL your heart, with ALL your soul, and to keep the commandments and laws of Yahweh that for your good I lay down for you TODAY? [cf. Dt 10:12].

The prophet Micah has said it even more simply:

... This is what Yahweh asks of you, only this: to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God [cf. Mi 6:8].

...

3. Obsequium according to St. Ignatius

In the ideal of St. Ignatius, codified in his Constitutions, there is evident a 'mysticism of service'. The Founder of the Jesuits originally wrote the Constitutions in Spanish, and there were eventually translated into Latin by his secretary, Polanco. For the many, many times that Ignatius used the Spanish words *servir / servicio* the translation into Latin used a variety of terms, such as auxilium / auxiliari, obsequium / obsequi . If one were to read the Latin text of Part VII, concerning the Missions of the Roman Pontiff, repeatedly the Latin expressions: *missio, missiones, in obsequium* recur so familiar also in the Stigmatine Founder's writings.

The following are a few examples taken from the Rule of St. Ignatius:

...The Jesuit may be able to proceed with greater spiritual energies toward greater service and glory of the Divine Majesty [*ad maius obsequium*]⁵³.

...Such spiritual coadjutors should also be asked whether, as something characteristic of their vocation, they will be content and at peace, to serve their Creator and Lord in low and humble offices and ministries whatever kind they may be, for the benefit of the house and the Society; and whether they will be ready to spend all the days of their lives in

⁵³ cf. Constitution SJ # 51

those occupations believing that in this they are serving and praising their Creator an Lord, by doing all things for His divine love and reverence⁵⁴.

The Jesuit Constitutions in which **obsequium** is found are very numerous⁵⁵.

However, it is particularly in Part VII of the Jesuit Rule that is of interest to us - especially in the light of the fact that some understand the Stigmatine Apostolic Mission in this light shed by St. Ignatius, with certain adaptations. St. Ignatius' idea of "Apostolic Mission" is an **obsequium**, offered to God, to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit, to the Church, to the Roman Pontiff, to the Jesuit Superiors. The following are a few examples taken from that Part VII:

...The [Jesuits] may be sent in some places or others by the Supreme Vicar of Christ, our Lord, or by the superiors of the Society, who for them are similarly in the place of His Divine Majesty; or, they themselves may choose where and in what work they will labor, when they have been commissioned to travel to any place they judge that the greater service of God [**maius Dei et Domini nostri obsequium**] and the good of souls will follow;... where much fruit of glory and service of God is expected [**ubi magnus divinae gloriae et obsequii**]⁵⁶.

...[some places are] not conducive to the common good of the Society and the greater service of God [**et maius obsequium Dei** ..]⁵⁷.

... the Jesuit is to be sent in the manner that His Holiness judges to be a greater service of God and of the Apostolic See [**ad maius Dei et Sedis Apostolicae fore**]⁵⁸.

... The Supreme Pontiff may leave it to the superior to judge who would be fit for such a mission; the superior, while pondering the greater universal good ... undertaken in the service of God... [**ad Dei obsequium suscepta**...]⁵⁹.

... The Superior will try to help [the Jesuit] by what further counsels he can, that in everything God our Lord and the Apostolic See may be better served...⁶⁰.

... The Superior can also be helpful by some instruction, not only in his own Missions, but also in those of His Holiness, in order to attain better the end which is sought in the service of Christ our Lord [**quod ad Christi Domini nostri obsequium quaeritur**...]⁶¹.

...

There is some small difficulty in the Jesuit structure for those not familiar with St. Ignatius' great gift from God - the Society has two vows of obedience! These are the third and also fourth vows. However, on a closer approach to this Missionary charism, one sees that while it is true that all religious by virtue of the vows of Religion, are subject to the Holy Father in a special way - the Fourth Vow of the Jesuits has as its 'matter' the Apostolic Missions to be assigned by the Holy Father himself. This would include all the spiritual ministries of the Society without exception, which are in conformity with the end, or purpose of the Company, as spelled

⁵⁴ cf. Constitution SJ # 118.

⁵⁵ What follows here is a partial listing from the Jesuit Constitutions: ## 4; 8; 13; 49; 51; 59; 82; 114; 118; 119; 134; 149; 161; 162; 176; 192; 194; 204; 205; 208; 212; 213; 214; etc.

⁵⁶ Constitution SJ # 603.

⁵⁷ cf. ib., # 608.

⁵⁸ cf. ib., # 609.

⁵⁹ cf. ib. # 611.

⁶⁰ cf. ib. # 612.

⁶¹ cf. ib. # 614.

out in the **Formula** and in the remainder of the Constitutions which explain this. This **Formula** is made up of Papal constitutions approving the Company of Jesus.

For the Stigmatines the **Compendium Rude**, the fundamental paragraphs that introduce the Original Constitutions, serve as a kind of **Formula**. Then the rest of the Constitutions serve to spell these paragraphs out in more detail.

...

4. In the Writings of St. Gaspar Bertoni

In his description of the stigmatine charism, the Stigmatine Founder very often uses the word **obsequium**, as has been noted. He uses this word in relation to God, to Christ, the Eucharistic **obsequium**, toward the Word of God, Mary, the Church and authority. The following are a few examples of this:

a. Toward God:

...It is easy to estimate how deep is your love, how great your hunger for the Divine Word, the fervor of your wanting to serve [**ossequio divino**] God - when you must meet head on the very strong attractions of this world ⁶².

...Put before your mind's eye a King, divinely chosen, to whom all the Christian leaders and people owe reverence and service [**ossequio**]...⁶³.

...The third grouping of individuals would be those ready to surrender even the most sincere affection, and equally disposed to retain or give up something - depending on what would be the more convenient for the divine service [**ossequio**] ⁶⁴.

In this divine **ossequio**, Fr. Bertoni found apt expression for his "Holy Abandonment" - he would at times, quote the words of St. Paul on the way to Damascus: Lord, what do YOU want me to do? [cf. Ac 9:6] ⁶⁵.

The word **ossequio** is noted throughout in the Stigmatine Founder's meditation on faith, as did St. Thomas Aquinas in his theological explanations of Faith:

... To believe is an obeisance [**ossequio**] that the intelligent creature offers to its Creator: an obeisance [**ossequio**] that is not stupid, not thoughtless, but one that is most reasonable ... Faith is indeed glorious for the ones whose reason is the most beautiful aspect of nature. This is the oblation that St. Paul speaks of: **rationabile obsequium vestrum** [cf. Rm 12:1]. By believing, one makes a servant of his intellect in regards to the Faith [cf. 2 Co 1:5], but this 'slavery' does not proceed from weakness nor from ignorance. St. John Chrysostom says that such a surrender is a characteristic of one who is indeed generous, and of truly philosophical bent of mind, one that is truly sublime and above the ordinary mentality...⁶⁶.

For students of theology and Vatican II, this **obsequium of the intellect and will**, this 'surrender' is one of the expressions of Vatican I, to describe the workings of grace within an

⁶² St. Gaspar Bertoni, *Pagine di Vita Cristiana* [PVC], Sermon 16, p. 262.

⁶³ St. Gaspar Bertoni, Retreat to Priests and Seminarians: The Reign of Christ - CS I, p. 167.

