

PART TWO
PARTICULAR STUDIES

Section One

**[A] The "End" of the Congregation:
A Few Objective Elements in the Charism of the Stigmatine Founder**

[A General Chapter Intervention]

[Two Opinions - XXIXth General Chapter Intervention - January - March 1970]

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Introduction:

[1] The scope of this presentation of mine is that of offering my personal opinion regarding the specific apostolate of our Congregation. In this post-Vatican II era, there are few communities, I believe, who may boast of a program that is as up-dated as our own in its apostolic activity. This program which is summarized in our apostolic service offered to meet the needs of the Church today is found indicated, for those who would give them some time, in the Original Constitutions of our Founder.

[2] However, there exist among us, as there have existed for some time, two general opinions regarding the primary apostolate:

[a] One of these opinions follows Fr. Marani's interpretation regarding the "end" of our Congregation. Interpreting the intentions of the Founder, Fr. Marani maintained that we ought to serve the Church primarily by preaching Parish Missions to the People - and only after this has been complied with, he offers a list of subordinate apostolic activities. However, he himself does not always seem clear to everyone: for example in his "Report" addressed to the civil authorities, of December 14, 1853, he says simply that "the scope of this institute is that of assisting the Bishop in his needs." Then, in his Appeal addressed to the Holy See on the following day, he petitioned for this title for the Congregation: **Order of the Sacred Stigmata**. But, after six months he wrote: *...huius Sodalitatis membra vocantur Missionarii Apostolici ...* ["the members of this Community are called Apostolic Missionaries"]. Then, regarding the scope of the Community, he added this restriction: *... praecipua capita eorum in quibus Episcopis auxilium praestat Sodalitas sunt, praeter Missiones...* ["the principal headings under which this Sodality offers its services to the Bishops, in addition to the (Parish) Missions, are...].

[b] The second opinion - which I believe has always been the most wide-spread among us - is that the Stigmatines serve the Church: *... per ministerium Verbi Dei quodcumque, et Clericorum et iuvenum institutionem, dipendentemente dai Vescovi, e in loro ossequio...*¹ ["through any Ministry whatsoever of the Word of God, the formation of the Clergy and the instruction of youth, depending on the Bishops and in their assistance"].

[3] It seems to me that within the context of our Founder one might indeed discover a valid program also for this present period. In every period, the Stigmatines have sought to interpret this program, and to adapt it to the needs of the Church of their times. With this statement, I do not intend to say that the Congregation has always lived the subjective element of the Founder's Charism in the best possible manner. Fr. Tomasi, our Fifth Superior General, wrote on the occasion of the First Centenary of the life of our Institute:

¹ This is found among the "Responses" of the Capitular Commission of the IXth General Chapter, September 23, 1887.

...If we have in some measure lost [this original spirit], the Lord can give it to us anew; the humble recognition that we have in some way lost it, and the vivid desire of reacquiring it integrally, are the sole conditions that the Lord asks of us to make this gift to us ...².

[4] In truth, these words should be applied more to the Spirit of the Founder than to his Apostolic charism. Regarding the apostolate, on the other, in my opinion the essential approach has been maintained, and that our present Constitution # 3 contains the essential elements of the Founder's original plan. This is my opinion. I would like to add right away that it is our duty here as a Chapter to do more to bring alive even more the spirit of the Founder in our various apostolic activities today.

1. The Influence of St. Ignatius

a. First of all, I believe that in order to understand well Fr. Bertoni's intentions it would be useful to know the extent of the influence he received from the Founder of the Company of Jesus. While it is true that our Founder did not wish to make of himself "other Jesuits" ³, it cannot be denied that he experienced a clear dependence from the Company of Jesus. The short passage for his Spiritual Diary is quite well known to Stigmatines - the setting is that the Founder is on Retreat with a few priest friends - and with them he made a visit to the Altar of St. Ignatius:

...It seemed to me that the Saint [Ignatius] received us well and invited us to promote the greater glory of God, just as he did, and through the same ways, even though not in using all those means that he was able to make use of...⁴.

b. In the same sense, he wrote some eight years later in a Letter to Mother Naudet:

...The Arch-priest Galvani, is totally imbued with St. Ignatius. He has offered me the Stimite, as an opportune place to establish a Congregation of Priests, who would live under the rules of St. Ignatius ...⁵.

c. The "End of the Company of Jesus "is expressed right at the beginning of the introductory **Formula** at the beginning of their Constitutions. The purpose of the Jesuits is to serve the one Lord, and the Church, His Spouse, under the Roman Pontiff - this for the defense and the propagation of Christian doctrine. Their principal means are public preaching, conferences, and every other ministry of the Word of God whatsoever: the Spiritual exercises, with the teaching of the Christian truths to children and to the un-lettered, the hearing of Confessions, the administration of the Sacraments for the spiritual consolation of faithful Christians ⁶

d. In a manner that is even more brief, and almost as a kind of summary of the purpose of the Company of Jesus, the following appears in their Constitutions:

...the scope and the end of this Company is to go here and there, through the various parts of the world, by mandate of the Vicar of Christ, our Lord, by from the Superior of the

² Fr. Tomasi's Letter during World War I, 1916, may be found in: BC I, p. 7.

³ cf. Fr. D. Martinis, BERTONIANO, Supplemento to n. 3, 1954, pp. 411-413]

⁴ St. Gaspar Bertoni, in: MP, September 15, 1808, in: CS IV, p. 46.

⁵ cf. Ep, p. 130.

⁶ cf. **Formula SJ**, # 1

Company, to preach, to hear confessions, and to make use of all those other means that one might use with the grace of God, for the assistance of souls ...⁷.

1.] Comparing this now with the "End" of the Stigmatine Congregation [which is taken word for word from Suarez' Commentary on the State of Religion of the Society of Jesus], the Founder chose these words:

...the scope of our Congregation is that of servicing the Church with the various and proper ministries of its vocation, under the direction of the Bishops...⁸

2.] I believe that these **various and proper ministries of the Congregation's vocation**, and these **ministries that are proportionate** include those ministries included in Section X of Fr. Bertoni's original Constitutions, in Chapter II:

Those Means with which the Institute promotes the Salvation of its Neighbors.

Among these "means" we find the following [all taken from Suarez]:

- the taking on of the clerical state, and every disposition to assume this perfectly;
- the administration of the Sacraments, especially those of Penance and the Eucharist;
- celebrating Masses, imploring the fruit of the sermons and the confessions;
- every Ministry of the Word of God whatsoever;
- the formation and training of all in the clerical state.

e. Among the "forms of the Ministry of the Word of God"⁹, the Stigmatine Founder places the following:

- preaching publicly;
- or instructing the people with public and private catechism lessons;
- holding pious and holy conversations:
 - thus, at times fraternally correcting vices;
 - exhorting people to the practice of virtue, and to frequenting the Sacraments;
 - and encouraging people to the acquisition of perfection;
- preaching Retreats;
- promoting pious Congregations, or associations;
- attending devotedly to the spiritual care of the sick, especially those who are dying.

f. In the opinion I am presenting here, Fr. Lenotti seems to have understood our Stigmatine service [**ossequio**] of the Church in this broader manner, according to a rather ample list of ministries of the Word of God that he presents as we see from his Domestic Exhortations:

...it is necessary to learn how to manage well the Divine Word, with studies, with sacred reading, and to use it well according to the circumstances: in the confessional, in the prisons, on the podium, in the pulpit, from the altars, in the retreats, missions, Oratories, days of recollection, familiar conversations...¹⁰.

⁷ Constitutions SJ, # 308.

⁸ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Original Constitutions, CF # 185.

191 cf. *ib.*, CF # 163.

192 cf. ÇS III, pp. 409, ff.

1.] Form this, it can be seen that for Fr. Lenotti in his Exhortations in the House of Novitiate, the [Parish ?] "Missions" are simply included among the many other ministries of the Word of God that the Community is called to accomplish. He stated:

...we are Missionaries to serve God, our King ... and Jesus Christ, our Captain... and the Church. Let us never withdraw from hearing confessions, from sharing the word, preaching, instructing, administering the sacraments, and any ministry whatever that God would want...¹¹.

2.] It seems to me proper to note how this listing is very similar to that contained in the *Epitome* to the Jesuit Constitutions of the Company of Jesus:

...The principal ministries of the Society are the following: for the defense and the propagation of the faith, and the progress of souls in the life and doctrine of Christ, to deliver public preaching and conferences, and every other ministry of the Word of God whatsoever: to preach retreats; to instruct the young and the unlettered in Christian doctrine; to hear the confessions of the faithful of Christ, and to administer the other Sacraments to them; to perform the works of charity, in so far as this is judged for the greater glory of God and the common good...¹².