⁶⁴ cf. id., Mss B # 2538.

⁶⁵ cf. Nello, p. 154.

⁶⁶ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, MSS B 1555.

individual accepting the faith. The act of faith is an 'obedience', an obeisance, an 'abandonment' of one's entire self to God [cf. DV 5].

...to readily follow the impulse of the Holy Spirit; to offer from this moment on your hearts to Jesus Who is asking them of you; to make the firm resolution to serve from now on, for the rest of the days of your life, that God Who merits so much your best service [**ossequio**]⁶⁷.

... It should be said that those who would like to dedicate themselves entirely to the service [**ossequio**] of God, should not only make the offer to accept the fatigue to do so. Their offering should rather be one of ever greater undertakings and activities... Here one sees at least the rough outlines of what went on in Christ and in His Apostles; and right now there is more need than ever for something like this...⁶⁸.

b. Toward Jesus Christ

Fr. Bertoni presents the Sorrowful Wounds of Jesus Christ as an incentive for his listeners to offer their **obsequium** to Him:

... This is how the Just Man dies, in a most torturous manner, condemned by the most unjust sentence after a most terrible betrayal. This is how the sufferings of Jesus came to an end. However, His enemies even wound His dead body. They open with a lance His right side with a gaping wound which pierces His heart and His other side... Would that we could have received that dead and bloody body to make up for this most atrocious wrong, with the just offering [**ossequio**] of tears...⁶⁹.

... St. Ignatius suggests: poverty, disdain for oneself, humility. the chosen must first achieve a spiritual affection for poverty [cf. Ignatius, 46]. : 'Blessed are the Poor in spirit' [cf. Mt 5:3]. Moreover, if the reason of the divine service [**ossequio**] and election are understood, this will lead one to follow after Him with the same poverty [cf. Ignatius, 146]: 'If you wish to be perfect, go sell what you have, give it to the poor, and come follow Me!⁷⁰

c. Toward the Spirit of Love

All of this forms "a Law of the Spirit" and of love - which Law essentially consists in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, this requires that to the internal affections and motions of the heart, there is to be added the external service [**ossequio**] of the tongue and the even more solemn deeds of the hand.

d. Toward the Most Blessed Sacrament:

St. Mechtilde attests that the Son of God appeared to her once and ordered her to venerate in every way possible by obeisance [**ossequio**] toward the divine sacrament, His most sacred Heart - and that there was nowhere any book which could contain all the favors that derive from this devotion ... similar sentiments of obeisance [**ossequio**] were shared by saints Bernard, Bonaventure, , Brigid, Frances of Rome, Francis de sales and by many, many other individuals favored by God⁷¹.

⁶⁷ cf. OVC, p. 205 - Sermon II, On Devotion.

⁶⁸ cf. Nello, II, p. 144

⁶⁹ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Sermon 4 - The Passion, in: PVX p. 186.

⁷⁰ id, "The Standard of Christ", in: CS I, p. 191.

⁷¹ cf. Nello II, p. 185; Mss B 1760.

e. Toward the Divine Word:

... One walks worthily of this vocation, submitting our intellect with humble obeisance [**ossequio**] to believe the divine Word.:

- with all humility: by not resisting with obstinate contradiction the authoritative judgments of the legitimate shepherds who have a right from God Himself to propose this to us and to explain its true meaning.

- with 'meekness': overcoming with unshakable patience the calumnies, the ridicule, the opposition that came to us from the enemies of the faith and of the peace of the Church.

- 'patience': and assisting us with mutual love to walk, carrying the burdens of one another. In this way, we all walk together in the same vocation, supporting one another in charity. Be solicitous to maintain the unity of spirit. By the grace of God, this unity of spirit, or of the faith, we do possess: what we must do is conserve it, keep it ...⁷².

f. Toward Mary:

... It seems to me that Mary herself wishes to bring together on this special day, such a most pleasing service [**ossequio**] ⁷³.

... O venerable Name of Mary! With what profound obeisance [**ossequio**] should not this Name be pronounced by us from now on. Wretched sinners that we are, with how much confidence can we not invoke this Name! Since she does have such authority of dominion over the person of her Son - then how can she not be the Mistress of all His wealth, of that immense sea of grace and mercies?

g. Toward the Church;

It is here that the Stigmatine charism is distinguished - in dedicated availability to the Church, through her Bishops. This was Fr. Bertoni's way of following after/ imitating/ putting on the mind of Jesus Christ, in His personal relationship of loving obedience to His Father, and total self-giving to His Spouse, the Church:

... It is necessary, therefore, to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ Who once emanated the Commandments of the Decalogue, and Who in our time, instructs and governs the hierarchical Church [Ignatius, Rule 13, **Sentire cum Ecclesia**]...⁷⁴.

At one period of his life, Fr. Bertoni was assigned by his Bishops to assist a number of priests trying to make their way back, through conversion, to the full living of their vocations... Among his sermons of those times, the following passage may be found:

...Jesus of Nazareth went down to Nazareth and 'He was subject to them'. The life of obedience is clearly the way to perfection... How much disobedience is there not found among priests! Disobedience to Pastors, to Spiritual Directors, if indeed they have any - to the Bishops, to the Pope, to the Church - in whose place they put themselves, and re-interpret their orders, and prove to be so upsetting... Their 'freedom' is their withdrawal from obeying Christ, Who so humbly commands through the mouth of His Vicar on earth, and those superiors united to His Vicar in faith and charity; while they throw off a yoke

⁷² cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Sermon 35, in: PVC ,pp. 259, ff.

⁷³ cf. id., PVC p. 302.

⁷⁴ Quoted by Fr. Bertoni in his Retreat to Priests and Seminarians, in: CS I, p. 244.

that is sweet, light, gentle and glorious - they seek one that is much more harsh, heavy, inexorable, shameful ...⁷⁵.

Fr. Bertoni was disposed to undertake **any Ministry of the Word of God whatsoever**, always trusting in the voice of his ecclesiastical superior. As a diocesan priest, he certainly recognized in this voice the voice of God⁷⁶.

For Fr. Bertoni, **obedience, or the assistance, service of Bishops**, was but the logical conclusion of his fundamental spiritual principle of holy abandonment:

...**You should not precede, but only follow the Lord**, Who illumines your path, and will suggest to you which way to follow, once you have asked Him, and in what manner you should proceed and correspond⁷⁷.

...

5. Episcoporum:

There are three points that can be considered here:

- a. The Legitimate Interpreters of the Word of God, are the interpreters of the Stigmatine Apostolate.
- b. The Priesthood in Fr. Bertoni's Plan.
- c. The Expression: "More than others" in the Stigmatine Service of Bishops.

a. The Bishops: The Legitimate Interpreters of the Word of God - the Legitimate Interpreters of the Stigmatine Charism:

Being a Diocesan Priest, and a confidant of a series of Bishops of Verona, who had Church renewal high on their list of priorities, Fr. Bertoni made this great sense of fidelity to the "Local Church" an essential and determining part of his charism. The Bishops, he deeply believed, were appointed by the same Holy Spirit Who inspired the Scriptures. As they are the legitimate interpreters of God's Word, for Fr. Bertoni, they are also the interpreters of the way the Stigmatine would serve the Church, **through the various and proper ministries** of the Stigmatine vocation, as envisaged in the Original Constitutions⁷⁸ - based almost entirely on ***De Religione Societatis Iesu***, by Fr. Francis Suarez, SJ. In a way, the 'epiphany' of God's Will for him was the Bishop's Apostolic needs.