3.] Likewise in the Jesuit Constitutions there is found another similarity for the Stigmatine Founder. One reads the following:

...however, in the formula of the vow, mention is made of teaching catechism to the young because it is considered to have been recommended with particular force this holy exercise due to the singular service that such ministry renders to God, our Lord, for the assistance of souls, and because this kind of ministry runs the risk of being forgotten or neglected, that for other more spectacular ministries there would not be the same risk, as for preaching, and the like...¹³.

g. In Section IX of the Stigmatine Founder's Constitutions, the question of the "Professed" is discussed. These would be the **Apostolic Missionaries**, so specifically named by the Superior General of the Congregation, and they would profess solemn vows as a result. After having explained the various ministries of the Congregation, these words appear; ***Verbi Dei quodcumque Ministerium, Clericorum institutionem***, and the like. In Chapter VI of this section of these same "Professed" Fr. Bertoni likewise speaks of teaching catechism to the "unlettered", to the "youth". St. Gaspar chose these words from Suarez' Commentary:

... The Special Occupations of the Professed Fathers:

It is their task not only to teach the truths that are necessary or helpful to obtain eternal life by preaching, retreats, conferences, but also to explain the first elements of faith and morals, especially to the youth, and to other unlettered persons [***pueris et rudibus***] in the Oratories and in both public and private catechism instructions. This, too, is supremely useful to the Church; and therefore it is supremely to be recommended to the m...¹⁴.

h. In his time, Fr. Lenotti likewise explained the Founder's central ideal:

¹¹ cf. CS III, pp. 411, ff.]

¹² cf. Epitome SJ, to # 22, Par. 6, # 7.

¹³ cf. Constitutions SJ, # 528.

¹⁴ cf. CF # 182 - from Fr. Suarez.

...The perspective of the Very Reverend Fr. Gaspar was always the good of the Church; therefore, he was always attentive to observe the present needs of the Church herself, and for this he studied, wrote, and preached...¹⁵.

Summary: For these reasons, it seems to me that our Founder left the actual choice of the apostolic activities of the Congregation in the hands of the Bishops, who would be moved by their changing needs, according to the times and places. IT also seems to me that the Founder had in mind a rather broad program, within the confines of the Ignatian expression: ***Ministerium Verbi Dei quodcumque***□ The choice of the actual apostolic means to be employed, would depend on the actual needs of the local Churches. therefore, I believe that these were the reasons that Fr. Lenotti found such similarity between the Stigmatines and the Jesuits:

...It is seen clearly how the intention of Fr. Bertoni ... was to found a Congregation, which, like the Company of Jesus is in a special way dedicated, oriented toward the service [***ossequio***] and dispositions of the Roman Pontiff - and that our Congregation would be dedicated, determined in a totally special manner, and signed to the service and assistance [***ossequio***] of the Bishops...¹⁶.

This leads to a second point: Our Specific End. Fr. Bertoni stated:

2. The End: ***Missionarii Apostolic in obsequium Episcoporum***

a. It seems to me that this study of our Stigmatine history might show that our earlier members, in general, did not interpret these words in a limited manner. I believe that the majority through the years have understood these words as a kind of analogy, comparison. This would mean that we are being called as Stigmatines to imitate the life of the Apostles, and that our "end" is to become Missionaries sent to accede, through each one's specialized assistance the Ministry of the Word of God, to the requests, even those unexpected ones, of the successors of the Apostles.

b. It also seems to me that our Founder purposefully used an expression that was quite open to a broad interpretation, for a later specification, depending on the changing needs of the Bishops. IT does not seem that our Founder has explained these expressions clearly within his own Constitutions, left unfinished. Examples of some of these expressions would be the following:

apostolici muneris [CF # 2]; ***perfectum opus sacerdotium; apostolicam missionem*** [CF # 7]; - ***officium sacerdotale*** [CF # 76]; - ***Missionarii Apostolici*** [CF # 85] - ***graviora ministeria quae Sacerdotium requirunt*** [CF # 158].

The other opinion regarding the "Stigmatine Apostolic Mission" would interpret these expressions to mean the essential end of the Congregation, indicating the Parish Missions to every class of believers. Hence, all of these expressions [the majority of which are taken verbally from Suarez, with the broader Ignatian interpretation in mind] would mean Parish Missions. However, in our Stigmatine history, these have been interpreted in a broader, and less exclusive manner.

c. In this regard, there was a Capitular Commission, chosen by the XVIIIth General Chapter to prepare the Constitutions for the following General Chapter to be held in 1914. The members of this Commission were: Fathers Piccoli, Zaupa, Fiorio, John B. Castellani and Sozzi

¹⁵ *Summarium Additionale*, Doc. XX, p. 154.

¹⁶ cf. CS III, pp. 409, ff.

17. This Capitular Commission explicitly these matters. This is the interpretation they offered of the Stigmatine "Apostolic Mission":

...Our special end consists in giving a special assistance to the Bishops in their apostolic mission of saving souls...¹⁸.

d. The above-mentioned Commission reduced the **various and proper ministries of our vocation** to four headings. This reminds us, too, that the Founder referred to this, our vocation, as "one that was arduous and difficult"¹⁹. The Commission found all these concepts, and also the list of our various apostolates - and not some primary apostolate [such as Parish Missions] - in the Founder's Original Constitutions²⁰.

1.] In my view, the *ministeria graviora*, the *munus apostolicum* and the **Apostolic Mission**: are the same. When our Congregation has served the Church with eminent services, even though in different ways, it has achieved its end.

2.] As for the **Apostolic Mission** I believe that this is parallel to the same ideal in the Jesuit Constitutions. From the beginning to the end, the Constitutions of St. Ignatius [as the Commentary of Francis Suarez] speak of a **Mission**, which is described as an **apostolic expedition**. The XXXIst General Congregation of the Jesuits declared that the Constitutions of the Company are **Missionary** - and that from the time of the Pontifical Bull, *Licet Debitum* [1549], the obedience within the Society acquired its full apostolic and missionary sense.²¹.

3.] For the Jesuits, the word **Mission** can be synonymous with **ministry**. In general, **Mission** is defined as 'that which refers to the divine worship and the good of the Christian religion, without bringing excuses, and without asking anything for the expenses of the journey'²².

e. We have already seen a list of the **principal ministries**, or the **Missions** of the Company of Jesus - and that there is a clear similarity with the Constitutions of our Founder. Descending now to particulars, the Jesuit Constitutions speak of the various **Missions**: as, the **Foreign Missions**; then, the **Missions of the Superior of the Society**. The Superior General of the Company, by concession made by the Supreme Pontiff, could send any person whatsoever of the Company, wherever though would seem to be to serve the great usefulness. However, wherever all the members might be assigned, they will always remain at the disposition of His Holiness²³.

f. The Constitutions of the Company of Jesus speak also of the **Missions to the People**. It is interesting to note, however, that for the Jesuits, the **Missions to the People** clearly are not the end of the Company of Jesus²⁴. Furthermore, the Jesuits also imposed other restrictions on their handling of **Parish Missions** or the Spiritual Exercises. Let us read from their Constitutions:

¹⁷ cf. *Bertoniano* 1911, pp. 25-27.

¹⁸ cf. Notes of the Commission. p. 20.

¹⁹ cf. CF # 185.

²⁰ cf. CF ## 161-167. cf. *Bertoniano* n. 1, 1968, pp. 240, ff.

²¹ cf. Documents of the XXXIst General Congregation of the SJ. n. 3, note 5; n. 4

²² cf. Constitution SJ # 7.

²³ cf. Constitution SJ # 618.

²⁴ cf. *Bertoniano*, Supplementum to n. 2, 1967, pp. 205, ff.

...if any of the occupations are of a more universal good, and they extend their assistance to a greater number of persons, as preaching does, sacred conferences - or, if other occupations are more particular, as hearing confessions, or the giving of the Spiritual Exercises - and in the hypothesis that one has to make a choice between the two, it is necessary to give preference to the former. ²⁵.

g. Therefore, I believe that our Stigmatine Founder's Constitutions ## 69-76 might be understood in this manner: the promotion of our confreres to the **officium sacerdotale**, is geared to the **munus missionum dirigendarum**. In other words, the **Missions**, and their direction, are understood by our Founder as a very efficacious means to prepare young priests for other ministries. We find a concept that is very close to this idea in the Epitome; of the Jesuits:

... the members can be destined not so much to the sacred ministry to be carried out in the manner of workers, but to the more humble ministries, such as the **Missions** in the villages and townships, which do not require great preparation, nor are they ministries that would last more than about a month: for this purpose they are taken on that they might serve as a certain preparation for future ministries, an excitement of zeal for souls and an exercise in abnegation ²⁶.