- 1.] Fr. Bertoni looked on the apostolate clearly through the eyes of his faith:

...Obedience to the Church in her Prelates ... that which the Church proposes is not based on human judgment alone, but on the divine...⁷⁹.

- a.] For Fr. Bertoni, the Magisterium is a God-given instrument to offer powerful assistance in interpreting the divine will:

⁷⁵ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Retreat to Priests: "The Private Life of Jesus", in: CS I, p. 182.

⁷⁶ This is the testimony of Fr. Cajetan Borsatti, Prison Chaplain - cf. *Summarium Additionale*, pp; 119, ff.; Nello, II, p. 499.

⁷⁷ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, *Memoriale Privato* [MP], January 12, 1811.

⁷⁸ cf. CF # 185.

⁷⁹ St. Gaspar Bertoni, Mss B # 4998; cf. also Nello, II, p. 191

... Through the Magisterium of the Church, 'the divine will of sign' becomes manifest, in what concerns the reprobation, or destruction of what is merely human interpretation - and also in what pertains to the renewal and restoration of the divine spirit in her ministers...⁸⁰.

b.] In the Ecclesiology of the times, he saw the great need for One Church - as in our own time, there is the problem of "Parallel Magisterial", rejected by Pope John Paul II at Puebla, and many times since. In Fr. Bertoni's time, with its political and doctrinal situation, he saw the ideal of a united Church:

... Whoever makes two Churches, i.e., whoever would set up a party that would think differently from the Roman Church, is outside the true Church...⁸¹.

2.] With great faith in the Magisterium, he did not think that those called to serve in that way had any other reason for being. He saw the great need for prayer in the members of the hierarchy, being entrusted with 'the sure charism of truth' [cf. DV 8]:

...A Pastor must be a man of prayer. Such a person encounters reality in the way the Providence of God has decreed it. The man of prayer, therefore, is not precipitous, impulsive: he sees all as ordered, tranquil. He awaits the right moment, and for the proper combinations of circumstances. To have the proper lights that give confidence, confirmation, that reach to the right understanding concerning the choices that are in accord with God, deep prayer is necessary in Prelates...⁸²

a.] His synthesis of the Apostolic Mission is summarized as a **service of the Church of the Vicar of Christ - through the Bishops**. He once prayed:

...'take command, God, as befits your power, that power, God, you have wielded in our behalf' [cf. Ps 69:29] - so that we, through the Catholic Bishops, might share in the firmness of that one High Priest and source of all jurisdiction in your Church ⁸³.

Behind these words there is some indication that Fr. Bertoni may have held as his own theological opinion, one that was at variance with his own, Bishop Liruti. The Bishop had written in a public document [dated: February 11, 1811] that every Bishop receives his jurisdiction directly from God. For Fr. Bertoni, the jurisdiction came to Bishops through the mediation of the Pope ⁸⁴. Hence, his real intention was the full service of the Church, the Vicar of Christ, but always through the Bishops.

b.] In his spirituality, the Stigmatine Founder looked on obedience as one of the surest signs of the presence of the Spirit, a basic Ignatian principle:

... The sign which confirms all the others is the presence of the Holy Spirit - with Whom one receives the grace of the Word, the affection and effectiveness, together with charity and the love of the Word. A sign of the fullness of the Holy Spirit is the excelling humility - the sign of excellent humility is perfect obedience, which is the sign of signs, i.e., the seal of all other testimonies...⁸⁵.

⁸⁰ cf. id., Mss B; Nello II, p. 223.

⁸¹ cf. id., Mss B. # 6040; cf. also Nello, p. 257.

⁸² cf. Mss. B, # 6192 - cf. also Nello, II, p. 285.

⁸³ cf. Mss B 6282.

⁸⁴ cf. Nello, II, p. 287, Note # 109.

⁸⁵ cf. Mss B # 6441.

Here we are close to the kernel of Fr. Bertoni's spirituality: he simply rejects any claim to the authentic presence of the Spirit where there is not first the evidence of humble submission to authority. One cannot pretend to be docile to God if he is not first docile to his ecclesial superiors⁸⁶

c.] In the terrible struggle to share the message of Jesus Christ, Fr. Bertoni commented on a passage from Job:

...'Is not man's life on earth nothing more than pressed service, his time no better than hired drudgery' [cf. Jb 7:1]. Each one of the faithful is like a soldier in the struggle, and the Pastor is like a Captain...⁸⁷.

d.] The lack of obedience, dedicated, united service - eventually leads to division:

...Anyone who is called to be a Shepherd in relation to his own flock, is in his turn, a Lamb in relation to the Supreme Shepherd. Such Shepherds are called to live among their sheep, as sheep themselves of the First Shepherd, who is 'the Servant of the Servants of God' towards the faithful. Sane doctrine, which is in accord with that of the First Shepherd, removes vice: 'Where two or three are gathered in my Name, there I am in the midst of them' [cf. Mt 18:20]. Otherwise, the result would be schism, which defeats the Holy Spirit⁸⁸.

3.] Fr. Bertoni nurtured a profound respect for Bishops throughout his entire life:

... however, since I already knew from other sources that the Bishop intended me to obey him alone in this, I did not act upon other orders. I did want to write to you about all this, but had to wait for further clarification from the Bishop...⁸⁹.

...

b. The Priesthood and the Apostolic Mission in Fr. Bertoni's Plan

1.] It is true that the IInd Vatican Council has abolished every form of 'class' in the religious life - and it is also true that Pope Paul VI's Encyclical, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, has broadened our idea of 'evangelization.' Nonetheless, there are still some aspects of the Ministry of the Word requiring sacramental orders. Some of these apostolates would be the Eucharistic Homily and Sacramental Reconciliation.

a.] In the time of the Stigmatine Founder, almost every middle class home had its 'servants', as did every wealthy family. This idea of "class" in societies in which the monarchical system of government was still a vivid memory, all this had a profound influence on religious life.

b.] It is also most true that individuals are eminently products of their times. This is particularly so of the Stigmatine Founder, who might indeed be contrasted with the original thinker, his contemporary, Fr. Anthony Rosmini. There is no doubt that Fr. Bertoni, perhaps somewhat timid, reflective by nature, was surely a creature of his own history.

⁸⁶ cf. Nello II, p. 289.

⁸⁷ cf. Mss B # 6534; cf. also Nello, II, p. 339.

⁸⁸ cf. Mss B # 6660; cf. also Nello II, p. 343

⁸⁹ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Ep, pp. 28, ff.; cf. also Nello II, p. 427.

c.] However, it does not seem that the Stigmatine Founder's insistence on the specific role of the priesthood was solely from the aspect of a society steeped in the 'class' system. It seems, rather that the importance of the priesthood in the Original Constitutions derived from its central idea, the **Apostolic Missionaries for the assistance of Bishops**.

d.] In that part of the rule where the Founder begins to 'spell out' the specifics of the Apostolic Mission, we find the following:

...[The members who would take the Fourth Vow will be characterized as follows:

- by the taking on of the clerical state, and being endowed with every disposition that they might do this with perfection ⁹⁰;

- they will be assigned to the administration of the Sacraments, especially that of Penance and the Eucharist, along with the celebration of Holy Mass to obtain the fruit of the Missions, of the preaching, and of the confessions ⁹¹.