1.] For these reasons, it does not seem to me that our Founder ever understood the **Apostolic Mission**, the **muneris apostolici, graviora ministeria, opus perfectum sacerdotum** : all these as meaning primarily Parish Missions.

2.] The Constitutions of the Jesuits speak of the **Missions of the Supreme Pontiff**. These are those **Missions** that demand the Professed' members, properly so called, of the Company. Let us read from their Formula of Profession:

...I promise a special obedience to the Roman Pontiff regarding the **Missions**, according to the norm of their Apostolic Letters and these Constitutions...²⁷.

h. I think that the **Apostolic Mission** in the mind of the Stigmatine Founder would indeed include these **ministeria graviora**, through which the Congregation serves the Church, under the requests of the Bishops. Our history is full of examples of **special ministries** that our members have offered to Bishops. Fr. Bragato, the person who was the "most dear" for our Founder, and also the most useful that we have ²⁸, is an example of the sacrifice of the personnel of the Congregation for the good of the Church, to accede to a request of a Bishop for a special endeavor. Our Fathers who were sacrificed for the Chairs in the Seminary, for me, are another example of these **ministeria graviora** , which demand in the members an authentic specialization.

i. In so far as what pertains to the promotion to the title of **Apostolic Missionary** is concerned, it seems that our first General Chapters considered as necessary for this three qualities, expressed in the Constitutions of the Founder

- the priesthood;
- an uncommon culture, and a proof of one;s goodness of life;
- the choice made by the Superior General ²⁹.

²⁵ cf. Constitutions SJ # 623.

²⁶ cf. Epitome SJ, n. 434,n. 2.

²⁷ cf. Constitutions SJ # 527.

²⁸ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Letter to Fr. Bragato, in: Ep p. 311.

²⁹ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Original Constitutions, CF ## 158-160.

1.] Let us read from the "Appendix" to Part XII of the Constitutions of our Founder approved by the IInd General Chapter:

... To the Superior General there pertains the discerning of the conferral of the grade of **Apostolic Missionary** upon those whom he judges to be suitable, according to the Constitutions of Fr. Bertoni, in Part IX, Chapter 1³⁰, and by us referred to and prescribed in Chapter I, Paragraph 2..³¹.

2.] As far as Fr. Bragato is concerned, the IIIrd General Chapter in 1871 conferred upon him the title of **Apostolic Missionary**. The Minutes of that Chapter describe him as being **on a Mission to the Imperial Court of Prague**³². Fr. Bragato had gone to Prague some 36 years earlier in the quality of Confessor.

3.] In 1889, the IXth General Chapter approved the Constitutions to be presented to the Holy See for approval. Let us read the qualities required of a member in order for him to be declared an **Apostolic Missionary**:

...no one is to be given this grade of membership, unless he is:

- at least 35 years old, and having completed 10 years of vows in our Community;
- Furthermore there is required in him in addition to outstanding piety, a love for the regular discipline, and a zeal for the salvation of souls;
- that he be endowed with a fitting learning, i.e., that he have completed the entire curriculum of theology, and having come through it all with a comprehensive examination with praise;
- and furthermore that he be held in high esteem within the Community uppermost in his mind - either because:
 - either for several years he would have been committed to giving the Spiritual exercises, or the sacred missions;
 - or that at least for three years he would have served as the Director of some one of our houses;
 - or that he would have been genuinely dedicated to the instructing and educating the youth for many years;
 - or that he have carried out in outstanding manner some other office, or duty, for the good of the Community, for a fitting length of time.

...

CONCLUSION

[1] In conclusion, it seems to me that the End of our Congregation might well be defined as follows:

*...Ecclesiae sub Episcoporum obsequium praestare, per varia et propria vocationis munera*³³.

Our apostolic program asks us all to serve:

*... per varia Ecclesiae obsequia, quae pro temporum et occasionum diversitate occurrunt utilissima erunt*³⁴.

³⁰ This would mean CF ## 158-161.

³¹ cf. p. 42 of the original.

³² cf. The Original Acts of this IIIrd General Chapter, p. VIII.

³³ St. Gaspar Bertoni, Original Constitutions, CF # 185.

In my view, a list of the principal "means" to serve the Church can be found in Section IX of the Constitutions of the Founder, entitled:

...De Professorum Gradu: Verbi Dei quodcumque ministerium, et Clericorum et iuvenum institutionem, dipendentemente dai Vescovi, e in loro ossequio.

[2] The views expressed by those outside the Congregation, on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities, contemporaries to our first confreres, who have known and appreciated our Congregation, manifest a kind of unanimity regarding our end. They maintain that our men:

...by their special ecclesiastical vocation, were dedicated and spent themselves entirely and exclusively on the assistance [**ossequio**] and serving the Diocesan Ordinary ...³⁵..

...this Congregation never ceased existing and show itself committed to any ecclesiastical ministry whatsoever, to which they might be invited by their Bishop ³⁶.

[3] The Post Vatican II Era: if we compare now the challenges of Vatican II, it seems to me that if we understand the Apostolic Mission as I have presented it here - then our end renders us most "up-dated". In fact, in the Council Documents we can find so many concepts that we might consider truly "Stigmatine":

[a] For example, all religious are invited to collaborate with the Bishops ³⁷. For us, this is a most favorable insight of our Founder, and today a special appeal is being made, in that we are already called in the strength of our vocation, to the service of the Church under the direction of Bishops.

[b] A further point: our Founder with , St. Thomas Aquinas, places **contemplata aliis tradere** as the end: of our Congregation ³⁸. The IInd Vatican Council has invited us a number of times to offer the fruit of our contemplation to the faithful ³⁹.

[c] The IInd Vatican Council sees the complementarity between the 'sorrowful' and 'glorious' aspects of the one Mystery of Jesus Christ ⁴⁰... Within the Congregation, there were so many years of hesitation between the "Sorrowful Stigmata" and the "Glorious Stigmata", and today we might the 'whole', integral Christ in worship.

[d] We all know that our Founder insisted on the practice of hiddenness and humility. Furthermore, the IInd Vatican Council invite all priests and religious to the humble and hidden life ⁴¹. I will not dally here to emphasize how Holy Abandonment is indeed the characteristic of our Founder's own life.

³⁴ cf. CDB # 57.

³⁵ cf. **Bertoniano**, n. 1, 1968, p. 245.

³⁶ For other texts, cf. the "Appendix" added to Chapter II, of this First Part.

³⁷ cf. CD ## 33-35.

³⁸ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Original Constitutions, CF # 49.

³⁹ cf. PO # 13; OT # 8; PC ## 5 & 8.

⁴⁰ cf. LG # 7; SC # 12.

⁴¹ cf. LG # 41; PO # 15; OT # 2; PC # 13.

[4] Truly, "the spirit of Holy Abandonment is codified in the very Rules of our Institute" ⁴². I, too, believe that there are many traces of Holy Abandonment in the Constitutions of our Founder. For example, the following are indications of Holy Abandonment:

- his *gratis omnino* ⁴³.
- his ideal of being 'content' with one's own grade of membership.

[5] In my view, the Congregation is conceived by our Founder under the influence of his own personal Holy Abandonment to God's will:

[a] This Holy Abandonment needs to continue in the Congregation. Examples are how the Founder never anticipated, but always awaited the clear manifestation of God's Will. In this way, I believe that the Congregation should never insist on our wills with the Bishops, but to await the knowledge from them of their needs for their local Church.

[b] However, this theme would need a further intervention, and this present one is already too long!

[5] The Jesuits really are the "Army of the Pope". I will close this intervention of mine saying that the originality of our Founder is to be sought in his design of a Congregation, composed of men, truly specialized [particularly in the sacred field]. something like a flying squadron - at the disposition of the Church, under the direction of the Bishops. The secret of the efficacy of a renewed up-dating there has to be found in us the disposition of imitating those heroic virtues of our Founder - recently officially defined by the Church in his life, and wondrously lived by the early Father and brothers of the community.

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⁴² cf. Nello Dalle Vedove, *Modello di Santo Abbandono*, p. 236.

⁴³ cf. CF ##3; 92' 102; 184; 297.