2.] As is well known, the Stigmatine Founder spoke of this characteristic:

...Fr. Galvani, who is said to be totally Ignatian, has offered me the Stimite as an opportune place to establish a Congregation of priests who would live under the Rules of St. Ignatius ⁹².

Most Holy Father ... the least of Your servants, the under-signed - priest, with a few of his companions, living the priestly and common life, for 22 years have served the Spouse of Christ gratuitously. We do this to honor in this Spouse the common Creator and Savior of us all... And this is my own firm decision, as well as that of my companions: to spend ourselves totally in serving Our Lord and His Church, if He thinks us worthy to do so...⁹³.

3.] While the Society of Jesus was being assembled in its General Congregation to discuss this problem of the abolition of classes, striving to remain faithful at one and the same time to their fundamental charism, as well as to Vatican II, they received this Letter from Pope Paul VI, dated December 3, 1974 [Feast of St. Francis Borgia]. In part the Pope's Letter reads:

...Where do you come from. Who are you? Where are you going?... We speak to you in the name of Christ and - as you like to consider us - as the highest Superior of the Society, by reason of the special bond which from the time of its foundation, always links the Society itself to the Roman Pontiff..

We know, therefore, who you are... you are members of a religious, apostolic, priestly order, united by a special bond with the Roman Pontiff, a bond of love, and of service, in the manner described in the Formula of the Institute...

... You are religious ... You are, furthermore, apostles, i.e., missionaries ... and the very diversity of ministries to which the Society is dedicated, draws from such sources its most profound reason for that apostolic life, which always must be lived in the 'full sense'!...

Then, you are also priests: this, too, is an essential characteristic of the Company, while not forgetting the ancient and legitimate tradition of the excellent Brothers. Even though

⁹⁰ cf. CF # 161; cf. also # 49.

⁹¹ cf. CF # 162.

⁹² cf. Letter 54, in: Ep p. 130.

⁹³ St. Gaspar Bertoni, Letter to Pope Gregory XVI, iin: Ep p. 340.

not endowed with sacred orders, they, too, have played an honored and effective role in the Company.

...However, the priesthood was formally required by the Founder for the Religious elevated to the 'Professed.' There is good reason for this - because the priesthood is necessary for the Order established by him, which has for its principal purpose the sanctification of human beings through the Word and sacraments ...

... Effectively, the priestly character is required by your dedication to the apostolic life, we repeated, understood in the 'full sense': by the very charisma of the Priestly Order, which configures one to Christ, sent by the Father. the of the Mission, to which as Jesuits, you are deputed, flows principally from this.

You are therefore, priests... who administer the grace of God with the sacraments, priests who receive the power, and have the duty to participate organically in the apostolic work of nourishment and of union of the Christian community, especially with the celebration of the Eucharist...

... Finally, you are united to the Pope by a special vow...

...

4.] In the plan of the Stigmatine Founder, the **Apostolic Missionaries** are born **for the assistance of Bishops** - collaborators in the Mission of the Apostles. The hierarchical authority, as it is presently exercised, served for the Stigmatine Founder as the sacramentality, the 'epiphany', of the power of Christ, the Lord. In this power, and by means of this power, Jesus Himself gathers, sanctifies and governs His own in the Gift of the Word and of His Holy Spirit. The Shepherds of the Church in history have been placed in their authority, also by the grace of the Holy Orders received. This gives them a share in the power enabling them to act in a particular manner, in the Name of Christ, the Head. The Sacrament gives to Bishops the spiritual power over the Body of Christ, the Church, the People of God. By divine institution the sacrament of Orders is the formal determining principle of the hierarchical communion of the Church. this sharing in the power of Christ enables the Bishops to act in the Name of Christ over the Body of Christ: both the People of God and the Eucharist.

a.] In the Stigmatine Founder's ideal, the members submit humbly in their vocation to this hierarchical authority, thus offering also to the Church a witness of the submission of Jesus to His heavenly Father. Furthermore, in the words of the Founder himself [cf. CF # 2], the Stigmatine receives from the hierarchy the power to continue the personal mission of Christ to gather, to sanctify and to lead the People of God to the Father.

b.] The Stigmatines do not make a special vow of obedience to the Bishops because it is simply juridically impossible, if they are to remain 'religious' and not Diocesan Oblates. However, the Stigmatine is called in his 'difficult vocation' to offer a dedicated obedience', one that is determined in a totally special manner, one that is outstanding in its service to the Bishops - this is Fr. Berton's own phrase. This covers all that pertains to the apostolic Mission. The **obsequium** of the Stigmatine has as its object that which concerns the **Apostolic Mission** ⁹⁴.

c.] The Church herself is the 'formal Founder' of the Congregation - the originality of the Stigmatine community resides in the **total abandonment** to God, exteriorally expressed through **availability** to the Bishops of the Church, the Spouse of Christ. The Stigmatine Congregation was born to fulfill the **Apostolic Mission** for the assistance of Bishops. In the original vision of the Founder, there is the configuration to Jesus, sent by the Father for the

⁹⁴ cf. also Constitutions SJ, # 527.

redemption of the world, through the suffering of His Sacred Stigmata. This is why Jesus 'offers' Himself [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16. and is 'consecrated' by the Father [cf. Jn 10:14, 18; 17:19], and is 'distributed', as the High priest, Servant of the Father - self-sacrificing Spouse of the Church [cf. Ep 5: 21, ff.]

d.] The universal character of the **Apostolic Mission** is expressed in geographical terms [**quocumque**] - in terms of personnel, involving every single Stigmatine [**quicumque**] - and is expressed in pastoral terms, by the vocation to be prepared as a body to assume any ministry of the Word of God whatsoever [**quodcumque**]. It is a share in the **Apostolic Mission** - the one Jesus received from His Father, and shared with His Apostles, which implies gratuity as an ideal. It is firmly radicated in the Eucharist and in the sacramental life of the Church. For the basically 'sacramental' purpose of the mission, the Stigmatine Founder saw his community as 'sacerdotal.'

e.] Very often, the term 'clerical' in this context, has proven to assume a pejorative meaning. However, the original purpose of the Stigmatine Founder is often clouded in the heated and justified discussions that do ensue regarding his charism - however, 'clericality' should not be discussed fro within the Congregation and its own history - but, far more by looking at the **Apostolic Mission** in St. Gaspar Bertoni's ideal.

f.] In the Stigmatine ideal, there is a plurality of ministries, and a variety of members - but, all united, as the Most Holy Trinity, in the Plan of Creation, Redemption and sanctification. The Stigmatine Founder's repeated insistence on the priestly ministry seems to have been inspired by his idea of **Apostolic Mission**. Collaboration in the Mission of Evangelization committed to the Church by her Founder, and a share in the very Mission of Jesus Christ: this pertains to all the baptized, consecrated as each one is in Jesus Christ, into His death and resurrection [cf. Rm 6:1, ff.]

g.] However, to promise a full obedience to Bishops for the Mission of the Church also means to be dedicated to **the various and proper ministries** of the Congregation, in behalf of the Church, the Spouse of Christ. The principal ministries as these are presented by the Founder, are sacramental.

5.] In the process of discernment for the acceptance of apostolates, it would seem in the light of these reflections that the **various and proper ministries** can only be accepted if in some way they further the central apostolates that have emerged in the history of the Congregation: specialized preaching, the assistance of priests, religious and seminarians - and the apostolate to the youth, in its various aspects.

a.] The competent service of the Divine Word demands grace, and great personal commitment to it. The Stigmatine **Apostolic Mission** calls for a life- long spiritual growth, an on-going intellectual development.

b.] Any meditation on the Stigmatine **Apostolic Mission** would show that the **various and proper ministries** of this vocation, means a committed service offered to the Eternal father, through the Holy Spirit, in Jesus Christ, Priest-Servant and Spouse, in obedience to the Bishops of the Church.

c.] All the members of the Stigmatine Congregation, without exception, are dedicated to the same Mission of Jesus Christ, in differing ways - all Stigmatines are consecrated to God to serve the one **Apostolic Mission** of the universal Church, that of leading humanity to the Most Blessed Trinity, through holiness and apostolic competence.

...

c. **"More than others"**

The XXIXth General Chapter of 1970, the Extra-ordinary General Chapter called for the renewal of the Constitutions [and also to elect a successor to the Very Rev. Gilbert Fini, CSS, who died in office in the 4th year of his second term as Superior General] decided on the following for the second 'Fundamental Constitution':

...The Congregation is for the assistance of bishops more than the other institutes, because of a more acute missionary sensibility to the needs of dioceses...

The subsequent General Chapter in 1976, thought better of this reading, and among its "Guidelines for the Pre-Capitular Commission" [n. 11], there was this following directive:

...Constitution 2: Keep the content, but take out the competitive spirit, which seems to be behind the expression *more than others* .

This same difficulty had been confronted a number of times in the history of the Society of Jesus. The Company of Jesus is called to the "greater" service of the Roman Pontiff. The Jesuit theologian, Francis Suarez, discussed this matter specifically several centuries ago⁹⁵, and offered this consideration:

...14. In obedience to the Roman Pontiff the Society does enjoy something proper ... In the early institution of this community, this is evident in the words of the Pontiffs who approved it... In no other religious communities is there found this proposal, and one that is repeated so many times. Obedience to the Pope is the primary scope of this community.

...This may be clarified further. No other religious institute consecrates itself to this means of a special vow. The Society of Jesus does this by a special vow, by which is Professed oblige themselves to obey the Pontiff in the **Missions** for the salvation of humanity, and the defense or spread of the faith..

This does not mean that all the religious of the Society take this vow - they who do profess it, comprise the principal part of the Society; the work they do responds to the principal purpose for which the Society was founded...

...

1.] A Bit of History

a.] In the initial discussions concerning their Constitutions, the Companions of Ignatius, under his leadership, discussed the particular obedience of the Jesuits concerning their Apostolic Mission toward the Roman Pontiff. This difficulty of serving the Pope '**the more**' [cf. *ad maiorem Dei Gloriam*] surfaced. The question was resolved as it came up. They say very clearly that all the members of the Church, incorporated into Christ through Baptism, owe obedience to the Pope. However the phrases used to resolve the dilemma are found in the Formula which prefaces the Jesuit Constitutions:

...For the **greater** devotion to the obedience to the Apostolic See, for a **greater** abnegation of our wills, and for a sure direction of the Holy Spirit..

⁹⁵ Fr. Francis Suarez, *De Religione Societatis Iesu*, Lib. I, c. II, n. 14. Paris: Vives 1860, pp. 567 a - 567 b.

In the spirituality of the Stigmatine Founder, there is a parallel ideal: in the reverential acceptance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, there is the profession of faith that the Holy Spirit will guide the Congregation more surely by means of the bishops⁹⁶

b.] St. Bonaventure offers this reason for a second, special vow for the Franciscans: even if all the clergy, and all religious are firmly held to obey, there can still be a special obedience, in so far as from such an act of faith, consecrated, then, but faithful service there would be received a particular grace and merit⁹⁷.

2.] The Spiritual Exercises preached by the Stigmatine Founder [taken from those of St. Ignatius] require a submission to the Church by all the faithful - however, the specific 'Stigmatine' submission is found in the community' **availability to the Bishops**, concerning the **Apostolic Mission**. this is meant to emulate the **abandonment of Jesus to His Heavenly Father**. It is in the 'spirit' of the Original Constitutions not to have the 'ordinary' care of parishes, chaplaincies of Convents, in the canonical structures that were in vogue at that time. The juridical climate is much changed now, and so often parishes are mission centers for a very varied apostolate - and chaplaincies often have associated with them professorships, or other missionary endeavors. The Stigmatine spirit was one of 'mobility', **availability** - the willingness to move on. Stigmatine obedience, in the ideal, implies the **more than ordinary** - its 'specificity' is found in the fact that service of the Church, unavailability to its Bishops, strives to live out an aspect of the life of Christ, namely His relationship within the Trinity. The **Apostolic Mission** of the Stigmatine is meant to be a competent effort at evangelization and sanctification.

3.] Surely, in the light of the IInd Vatican Council [cf. LG 22], recent documents⁹⁸ - there is little doubt that every ecclesiastical mission flow from the source of divine love⁹⁹. In the light of this love, all the faithful are called to obey the Church - and the recent Magisterium will say 'especially priests and religious.' Nevertheless, even with these enjoinders, Stigmatine submission retains its particular, special character. Stigmatine obedience is directed primarily toward the **Apostolic Mission**, offered for the Assistance of **Bishops**. Stigmatine '**service**' [**obsequium**] places an entire Congregation at the service of Bishops, with a promised competence and particular dedication, the on-going preparation of its members, for any form of the Ministry of the Word of God whatsoever, especially: preaching, the assistance of priests, seminarians and religious - and youth work. Without any sense of triumphalism, the Stigmatine vocation is invited to offer witness to ecclesial obedience.

4.] This **Apostolic Mission for the assistance of Bishops** will always remain deeply a part of the Church - by the very injunction of seeking the faculties from the local Ordinaries, or remaining faithfully within the scope of the permissions received - all of these prescriptions offer some insight into the mind of the Founder. The place of the Stigmatine community in the Church is based on the relationship of Jesus to His Father, and the resulting free and personal choice of each Stigmatine to act solely in the name of the Church, under obedience to the Bishops. While all that pertains to the interior religious life is in some way 'exempt' from the local Ordinaries, the **Apostolic Mission for the Assistance of Bishops** offers a variety and proper ecclesial service entrusted to the Congregation in the strength of its vocation, in the name of the Church.

⁹⁶ cf. a Discussion on this point, in: *La Formula dell'Istitutio SJ. REcherches* 12. Rome: CIS 1977, pp. 75, ff.

⁹⁷ cf. *Insuper Promitto. Los votos solemnes peculiares del nos Ordenes*. JJ.G. Harbatz. Roma: CSJ 1963, p. 105.

⁹⁸ cf. *Mutuae Relationes*. Pentecost 1978, n. 4: The Bishops and Religious intent on the one Mission of the People of God].