Section Two

**[B] The Apostolic Hope of St. Gaspar Bertoni:
Abandonment to God - Availability to the Church
[Week End Reflection - Province of the Holy Cross
Brazil - General Canonical Visitation
November 1, 1990**

**[First Anniversary of the Founder's Canonization: November 1, 1989]
[First Centenary of the Approbation of the Constitutions: September 15, 1890]
[25th Anniversary of the Closing of Vatican II].**

1. **"Progress": A Fundamental Biblical Law** - a number of texts could be cited in this regard:

a, A Few Important Texts

And the child grew, and became strong, and increased in wisdom. And the grace of God was with him.. He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them. His Mother, however, kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and in grace, before God and men [cf. Lk 2:40, 51, f.; 1 S 2:26; Pr 3:4].

No disciple is greater than his master, nor servant superior to his lord. It suffices that the disciple as his master, or servant like his lord [cf. MT 10:24, ff.]

St. Paul

II Co

We reflect the splendor of the glory of God, we are transfigured into the same image, ever more resplendent [cf. 3:18]

Grace grew among many, and was translated into thanksgiving for the glory of God [cf. 4:15].

Ephesians

And you, too, are all being built up together to serve as a dwelling of God, in the Spirit [cf. 2:20-22].

Thus you have the conditions to comprehend with all the stains what is the length, the width, the height and the depth, to know the love of Christ which exceeds all knowledge so that you would become the total fullness of God [cf. 3:16-19].

This is until all grow into the unity of faith, and the full knowledge of the Son of God, the state of the perfect man through the stature of the fullness of Christ... we will grow in all ... and realize His growth for the true up-building of love [cf. 4:13-16].

Finally, strengthen yourselves in the Lord and in the strength of his power [cf. 6:10].

Philippians

Be sure that the One Who has begun this good work in you will bring it to full perfection on the day of Christ Jesus [cf. 1:6 - this is a text often quoted by Gaspar Bertoni, as in CF # 185].

May your love grow stronger each day [cf. 1 9, f.].

It is not that I am puffed up or that I have already reached perfection, but that I am moving along so that I might be with Jesus Christ... moving ahead, running for the reward of the vocation from on high, moved by God in Jesus Christ [cf. 3:12]

Colossians

We do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you be raised up to the full knowledge of God [cf. 1:19].

So that he might reach the richness in full of the understanding and the comprehension of the mystery of God, Christ [cf. 2:2-3]

And that you might be dressed anew, and be renewed for the knowledge according to the image of your Creator.. but above all, dress yourselves in charity which is the bond of perfection [cf. 3:10-15].

1 Thessalonians

However, you must continue to progress [cf. 4:1]

II Thessalonians

We feel obliged to thank God continually for you in that your faith is growing greatly and the charity you have for one another through your perseverance [cf. 1:3, ff.]

It is so that our God might make you worthy of His vocation so that you might achieve in all the good plan and that your faith might remain active [cf. 1:11].

Hebrews

Let us run with perseverance toward the goal that is proposed to us, with our eyes fixed on the one who is the author and the realization of the faith, Jesus, who in the light of faith rejoiced in the suffering of the Cross [cf. 2:1, f.].

St. James

It is necessary that perseverance should produce a perfect work, that you might become perfect and integral without any deficiency [cf. 1:2-4].

1 Peter

Then you will reach the purpose of your faith which is the salvation of your souls [cf. 1: 8-9].

2 Peter

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [cf. 3:18].

1 John

But for the one who will keep His word, in him truly will the love of God be perfect [cf. 2:5] .

Beloved, we are already the children of God but what we will be has not yet been revealed [cf. 3:2].

Judas

But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God, placing your hope in the mercy of our Lord, Jesus Christ, for eternal life [v. 20].

Apocalypse

...Who has ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.. [cf. 3:6, 22].

All of **EX-istence** is an **EX-odus**
A Going out from all that is, to what still might be!

ooooo

b. St. Gaspar Bertoni - A Pondered History⁴⁴

The saints of the Church are the most important commentary on the Gospel because they are the incarnate interpretation of God's Word and thus they serve as a way of access to Jesus Christ, according to Von Balthasar⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ cf. Wolfgang Beinert, *O Culto dos Santos Hoje*. Sao Paolo. Ed. Paulinas 1990.

⁴⁵ ib., p. 5.

The saints are those persons who in their quality as members of the Church, through the heroic practice of love and of the other Christian virtues, open themselves up completely through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the call of God ⁴⁶.

The term "Saint" is not "univocal", but "analogical". Essentially it is employed with particular insistence and emphasis as an attribute of the Name of God - as the **Holy** Trinity, the **Holy** Son of God, the **Holy** Spirit, the **Holy** Eucharist, **Holy** Communion ⁴⁷.

Holy is not simply one attribute of God out of many, but the word expresses His essence - and this essence is in itself, and in all its exterior applications, from creation until our final return to God: love, mercy: Be **Holy** because I am **holy**, the Lord your God [cf. Lv 19:2; 20:8]. St. Luke presents this **Law of Holiness** in these terms: Be merciful, because I am merciful ⁴⁸.

In English, there are two distinct words, very similar in their pronunciation and we might say, also in their meaning: **wholly** would signify "totally", "integrally" with all one's strength, ability, capacity - and **Holy** which means God-like, sharing in his sanctity.

For St. Irenaeus,

...the glory of God consists in the realization of this manifestation and communication of His goodness, for which the world was created. God made us 'to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, *to the praise of his glorious grace*, for "the **glory of God is man fully alive**; moreover man's life is the vision of God: if God's revelation through creation has already obtained life for all beings that dwell on earth, how much more will the Word's manifestation of the Father obtain life for those who see God. The ultimate purpose of creation is that God 'who is the creator of all things may at last become all in all, this simultaneously assuring his own glory and our beatitude."⁴⁹.

A Saint is a person who exists in the full possession of self. Holiness is indeed a paradox: a *tremendous mystery*, which stands in the middle, has relationships, and is separate. [Somewhat facetiously, it was often said: From the saints and Superiors - deliver us, O Lord!"]

On the other hand, authentic holiness reveals itself as a kind of splendor, vitality and glory: a genuine saint attracts, fascinates. The *mysterium tremendum* is at the same time, a *mysterium fascinosum* ⁵⁰.

A saint lives religion integrally - a word that has at least three possible root meanings:

- **re - ligare** : accepting a bond, a most intimate and sublime link of love with the Holy Spirit;

- **re - eligere** : a repetition of one's response when one is elected, chosen to be committed to God;

- **re - legere** : one discovers the authentic fulfillment of life in the word of the Son of God - a kind of on-going conversion.

Holiness is the central theme of the Bible - in its turn, holiness is a vocation, a particular meaning, as the 'holy' book, or the Sacred Scripture - the 'holy' book, written in the divine, holy, sacred tradition ⁵¹.

⁴⁶ ib., p. 11.

⁴⁷ ib. p. 13.

⁴⁸ ib., p. 29.

⁴⁹ cf. CCC # 294.

⁵⁰ cf. W.Beinert, *O Culto dos Santos Hoje*, ¶ p. 20.

Jesus Christ manifests a new dimension of what it means to be 'holy': He Himself is the Holy Son of God, sanctified through the Holy Spirit. His Mission consists in particular in His personal Filiation - in communicating the Holy Spirit to human beings⁵².

The Holy Spirit appears as a Gift of Love, and He communicates himself intimately as God to us, as sanctifying grace, as the grace of our vocation, which the saintly Stigmatine Founder has termed a vocation that is **difficult and arduous**, but also possible⁵³.

c. A Few Theological and Spiritual Reflections: - Christian Holiness would have these dimensions:

[1] Trinitarian: The Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* [# 41] presents the universal call to holiness: and this Holiness is the fruit of the actin of the Holy Spirit, is realized as the following of Jesus Christ, and consistent in obedience to the Will of the Father [48].

[2] Paschal: on the "birthday" of the saints [into heaven] the Church proclaims the Paschal mystery realized in them - what they suffered in Christ and how, like He, they are sanctified by it all.

[a] Anthropological: based on the history, sociology and psychology of each person.

[b] Christological: firmly rooted in the Person of Jesus Christ, in great openness to human beings of our time, as based in the reality of the Risen Christ, each person can attain supreme perfection. Jesus and human beings are united mutually in a radical and absolute manner: the humanity of man and the divinity of God are never eliminated, confused⁵⁴.

[c] Soteriological, Redemptive: salvation is achieved uniquely "through Jesus Christ Our Lord, the true Son of God, in the unity of the Holy Spirit" - human beings are not separated among themselves, but rather they come together in Jesus Christ for their salvation⁵⁵.

[d] Eucharistic

[3] Pneumatological: the Spirit of Christ is the principle of the sanctifying love of God and therefore, at the same time, it is what brings about the transformation of each one into Jesus Christ, through sanctifying each⁵⁶.

[b] Biblical

[4] Ecclesial: Holiness is realized always in the Communion of saints and is salvation into the Communion of saints. A number of dimensions may be considered:

[a] Contemplative: [cf. SC 2; DV 8];

[b] Missionary

[c] Liturgical: in the context of Worship and prayer. St. Thomas speaks of the saints in the context of prayer⁵⁷.

⁵¹ ib., p. 27.

⁵² cf. ib., p. 32.

⁵³ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, CF # 185.

⁵⁴ cf. Beinert, *O Culto dos Santos*, o.c., p.. 60.

⁵⁵ cf. o.c., p. 83.

⁵⁶ cf. o.c., p. 63.

[5] Mariological: Some theologians would place a tract on "Hagiology", the Theology of the Saints, as an Appendix, or Corollary, to Mariology: all are "saints", "holy" through her intercession.

d. Reflections: This question on the positioning of Saints in Theology: under Mariology; a part of Eschatology; Ecclesiology; Sacramentology; as part of the Theology of Grace: all are possible. These possibilities might show that it is a part of theology that perhaps should not be held either a section of an introductory course on Spirituality, but that in truth, Holiness is central to dogma. One solution might be rather than to separate a course on "Hagiology" it would be best to insert the ideal in various aspects of dogma, but that it should not be reduced to a marginal consideration⁵⁸.

1.] There is a Christocentric Nature to Liturgy: and this is emphatically, Eucharistic - this offers to the ecclesial communities the natural place in which this theme could receive even greater light and insight⁵⁹.

2.] When the Liturgy proclaims its mystery to the Pilgrim Church across time, it does not pretend to proclaim this without any reference to the contemporary situation. It is totally inclined to be inclined, immersed in this world, and yet not a reality that would be absorbed by any one age. Beginning with the Incarnation, we know that God saves this world, not by passing above, and not ever being involved in it, but saves it from within, making use of weak human instruments inspired through the life of worship, even though these instruments are imperfect⁶⁰.

3.] The saints are the exemplary realization of the Following/ Imitation of Jesus Christ, in 'putting on His mind', concretized in a given lived situation and historical environment. The saints are those who live a profound experience of God the Father, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For this very reason they are the most effective witnesses of the Gospel, in the service of the Church - similar to the Virgin Mary, 'who pondered the Word of God in her heart '[cf. Lk 2:19, 52].

e. The Spirituality of St. Gaspar Bertoni: seems to be a fusion of his historical reality with the grace of God. Reflecting on his life today, a few elements might be noted which indeed were for him a kind of "lived Stigmata", or wounds that he received in his lifetime, which transformed him through a most profound dedication on his part, in correspondence to his life of Grace.

1.] The Deaths of his own loved ones: from the age of nine, until he was 15. five members of his family died, including his only and younger sister, Metilda, who was just two years old. This reality profoundly marked the heart of young Gaspar, giving him a sense of the fleeting nature of human life: "We do not have here a permanent home!"

2.] The Separation of his Parents: after these deaths, the father of young Gaspar unfortunately separated from his wife, abandoning her and his only son, and left behind just enough financial support just to eke out an existence. This separation, too, marked the boy with a profound love for his Mother - and, at the same time, with a more ready faith in Mary, the Mother of Jesus and the Spouse of Joseph.

⁵⁷ cf. Summa , II-II, q. 83, a. 11; cf. Beinert, *O Culto dos Santos* , o.c., p. 50.

⁵⁸ cf. Beinert, *O Culto dos Santos*, o.c., p. 53.

⁵⁹ o.c., p. 55.

⁶⁰ o.c., p. 73.

3.] Illness that remained throughout his entire Life: after these family sufferings, Fr. Bertoni never again enjoyed good, or robust health. He underwent numerous operations, and endured other sufferings. By his faith, hope and charity, Fr. Gaspar was able to transform all these sadness in a vibrant devotion for the Wounds as those of Christ, accepted on Calvary and retained in His resurrection.

4.] Apostolic Failure: not all of his endeavors were crowned with success - a number of times, his conduct life, his prayer and his great project undertaken in behalf of the Church. did not meet success.

5.] Finally, his Congregation of the sacred Stigmata at the Service of Bishops did not develop in his life-time. The community was founded in 1816 - and on the day of his death almost 37 years later, it did not have more than ten members.

f. However, the contribution that St. Gaspar Bertoni made in his time, remains to this day - he is a witness of holy abandonment to the Will of God, in the dedicated service of humanity. Fr. Gaspar Bertoni had the great intuition to unite his routine daily life into a sacrifice, uniting it to his Eucharistic celebration, which he celebrated each day, according to a principle suggested by St. Paul: My brothers, through the mercy of God make of your bodies [i.e., entire lives] a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God [cf. Rm 12: 1, ff. - the Latin word here for the bodily oblation, is **obsequium** according to the Latin Vulgate.

...

2. The Icon of the Living God: this would mean a 'door' to the Trinity, and a 'mirror' for Christianity. There are a few texts that might be cited in this regard:

Introduction: The authentic dignity of each person is in the image of God - a relationship, orientation toward God.

a. A Revealed Principle

God said: Let us make human beings according to our image and likeness...God created humanity according to His image, in the image of God did He created many and woman He created them [cf. Gn 1:26, f.].

On the day God created Adam and Eve, He made them in the likeness of God [cf. Gn 5:1].

And He made them a little less than God, crowning him with glory and beauty [cf. Ps 8:6].

God created humanity in incorruptibility, and made all to His image in the likeness of His own nature [cf. Ws. 2:23].

He made them like Himself, He created them to His own image [cf. Si 17:3]

b. The Development of this Doctrine in the NT

1.] Humanity is indeed created in the image of God and of His glory [cf. 1 Co 11:7].

2.] Predestined in the image of Jesus Christ: we know that the entire creation groans and suffers the pain of birth in the present...we are saved in hope... those He knew beforehand, these He predestined, and they will be conform to the image of His Son [cf. Rm 8:22-29, passim]

And as we are marked in the image of the human person, so we will be drawn up in the image of the heavenly man [cf. 1 Co 15:49].

3.] This is all a progressive transformation into the image of Jesus Christ. And all of us with uncovered faces, we reflect as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are transfigured into His very image, each time more resplendent by the action of the Lord, Who is Spirit [cf. 2 Co 3:18].

c. Jesus Himself is a Window/the ICON of the Most Holy Trinity: He is the splendor of His glory the very breath of His being [cf. Heb 1:3]. - Jesus is the ICON of the Invisible God [cf. Col 1:15].

1.] ICON: is the First-Born: a fusion of wisdom and redemption.

2.] Wisdom: a divine capacity, special Gift.

3.] Soteriology: a new creation: if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a New Creation [cf. 2 Co 5: 17 +].

d. Jesus is indeed the Light, Mirror for Human Beings: In this He was the Life and the Life was the Light for human beings [cf. Jn 1:4] - For the rest what matters is not circumcision and being without circumcision, but to be a New Creature [cf. Ga 6:17] - In Him were created all things [cf. Col 1:16]. - It was all for the purpose of making in Himself but one new person [cf. Ep 2:15].

...

St. Gaspar has left behind a note that might serve as a useful point of reflection in the regarding of ICONS, painting: We are all called to reproduce in ourselves the portrait of Jesus Christ ⁶¹. An Image/ ICON that was important to St. Gaspar was that of the Crucified, wounded Christ - in his Risen form as well, with His wounds evident on His body.

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3. **A Central Biblical Ideal: the Poor of the Lord Whom He loves**

Introduction: the Modern Times have studied poverty, both with alarm and with some hope from a variety of perspectives:

a. Ecology: some book titles: *The Terminal Generation; Limits to Growth* .

b. Economy: the concerns of the Pope: *Centesimus Annus; Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*

c. Missiology: the Documents of Puebla ⁶².

d. Ascetics: St. Thomas Aquinas showed the bond between the Beatitude of Poverty and the Theological Virtue of Hope: Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for of such is the Reign of God [cf. Mt 5:5].

a. The Anawim in the OT:

1.] This is not merely an economic poverty, as is indicated in the Wisdom tradition: - the lazy hand makes one poor, the diligent arm enriches [cf. Pr 10:4].

2.] Injustice also leads to poverty: the impious move the boundary markers, they steal from the lowly shepherd - the poor of the land hide themselves - they go about nude for the lack of clothing, they have no covering to protect them from the cold [cf. Jb 24:2-12].