⁹⁹ cf. AG 2; cf. also *Enchiridion Vaticanum* VI, pp. 432-509.

5.] The hierarchical constitution of the Church is more expressly based on the sacramental economy, and notably on the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Orders. The tie between the apostolic obedience of the Stigmatine to the Bishops is based on the authority of the Bishops chosen by the Holy Spirit. Stigmatine obedience, particularly now in the light of ***Evangelii Nuntiandi***, which speaks of the 'first apostolate' of religious being 'witness' - can offer a 'catechesis', a lived expression of these truths.

Conclusion

The Stigmatine spirit in this regard was expressed well over a century ago by Fr. Lenotti, to the Stigmatine Novices of another time.

...It may be seen clearly what the intention of Fr. Bertoni really was - that of instituting a Congregation, which - like the Company of Jesus - in a special manner is dedicated, directed to the service [***ossequio***] and to the dispositions of the Roman Pontiff; then, this Congregation would be dedicated and determined in a totally special and outstanding manneru to the service and obeisance [***ossequio***] of Bishops...¹⁰⁰

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¹⁰⁰ cf. CS III, p. 409.

Section Five

The Abandonment of St. Gaspar Bertoni and A Modern Application: Ecclesial Obedience

Introduction

[1] The **Agape'** of Jesus - as He Himself is - has to be 'incarnate'. Moral theology speaks, for example, of 'fraternal humility'¹⁰¹ - biblical roots for this might be found in the following Pauline phrase:

... There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always think of the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first, but everybody thins of other people's interests in stead...¹⁰²

[2] For the Stigmatine Founder, Jesus Christ was indeed 'incarnate', real , alive, present - an eloquent Word Keeping this in mind, the Stigmatine Community, with the Church, is on the threshold of another century, a new millennium. The Congregation is called to express its abandonment to God in its 'incarnate' manifestation, the **Apostolic Missionaries for the Assistance of Bishops**.

[a] It is said that Christian obedience is credible only as something suffered, united with Jesus, for the Reign of God which is still coming. Any discussion on religious obedience which does not begin with Christology, will never reach the heights it is intended to achieve, will never reach its decisive and ultimate motivation. The Church can never reflect on itself- unless she uses as a mirror, measuring stick, the august Person of Jesus Christ.

[b] The Synoptics present Jesus as prevalently in act, expressed in words - John and Paul offer Him more particularly as a result of their inspired reflections. Their contemplation leads to considering His whole life, as already completed - and they uncover the central mystery of the Christ-event, which they seek to describe by names, or titles.

[c] John eventually comes to conclusive formulae, and brings out in such emphasis, the unity between the Father and the Son. John's Gospel speaks far more clearly than any other of a 'mandate' which Jesus received from the Father, and which - in human terms - constitutes Him as a Person¹⁰³. In His human existence, Jesus expresses this Mission [cf. Jn 4:34] - His being is a kind of existential obedience [cf. Ep 2].

[3] As a result, a very basic type of obedience should be maintained toward the Lord within the Church herself. The first disciples abandoned all things, to be sent everywhere, even to the ends of the earth - to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ. each believer is called to measure his/her mandate of faith, measuring it in the light of God Himself [cf. Rm 12:3] - or, in the light of the Glory of Jesus [cf. Ep 4:10, f.].

[4] It is not the Church which distributes the gifts of grace - she is only the channel. instrument, established by Jesus Christ Himself. No one alone is the Church, unless Christ. So,e

¹⁰¹ cf. B. Haring, CSSR, *The Law of Christ*

¹⁰² cf. Ph 2: 3, ff..

¹⁰³ cf. Jn 10:19; 12:49; 14:31.

each believer is called to the 'obedience of faith' [cf. DV 5] - each one is invited to the subordinate to her - through each one's obedience, one also has an avenue of approach to Jesus Himself ¹⁰⁴.

[5] The Stigmatine Founder offers a program of **abandonment to God expressed in the Apostolic Mission for the Assistance of Bishops**:

- the Personal Abandonment of each Stigmatine - this is the Abandonment of the entire stigmatine **Personnel: *Quicumque***

- Geographical Abandonment: ***Quocumque*** .

- Apostolic Abandonment: ***Quodcumque*** .

...

1. ***Quicumque*** : the Total Abandonment of the Personnel::

a. **Personal Abandonment**

The Stigmatine Founder, described as "A Model of Holy Abandonment", taught this demanding spirituality more by his life than by his words. "Holy Abandonment" matured in Fr. Bertoni as the end result of a struggle - perhaps, too, somewhat as a spiritualization of his own insecurity and lack of self-confidence that may have been part of his make - up. However, once "abandonment" emerged as his basic quality, Fr. Bertoni seemed able to carry out apostolates that were beyond his own human nature. In his description of the **difficult Stigmatine vocation** [cf. CF # 185], we might also apply these other words of his:

...To begin the task well, it is necessary to have already acquired heroic virtue...

From his early priesthood at least, Fr. Bertoni was inspired by the idea of one day establishing a community along Ignatian principles. Hence, with this added incentive for his ready apostolic spirituality, he realized more deeply than many, the pressing need for "heroic virtue" to undertake important tasks in the service of God, through the Bishops of the Church. He was truly inspired by the ***Suscipe*** of St. Ignatius Loyola:

...Receive, O Lord, my freedom ...whatever I have, or possess... I give it all back to you...
Your love and grace are sufficient for me...¹⁰⁵.

The faithful minister is in conformity with the Will of God not only in his response, but also in the manner of operating ¹⁰⁶. He used as his basic principle a thought he so often repeated:

...We must go behind the Lord, and never ahead of Him... It is necessary never to take a step ahead of Him, but to follow Him in everything...¹⁰⁷.

This principle of his was something he very often suggested to those who had sought him out for spiritual direction:

...Once again, the Lord has known how to take care of matters - this is just one more argument for every circumstance to be abandoned to His adorable Providence...¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁴ cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Lo Spirito e l'istituzione. Saggi teologici* IV. Brescia: Morcelliana 1979, pp. 115-138, ff.]

¹⁰⁵ cf. Mss B # 2658; cf. also Nello II, p. 32.

¹⁰⁶ cf. Mss B # 6079.

¹⁰⁷ cf. *Summarium Addionale*, p. 265; cf. also Mss B # 5990.

¹⁰⁸ St. Gaspar Bertoni, Letter 43; Ep p. 105; cf. also Nello II, p. 259.

The entire Stigmatine plan develops from this sense of personal abandonment as the characteristic spirituality of the Founder. As each one grows in his faith, hope and charity flowing from Divine Providence, the rest of the plan is but the exterior expression of this interior basic "frame of reference", or attitude.

b. Abandonment of all of the Stigmatine Personnel:

The mentality of Holy Abandonment, presented as a challenge to each Stigmatine, serves as the basis of the consecration of the whole personnel to the service of the Church through the Bishops... This sense of "totality" noted in the response of Jesus Christ is meant to permeate the response of the Christian. The Stigmatine is called to witness this in a particular manner:

... In fatigue, in the vigils, and other situations, the [Stigmatine] should remain with Me - so that each one might share in the victory and in the happiness in the thought that He will be with me in travail and fatigue [St. Ignatius.]