3.] Zephaniah saw it as a spiritual value: I will leave in your midst a poor and lowly people and will procure for them a refuge in the Name of Yahweh [cf. Zp 3:12].

⁶¹ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, in:MP February 2, 1808.

⁶² cf. Part 4, Chapter I, nn. 1128-1165.

a.] The Psalms offer descriptions of the OT "Poor" [cf. Ps 22:16; 34:2; 37:11; 69:33; 74:10; 149:4, etc.].

b.] The Prophets seek for justice for the *Anawim* [cf. Am 2:6, etc.].

c.] Isaiah notes that the poor are the "beloved of God" [cf. Is 49:13; 66:2].

4.] Some exemplary testimonies:

a.] Jeremiah:

[1] in his crisis of faith, or vocation, Lord God Sabbaoth, I will come to You and to You I expose my cause: why does the way of the impious prosper? [cf. Jr 11:18 - 12:6]. In truth, Lord, did I not serve You in the best possible manner: why is my suffering continual and my wound incurable which refuses to be healed. You are for me a deceptive stream [cf. Jr 15:10-17; Lm 3:17, ff.].

[2] His response is heroic hope: [cf. Lm 3:21, ff.] I will hand my self over to you [cf. Jr 15:18]. Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed; save me, and I will be saved, because you are my Praise. You are my refuge in the day of tribulation [cf. Jr 17:14-18; 18:18-22; 20:7-18].

b.] Job: his were sufferings of various types and his response is abandonment to the wisdom of God:

[1] Invasion of Trials: I lived in tranquillity when he struck me, held me by the nape of the neck. He made of me his anvil [cf. Jb 16:12] - The hand of God wounded me [cf. Jb 19:11-21].

[2] The Triumph of Faith: this is Job's final response - I confess that You can do all things, and that none of Your plan is frustrated [cf. Jb 42:2-6].

c.] Suffering Servant: cf. the Canticles, Is 41:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12].

[1] A Prophet, predestined by God, with a divine mission, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

[2] A Servant of God who would triumph from humiliations to glorification.

[3] A word of comfort for the weary.

[4] By His wounds, ours are cured [cf. Is 53:5; 1 P 2:22-24].

d.] The Poor Just Man of Wisdom [cf. Ws 2:10-20].

[1] The just man is not easy to take, he claims to be the Son of God.

[2] His life distinguishes him for the rest, his ways are different.

[3] He proclaims that the destiny of the just is happy.

[4] He underwent a shameful death, but he will be raised up.

e.] Anonymous Psalmists: Trusting in God

[1] Ps 35:10: Yahweh, who is equal to You in freeing the poor?

[2] Ps 69:30: As for me, poor and wounded, that Your salvation, o God, might protect me!

[3] Ps 74:21: that the poor and need might praise Your name!

[4] Ps 80:1: Incline Your ear, O Yahweh, listen to me, as I am poor and needy.

[5] Psalm 131: An image dear to Fr. Bertoni: as a child who has just been weaned - place your hope in the Lord, now and always.

[6] Ps 9-10: I rejoice and exult in You - He never shuts out the cry of the poor - the hope of the poor will never be frustrated.

f.] Ben Sirach [or. 'Ecclesiasticus'] he unites love for wisdom with love of the TORAH - full of fervor the Temple and its ceremonies - he knows to the depths the sacred books: he offers the instruction of Wisdom personally to all those who seek it. A fundamental principle of Sirach is Fear of the Lord. He offers a meditation on Sacred History - this is the ultimate testimony of Jewish Wisdom in Palestine: My son, if you dedicate yourself to serve the Lord, prepare for an ordeal [cf. Si 2:1] - The fear of the Lord is wisdom and instruction, its vesture would be faith and meekness [cf. Si 1:27] - The more important you become, so much the more humble yourself [cf. Si 3:17-19]. - Incline Your ear to the poor and respond to him with salvation, with affability [cf. Si 4:8]. - Whether rich or poor, each one's glory is the fear of the Lord - it is not just to disdain a poor man who is intelligent - no one is greater than the one who fears the Lord [cf. Si 10:20-24].

g.] King David: he is remembered as "poor" for three reasons [incidentally, the word **anaw** appears 69 time in the Psalms - and 35 of these times are interference to David]:

[1] Unjust Persecutions

[a] On the Part of Saul [1 S 18:1-3113].

[b] His own son, Absalom [cf. 2 S 13:1-19:9].

[2] The Deaths of those He loved:

[a] His Elegy for Soul and Jonathan [cf. 2 S 1:17-27].

[b] The death of his son from Bethsheba [cf. 2 S 19:1-9].

[c] The death of his unfaithful son, Absalom [cf. 1 S 19:1-9].

[3] His own personal sin: To You, O Lord, I will confess my iniquity [cf. Ps 32:5] - Have mercy on me, O lord...The Canticle of the New Creation [cf. Ps 51]: Have mercy on me - I recognize my transgressions - purify me from my sin - O God, create in me a pure heart, renew and firm spirit within me.

Conclusion

The characteristics of **Anawim** of the OT:
- accept the Will of God, working for a better world;
- offering the Messiah to the world [cf. Is 61:1, ff.; Zc 9:9; Ps 22].
- purified in his own life - committed to on-going conversion [intellectual, moral, psychological, religious];
- the characteristic virtues of the *Anawim* : faith, hope, humility, obedience, love;
- a self-giving for others
- an abandonment in God.

...

b. The Anawaim in the NT

1.] John the Baptist: the central principle of his life which he has left for the Church: He must increase, while I decrease [cf. Jn 3:30].

a.] According to the Synoptics: He is presented as living the Ascetical Life, ending in Martyrdom

John came neither eating or drinking and wisdom was justified through the works of the Son of Man [cf. Mt 11:28] .

John the Baptist was in the desert proclaiming a Baptism of Conversion for the remission of sins [cf. Mk 1:4]. - The king sent the executioner with the order to cut off John's head [cf. Mk 6:17-29].

He will be great before the Lord, he will neither drink wine nor any strong drink; he will be filled with the Holy Spirit ..He will convert many [cf. Lk 1:16]. - He lived in desert places until that day in which he was manifest to Israel [cf. Lk 1:80]. - He went throughout the entire region of the Jordan, proclaiming a Baptism for the conversion from sin [cf. Lk 3:3]. - I will baptize with water, but one will come who is greater than I and I am not worthy to loosen the strap of His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire [cf. Lk 3:16].

b.] According to the 4th Gospel: he is presented here John the Evangelist as a "Witness", and "Friend of the Spouse"

No one can attribute to himself anything that was not bestowed on him from heaven [cf. Jn 3:27].

I am not the Christ, but I was sent on ahead of Him [v. 28]. - I am the Friend of the Spouse who is present and I rejoice at the sound of his voice - this is that my joy might be complete [cf. v. 29]He gives witness of what he saw and heard [v. 31] - the one that God has sent speaks only His words and the gift of the Holy Spirit is in truth beyond measure [v. 34]. - Whoever believe in the Son has eternal life [v. 36].

2.] The Holy Spouses, Mary & Joseph: their Holy espousals are a message of Holy Abandonment in the Stigmatine tradition:

a.] According to the Synoptics:

[1] A Royal Mission: Mary is the Mother of Jesus, Son of King David [cf. Mk 1:6, ff.].

[2] Priestly Mission: she was the cousin of Elizabeth, wife [and daughter ?] of a priest [cf. Lk 1:36].

[3] Prophetic Mission: I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to His Word [cf. Lk 1:38].

b.] According to the 4th Gospel: her Message of Cana and Calvary, her only appearances in John's Gospel [cf. cc. 2; 19]:. The **New Covenant** is an espousals, a union of divine mercy and human mercy. Mary's Message is what she lived: You do whatever He tells you! Woman, behold your Son!. Mary's message to the Diaconal Church: His mother said to the servants [**diakonos**] do all that he tells you [cf. Jn 2:5; Ga 4:55]. This is the Formula of the Old Covenant of Sinai - prayed in the Lord's own Prayer and is the lived message of the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane.

c.] Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, **Redemptoris Custos**, August 15, 1989 [cf. ## 1-4; 17-21; 30]: To God Who reveals Himself there is due the obedience of faith [cf. Rm 16:26, ff.; 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6] - the man freely commits one's entire life to God, offering to God the Revealer the full submission [**obsequium**] of intellect and will, and freely giving assent to the revelation made by Him [cf. DV 5]. Joseph acted in conformity to the angel of the Lord who had ordered him - Joseph's Annunciation [cf. Mt 1:24].