He invites each one to Himself with these words: This is My most just will: to take back to Myself the dominion over the whole world, to weaken all My enemies, and thus entire into the glory of My Father. Therefore, anyone who chooses to come with me, will have to share My fatigue, since the reward is in proportion to the fatigue...[St. Ignatius].

'If anyone wishes to come after Me....' [cf. Mt 16:24; Lk 9:23].¹⁰⁹

This is the way the Stigmatine Founder described his efforts to the Holy Father - he saw it all as a community effort, with each one dedicated to his own and to several other tasks:

...Should it seem to the Holy Spirit, and to you, Most Holy Father, that our work should result for the service [*ossequio*] of Christ our Lord, and that it be of some use to the Church ... this is my declared purpose and that of my companions; to give ourselves totally, each of us, to the service of the Lord, and His Church, if He should think us worthy of such an undertaking...¹¹⁰.

Fr. Lenotti offers his comments on this spirit of totality that would involve the entire Congregation of the Apostolic Missionaries:

...What should an Apostolic Missionary be? ... the Missionary does not fear dangers, and is not afraid of hard work, whenever it is a question of rendering oneself a suitable instrument of divine glory and of the good of souls. the Apostolic Missionary is one who is ready for everything, *paratus ab omnia...*¹¹¹.

...

2. ***Quocumque*** : Geographical Abandonment

There was no limitation to the scope of the plan for the Apostolic Missionaries. Modeled on the first Apostles, called to be witnesses of the resurrection to the ends of the earth, the Stigmatine is presented with the ideal that there be a willingness **to go anywhere in the Diocese and the world**. He preached thus:

¹⁰⁹ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Retreat for Priests, "The Reign of Christ" i, in: CS I, pp. 167, ff.].

¹¹⁰ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Letter to Pope Gregory XVI, in: Ep. p. 341.

¹¹¹ cf. CS III, p. 404.

...Our Leader sends His faithful ones throughout the world: consider how the Master of the universe sends throughout the world His chosen Apostles, disciples and other ministers. In their turn, they impart the salvific teaching to every class, condition and state of humanity... He sends them throughout the world! How beautiful are the feet of those who preach peace [cf. Rm 10:15]. Could anything be blacker? 'Yahweh is my Shepherd, I lack nothing!' [Ps 23:1]. Francis Xavier, with confidence such as this, immediately accepted the divine election to the mission in India - he set sail with only his breviary and Crucifix...¹¹².

In Fr. Lenotti's words, St. Francis Xavier was indeed a "privileged Apostolic Missionary" in the fullest sense of the title.

In one of Fr. Bertoni's sermons, from which we derive much concerning the Stigmatine spirit, we find him describing St. Francis of Assisi's world vision:

...Italy was not enough for him: he wanted the whole world! As soon as he had seven followers, he sat down with them to divide up the world. 'Let's go!', he said to them, 'wherever God and the need of souls cry out to us in a loud voice!' It was as though heaven had been witness to this statement, because in a short while, the numbers did increase, and he sent them throughout the world. And Francis did not die until he had abundantly provided for the whole world, to the four corners of the globe, he sent such valid workers...¹¹³.

While Francis was able to realize his dream before dying, the Stigmatine Founder was denied this consolation, and outward sign of divine approval. When Fr. Bertoni died one Sunday afternoon, June 12, 1853, the men were out teaching catechism, the well known **Quarta Classe** - which in another study some Stigmatines thought should be the fundamental Apostolic Mission. The whole membership on that day, 37 years after the founding on November 4, 1816, were perhaps about ten men. Many founders and foundresses have had the great privilege and blessing from God of seeing their communities spread throughout the world - in Fr. Bertoni's lifetime, the Stigmatines never left Verona. The day he died, they were all in their native city [with the exception of Fr. Bragato] and they assembled in his room to view the recently deceased remains of their beloved founder.

In one of his letters, Fr. Bertoni made a play on words with the Church of San Firmo, and the Italian word **fermo**, meaning "stop". In making this play on words, he was expressing the hope that the Sisters of Mother Naudet would not stop in Verona at St. Firmus', which was always in the same place!¹¹⁴.

Fr. Lenotti preached this version of the Apostolic Missionary:

...We have not been called to stand still, but rather, we should be ready, like soldiers, and disposed to assist all, and not in any one single Diocese, but throughout the world... Therefore, what is needed is a heart as broad as the world! It is true that right now the Lord keeps us restricted and humiliated - but, nonetheless, He has given us the grace to help out in various Dioceses, and we hope that when the proper time arrives, established by His Providence, He will give us the grace. We do not know His designs over this Congregation. Nonetheless, we should have a great and generous heart, and trust ourselves to God. If we are not lacking, God will not be...

¹¹² cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, in: CS I, pp. 190, ff.].

¹¹³ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Panegyric in honor of St. Francis - October 4, 1808 - in: Mss B # 1837.

¹¹⁴ cf. Letter 12 to Mother Naudet, January 9, 1815, in: Ep p.50.

...But if we are ever to be disposed to go anywhere in the world, it is necessary that we begin now by being indifferent regarding our rooms, clothing, food, trips, in everything...¹¹⁵..

...

3. **Quodcumque** : Apostolic Abandonment: "Any ministry of the Word of God whatsoever..."

Quoting the Constitutions of St. Ignatius and the Commentary on them by Francis Suarez [cf. **De Religione Societatis Iesu**], the Stigmatine Founder offers a very broad concept of the **Apostolic Mission for the assistance of Bishops**. Here are a few of the Original Constitutions he copied from Suarez:

...[The Professed] will be dedicated to preaching publicly, or instructing the people with public and private catechism lessons: having pious colloquies and holy conversations; these serve for the fraternal correction of vices, and for exhorting people to the exercise of virtues and the frequenting the sacraments;
spiritual direction, leading people to the acquisition of perfection;
preaching the spiritual exercises;
promoting pious congregations, or associations;
attending devoutly to the spiritual care of the sick, and especially of the dying ¹¹⁶.
... Being occupied in the formation of Clerics, both in the seminaries, as well as in the parishes, and in our houses; by means of teaching, private conferences, and assisting them to advance in studies and piety ¹¹⁷.

... The Christian education of Children and the youth, and un- instructed persons - this should be promoted with every effort by our men, through the oratories, specialized catechetics, and also through private instructions ¹¹⁸.

This whole section of the Stigmatine Founder's Rule is dedicated to the special tasks of the Professed' members, those with the intended Fourth Vow - therefore, the ministries are essential to the charism. The original Constitutions continue:

...The special occupation of the 'Professed' Priests: It is their duty not only to teach the truths that are necessary or useful to know for the obtaining of eternal life, by means of specialized preaching, retreats - and also by explaining the first elements of the faith and morality, particularly to children, and to un-instructed persons, in the Oratories, and in both public and private catechetical instructions. This whole manner is supremely useful to the Church, and therefore, it is to be most highly recommended ¹¹⁹.

In Fr. Bertoni's charism, he saw the great value of communicating the faith 'one on one' - with his emphasis on even private catechism lessons, almost a kind of 'tutoring' the young, the un-lettered, in the faith. Therefore, it should be without surprise that he must insisted upon the sacrament of Reconciliation as a special ministry to continue the effects of the preached word. In his view, the Confessor should also seek to be the 'friend' of the penitent. We find this Rule:

¹¹⁵ Domestic Exhortations, in: cf. CS II, p. 145.

¹¹⁶ cf. CF # 163.

¹¹⁷ cf. CF # 164.

¹¹⁸ cf. CF # 165.

¹¹⁹ cf. CF # 182.

... [It is the special task of the Stigmatine] to hear the confessions of people of all walks of life, but especially the poor, of the young, and to seek to lead them to the due frequency of the sacraments...¹²⁰.

All of these specifics may be found in the classic commentary of Suarez and the "**Religious State of the Society of Jesus**" - by which "**more in particular**" the Society is to serve the Church. In the early Jesuit tradition, and still in their Original Constitutions, the teaching of Catechism with specialized instruction, even to the unlearned, is one of the 'proper' ministries of the Society¹²¹ - as it is one of the special ministries of the Stigmatine Apostolic Mission.

Our first two Superiors General have left among their papers, a rather detailed description of the **various and proper ministries** of the Congregation:

Fr. John Mary Marani - Superior General from 1853-1811:

...The end of the Institute is 'Apostolic Missionaries for the Assistance of Bishops', i.e., for their help [*obsequium ... auxilium*]. Therefore, the members of this Institute ought to be always - both day and night - [prepared and ready to go, at any indication of their Superior, even at a moment's notice - anywhere, whether near or far, in the city, or to the country, to any class of persons:

- to give missions;
- to hear confessions;
- to administer to those in prison; especially those condemned to death;
- to supply the chair of philosophy or theology; to help out in a parish

which unexpectedly is without a pastor -

And once they have finished one task, and even if it is not yet brought to term in accord with their own liking, they should be ready to hand it over to someone else, in order to take up another more burdensome and difficult task.

And all this is to be done - and even more, should it ever be necessary - with joyful hearts and happy faces, without asking to be excused - either because their members do not feel qualified, or claiming that they have not studied enough. They are to accept such service without rationalization, without pretensions, and without receiving anything for their efforts.

In the ideal, the Stigmatines are called to be *parati ad omnia*, for whatever, and wherever the Superior may send them.

The Superiors, in their turn, are not ever to refuse a Bishop in real need, whenever they can, or, whenever they have capable personnel. The Superiors will also try to respond to the needs of Pastors in their necessities...¹²².

...

Fr. John Baptist Lenotti, Superior General from 1871-1875:

Although he was Superior General for the shortest of all the Stigmatine Generals [1871-1875], he had indeed a universal apostolic vision regarding the Stigmatine Mission. In his

¹²⁰ cf. CF # 183.

¹²¹ o.c., p. 206.

¹²² cf. *Regola Marani*, in: CS II, pp. 245, ff. In this Part, Fr. Marani cited the Original Constitutions of the Founder, ## 67; 162-164; 182-186 - and furthermore, he made concrete applications of the Founder's Constitutions on obedience and its levels, described in CF ## 139-151.

Domestic Exhortations, he compared the Stigmatine Mission to that of the Jesuits -- he called St. Francis Xavier an **Apostolic Missionary** of the highest order - and he was preparing in those years a group of young priests for foreign missions: Denmark, and the United States of America, and elsewhere. With his untimely death at the age of only 54, and deaths and sicknesses among the first Foreign Mission Band being prepared, the Congregation waited almost 30 years after his death to come to the United States.

This is still another description of the **Apostolic Missionary** left by Fr. Lenotti, who was trained personally for the Stigmatine life by the Founder himself. These are his words:

...Therefore, first of all, we are Missionary-Soldiers, as we have said on another occasion - and by the very fact that we are soldiers, we are called to serve. The soldier is called to serve his prince and nation, that is why it is called military service. We are Missionaries to serve God, our King - and Jesus Christ, our Captain and Leader - and the Church, the Christian Homeland. We are not, therefore, Missionaries to command, but rather to serve: Let us keep this clearly in mind, my brothers:

'The disciple is not superior to the teacher, nor the servant greater than his master' [cf. Lk 6:40].

The Son of God Himself, the Head of all Missionaries, 'came not to be served, but to serve [cf. Mt 20:28] - 'assumed the condition of a slave' [cf. Ph 2:7] - served for 30 years in a humble shop/ served in preaching even to the point of washing the feet of His Apostles, and served His divine Father and humanity. He also serves right now in the Most Holy Sacrament, humbling Himself under the species of bread.

Thus, Missionaries and apostolic men are called to be ready for the needs of our neighbors: 'I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost' [cf. 1 Co 9:22].]The Apostolic Missionary is called] not to withdraw from hearing confessions, from distributing Holy Communion, from preaching, instructing, and administering the Sacraments -= but, to **any ministry whatsoever** that God might want.

We are Missionaries, but servants. We do not show repugnance ... but serve also under the weight of fatigue and trial. And we are called to serve God and the Church in the very first place ...¹²³.

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CONCLUSION

[1] This total self-giving to the **various and proper ministries** of the **Apostolic Missionaries for the assistance of Bishops**. has also been eloquently described by Fr. Bertoni himself in his rule. He wrote:

...Furthermore, no one should try to arrange it so he might be sent to one place rather than another, but each one should allow himself to be moved by obedience: yet, it is in no way wrong to show oneself ready or disposed.

In fact, Isaiah offered himself, and Jeremiah excused himself - but, the latter did not refuse to go when he was sent, nor did Isaiah presume to go until he had been purified by the flame from the altar. St. Gregory said that no one should dare to approach the

¹²³ Fr. Lenotti, in: CS III, pp. 411, ff.

sacred ministries unless he is purified - nor, should the one who is chosen contradict the choice in pride, under the specious appearance of humility...¹²⁴.

[2] In a much more existential manner, Fr. Bertoni has left this glowing description of his closest collaborator, whose life style is truly that of the **Apostolic Missionary**:

...During the day, Fr. Marani teaches school at the Stimate: evenings and free days he helps out at the house of the Dereletti. AT the Stimate, he teaches his classes, and then studies for a while in the library for his preaching. At the Dereletti, on Saturday evenings and Sundays, he hears confessions for long hours, and with much fruit for the people in the area.

The other evenings, he gives Moral theology cases, much like the old Fr. Guereri used to do. He discusses and resolves, as the need may arise, the most difficult cases, as these come in day by day. The Lord has gifted him with the light, prudence and clarity far beyond the ordinary.

On Thursdays, he serves as Vocations' Examiner for the seminarians at the Seminary. He also receives penitents from all walks of life and at any time, even interrupting his dinner, supper, and giving up his rest.

Likewise, on Feast Days, he hears confessions in the Choir of St. Stephen's, until it is time for him to give the Instruction at St. Sebastian's, which he continues until the Lord knows when. The people listen to him willingly, and it seems that the Word of God is not just thrown at them, but it is received in good soil. Before taking up again, the course of his Instructions, I sent him to San Zeno's to preach the Octave after All Soul's Day...¹²⁵.

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¹²⁴ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Original Constitutions, CF # 186.

¹²⁵ Letter 4 to Fr. Bragato, in: Ep pp. 315, ff.