[1] A Message of Holy Abandonment

He was called to protect the Redeemer and Joseph did as the Angel of the Lord ordered him to do, and he took Mary as his wife [cf. Mt 1:24] - To Joseph, God entrusted the care of His most precious treasures and he served in an exemplary manner - The Messenger of God revealed to him the special plan of God in his regard [cf. RC # 2].

There exists a close analogy between the Annunciation in the text of St. Matthew [cf. 1:20, ff.] and the text of St. Luke [cf. 1:38]. Let it be done according to God's Word, and Joseph showed such an availability of will, similar to that availability of Mary in that order which God sent to him by means of His messenger [cf. RC # 3].

The marriage of Mary with Joseph is an indivisible union of two souls, two hearts, in the consent that was a virginal and holy union [cf. RC # 7].

In the unfolding of his life which was a pilgrimage of faith, Joseph as Mary, remained faithful to the end: He did just as the angel of the Lord ordered him to do [cf. Mt 1:24] [cf. RC # 17].

The fact that Mary was espoused with Joseph is included within the very design of God - there was a special confirmation of the sponsal bond - Joseph was obedient to the Spirit [cf. RC ## 18, 19].

The total sacrifice of himself, Joseph expresses his generous love for the Mother of God, making to her the sponsal gift of himself - he respected her condition of belonging exclusively to God [cf. RC # 20].

The total sacrifice that Joseph made of his entire existence finds its adequate motivation in his profound interior life: this implied the total disposition of committing his own freedom to the plans of God... this submission to God, which is the readiness of will to dedicate himself to those things that relate to His service, is no more than the exercise of devotion which constituted one of the expressions of the virtue of religion [cf. RC # 26].

The fundamental attitude of the entire Church ought to be one of religious listening to the Word of God [cf. DV 1] or, an absolute availability for the service of the salvific will of God, revealed in Jesus...Paul VI exhorted a spontaneous theological reflection on the espousals of the divine action with human activity in the great economy of redemption [cf. RC # 30].

[2] A Message of Courage:

Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God [cf. Lk 1:30].
Joseph, son of David, do not fear to receive Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit [cf. Mt 1:29].

[2] A Message of Joy:

Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you [cf. Lk 1:28]
My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God [cf. Lk 1:46, ff.].
You will bring forth a Son and you will call Him by the name of Jesus for He will save His people from their sins [cf. Mt 1:21]

Conclusion: The mystery of the Holy Espousals constitutes the central nucleus of the Stigmatine vocation, which is the spirit of Holy Abandonment ⁶³.

⁶³ cf. Fr. Joseph Stofella, CSS, in: CS III, pp. 361, 368.

The abandonment of Fr. Bertoni in the service of the Church was powerfully nourished in the Sponsal Model of Christ with His Church, lived visibly by Mary and Joseph in the Mystery of their espousals. Mary and Joseph are models of abandonment in the following of the Will of God. In them may be seen the vital communion of the relationship of the total gift of self in the overcoming of the limits of human nature ⁶⁴.

...

4. Jesus Christ, One of the Anawim The Kenosis of Jesus Christ according to St. Paul [cf. Ph 2:5-11]:

a. Literary Form:

1.] A Liturgy, a Canticle:

a.] Dogmatic: this hymn presents the various stages of the existence of Jesus Christ: His divine "pre-existence" [cf. Jn 1:1, ff., etc.] - His life-long self-emptying: Incarnation and Redemption] - His Glorification [and universal Adoration].

b. Moral-Ethical: Imitations [according to St. Paul]; or, the Following of Christ [according to the Synoptics] of Jesus Christ - putting on His "mind".

c.] Various NT Canticles:

[1] Vocal Prayers [cf. Col 3:126; 5:19; Jas 5:13].

[2] Sacramental [cf. Ep 5:14; Tt 3:4-7];

[3] Meditations [cf. Ep 1:3-14; Rm 8:31-39; 1 Co 13];

[4] Confessions [cf. 1 Tm 6:11-16; 2 Tm 2:11-13];

[5] Christological [cf. Heb 1:1-4; Col 1:15-20; Jn 1:1-14; 1 P

1:18-22; 2:21-25; 3:18-21; Ph 2:5-11].

d.] A Canticle of Baptism

1.] Victory over the tyranny of evil [cf. Rm 8:15, 21, 38, ff.; Ga 4:1; 5:1; Col 1:12-15; 2:8-15, 20; Ac 10:38; Ap 1:18, ff.]'

2.] In the Name of Jesus

3.] Baptized INTO [progressively] into Christ Jesus. [cf. Rm 6:1, ff.];

4.] A gradual transformation [cf. Rm 8:2; 1 Co 5:17 +: the "New Creation"];

5.] A Remembrance, "Memorial" for all of life.

e.] A Eucharistic Hymn:

1.] The supreme form, the lowest kind of **kenosis** : the Eucharist.

2.] When you come together, each of you can sing a hymn, a canticle, or a revelation [cf. 1 Co 14:26].

2.] A Profession of Faith:

a.] Jesus of Nazareth, the Galilean - is the "Lord"!

b.] The adoration of the Universe.

c.] The historical Christ is God and man, in the unity of His divine personality.

d.] The mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation.

⁶⁴ cf. Fr. Jose' Alberto Moura, CSS, *The Holy Spirit in the Charism of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni*, pp. 146-149.

- e.] A doxology.
- f.] Jesus is a Person FOR others: for the Father, for other humans.
- g.] This is a "mini-Christology", a synopsis, a capsule.
- h.] This is a Creedal Formula in the resurrection [cf. 1 Co 15].
- i.] A Ritual of Enthronement
- j.] A chanted Creed.

3.] A Confession of Hope: Let us continue to affirm our hope for the One Who made the promise is faithful [cf. Heb 10:23].

a.] This hymn is a response to apathetic polytheism, in the midst of the astral gods.

b.] The "Book of Consolation" [cf. Is 40-55] presents Yahweh "supra-cosmic" {He is enthroned above the circle of the earth - cf. Is 40:23}.

c.] The Hymn is about Jesus' eventual triumph over the universe.

d.] This is a "tri-nome" of totality: on the earth, under the earth, the entire cosmos.

e.] The spiritual world: the adoration of the saints in the heavens: the faithful on earth; those in heaven - and even the demons, under the earth.

f.] An anticipation of the praise at the end of time.

g.] The extension of the Lordship of Jesus.

Conclusion:

[1] Do not be afraid - the Lord is with you!

[2] This hymn is the promise of eventual, total, final victory.

...

b. An Analysis of the Hymn:

v. 5: have in yourselves the same sentiments that were in Christ Jesus: what are these?

1.] Fraternal Humility? - judge each one as superior to yourself [cf. Ph 2:3].

2.] The human obedience of Jesus? - the mystery of the Incarnation?

3.] The Mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity? In this sense, that the "obedience" of Jesus is a revelation of that eternal love in God, distinguishing Jesus from the Father [cf. Col 1:15; Heb 1:3; Jn 12:45; 14:9].

a.] The Radical Poverty of St. Francis of Assisi .

b.] The total **nada** of St. John of the Cross.

c.] The **total obsequium** of St. Gaspar Bertoni.

4.] It is all OF Jesus Christ: a union, sharing in His divine Personality:

a.] Living Stones in the spiritual edifice [cf. 1 P 2:5].

b.] The true vine and branches, its fruit [cf. Jn 15:1, ff.].

c.] The nuptial theme: this is a great mystery [cf. Ep 5:25-32].

d.] The Mystical Body [cf. Ep 5:31; 1 Co 12:12 +].

5.] A Sacramental Interpretation = Incorporation/Communion.

6.] A "Participation" - that you might share in the divine nature [cf. 2 P 1:4].

v. 6: He was in the divine condition:

1.] Divine pre-existence [cf. Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:3; Jn 1:1, ff; 5:18; 10:33].

2.] True God: Eternal divine Filiation - also born of Mary, and our filiation.: he did not cling to His equality with God - a negative proposition);

a.] Divine "Humility"

b.] Precisely here, is Jesus' Constitutional Filiation, His central, fundamental interior, eternal disposition.

v.7: His human condition: but he **empties Himself** - his **kenosis** . - this is the positive proposition]:

1.] His "self-emptying", not of His Divinity, or of His essential divine attributes - but, He sacrificed his eternal glory which He possessed in His pre-existence [cf. Jn 17:5] - and which transfigured His humanity, as at His Transfiguration - cf. Mt 17:1-8. p.]

2.] His redemptive self-emptying: immediately there poured forth blood and water [cf. Jn 19:31, ff.].

He assumed **the condition of a slave**: in His Incarnation, Christ assumed the path of submission, obedience.

He took on **Human Likeness**: Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. [cf. Heb 2:17] - He was like us in all things, save sin [cf. Heb 4:15] - He was indeed the Son of God, and learned obedience through suffering [cf. Heb 5:8].

He assumed the figure of Man: Behold the Man [this is what ADAM looks like after scourging, an expression of the sins of humanity - the Woman of Samaria maintained: there is a "Man"...I wonder? [a kind of biblical "Dorian Gray"]

v.8: He humbled Himself and was obedient unto death, and death on the Cross.

1.] His divine "Obedience" - the central "sentiment", choice of will, of Jesus - his acceptance of the Precept of His Father - not only of the precept [this would be "obedience", but also the Person of the other [charity]: this is what distinguishes Him as a divine Person.

2.] Obedience of Faith [cf. DV 5]

a.] This is to God Who reveals, a full **obsequium** of intellect and will.

b.] To praise His name, the obedience of Faith [cf. Rm 1:5] - given to make known to all people in order to lead them to the obedience of faith [cf. Rm 16:26].

c.] Bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ [cf. 2 Co 10:5, ff.].

d.] There is an obedience due to the gospel message - but, what is intended here is the identification of adherence to the faith [cf. Ac 6:7; Rm 6:16, ff.; 10:16; 16:19, 26; 1 Th 1:8; 1 P 1:22; Heb 5:9; 11:8].

e.] An imitation of the central disposition of Jesus to His Father.

f.] A privileged imitation of Jesus Christ: by means of each one's **kenosis**, each would hand himself over totally to God [cf. DV 5; Ga 2:16-20; 3:22].

v.9: The Third stage, Condition of Christ: His exaltation, resurrection, ascension: Therefore, God exalted Him greatly.

1.] The Resurrection is a work, par excellence, of the power of God [cf. Rm 4:1 +].

2.] This is a profession of the ecclesial faith of Christianity [cf. Rm 10:9; 1 Co 12:3, ff.].

3.] This is the formula for the New Creation: to be crucified together with Jesus Christ [cf. Ga 2:19, ff.] - whoever is in Christ, is a new creature [cf. 2 Co 5:17; Col 1:15-20; Ga 6:15; Ep 2:15; cf/ Rm 6:4 +]. - this is to create in one one sole new man [cf. Ep 2:15] - the body is one, even though there are many members, we are all baptized into one Spirit to be one Body: if one member suffers, then all the members share in his/her suffering [cf. 1 Co 12:12-27].

Conclusion

With St. Ignatius, St. Gaspar Bertoni frequently mentions the Glory of God in his Original Constitutions:

- for the glory of God [cf. CF # 133];
- for the greater glory of God and better service of the Church [cf. CF # 125];
- for the exclusive glory of God [cf. CF # 219];
- so that everyone might collaborate for the greater glory of God [cf. CF # 259].

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5. The Synoptic Gospels

a. The salvific Mystery of Christ's Temptations

Introduction

- [1] Jesus' temptations are included among His central works.
- [2] These manifest one aspect of the *kenosis* of Christ.
- [3] Jesus assumes human sufferings and redeems them.

1.] Mk 1:12-13: Christ as Victor:

The Spirit drove Him out into the desert - He was in the desert 40 days, and was tempted by Satan - He lived among the wild beasts, and the angels served Him.

- a.] There are only two verses: the key to the interpretation:
 - no one can enter the house of a strong man to rob his belongings [cf. 3:27].
- b.] The desert is an image of Gethsemane [cf. 14:32-42] - a

Promise:

- c.] The Lord of all:
 - the angels serve him.
 - He was among the wild beasts the serpent and the child; the wolf and the lamb [cf. Is

11].

- Dominion over all evil.
- The decisive battle is won in the desert.
- This is the heart of Jesus' Mission.
- The initial victory is followed by a variety of cures: Peter's Mother-in-law; the leper; a paralytic [reference to sin]; expulsion of an impure spirit [cf. Mk 5].

2.] Mt. 4:1-11: Christ, the Genuine, Faithful Israel

- 40 days and 40 nights, as Israel of old, 40 years [cf. Dt 8:2, 4; Nb 14:34].
- the format: a discussion among the scribes: citing the OT.
- The radical temptation: IF you are the Son of God [cf. 4:3, 6].
 - Bread from heaven: My Food is the Father's Will [cf. Jn 4:34]
 - In the Holy City, on the Temple pinnacle, the sin of Israel changed by Jesus' victory - a spiritual Reign, interior.
 - on the high mountain: Sinai, the Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Ascension: Universal Dominion.

3.] Lk 4:1-13: Christ, the New Adam:

- Geographical Concerns with the Holy City: Jerusalem!
- New Adam [cf. Rm 5:12; 1 Co 15:22].

By means of one man, sin entered the world, and through sin, death - because of one man's sin, all die. How much greater is the outpouring of God's grace through one sole man, Jesus Christ [cf. Rm 5:15, ff.].

All die in Adam, and in Christ all will receive life [cf. 1 Co 15:22].

- the sin of Adam transformed the garden into a desert - the sufferings of Jesus in the desert, translate it back into a Garden: a New Creation.
- after he had exhausted all the means of tempting Him, the Devil departed [cf. Lk 4:13]
- the temptation of each one becomes a part of the mystery of redemption.

...

b. The Mystery of Jesus' Prayer:

Introduction:

- [[1] Jesus offers a prayer of His own: Our Father [**Abba** !] [cf. Mt 6:3-13].
- [2] Prayer is the expression of love, hope, charity, faith.
- [3] This is an eschatological prayer for all time, prior to His second coming.

- 1.] **ABBA** - a family intimacy - equal to the Father, but prays to Him.
 - a.] This is a dialogue on the supreme level.
 - b.] A sanctification of the divine name.
 - c.] An essential prayer of the Church.
 - d.] Total intimacy, and earlier fear.
 - e.] A letter from the Holy Spirit

The Spirit comes to assist our weakness, when we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit prays within us [cf. Rm 8: 26, ff.]

- f.] A filial form of prayer

- 2.] **FIAT** an instruction: and then a lived expression in Gethsemane.

- the Incarnate Word of the Father: Jesus is the **obsequium** to His Father - He did not spare His own Son, but offered Him up [cf. Rm 8:32].

- Jesus is the Father's personal **obsequium** - God so loved the Lord that He handed over His only Son, so that those who would believe in Him, will have eternal life. [cf. Jn 3:16].

- 3.] Christ prays to His heavenly Father [cf. the General Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours, n. 3].

- to communicate to human God's own life, the Word proceeds from the Father as a High Priest;

- The praise of God resounds in Christ's heart with human expressions of adoration, propitiation, intercession;

- Jesus is one with the Father, and said: I am coming, O God, to do Your will! [cf. Heb 10:9; Jn 6:58].

- He is the exemplar of Prayer: His entire life, from its inauguration until His death.

- His activity of each day is bound to His prayer: in the desert, on the mountain, rising up early in the morning, and remaining at prayer through the entire night.

- 4.] The Church continues the Prayer of Jesus Christ

- each person needs to confess his/her dependence before the Creator;

- prayer of necessity needs to be connected to that of Jesus Christ'

- Christian prayer incorporates within itself the human community.

Conclusion

The thought of St. Gaspar Bertoni might be summarized in this manner ⁶⁵ :

- [1] The Congregation has for its purpose to hand on to others only what has been contemplated ⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ cf. Jose' Alberto Moura, CSS, *The Holy Spirit in the Charism of Gaspar Bertoni*, pp. 231, ff.

⁶⁶ cf. Original Constitutions, CF ## 49; 272.

[2] When one does not offer his prayer well beforehand, he will not be able to speak well of God later ⁶⁷.

[3] The active life alone is not sufficient then to serve Christ; there is necessary the help of contemplation ⁶⁸.

c. The Salvific Mystery of Gethsemane

Introduction: there are various theories concerning its fundamental meaning:

[1] Sadness, anguish, fear for His impending death.

[2] Radical Abandonment of the Son on the part of the Father - His specially chosen Apostles.

[3] A "Messianic Trial", of sublime mystery - a revelation of the Trinity?: - He was wounded by God, and humiliated [cf. Is 53:4] - strike the shepherd and the flock will be dispersed - I will turn My hand against the little ones [cf. Zc 13: 7, ff.; Jb 19:11-21].

...

1.] Mk 14:32-42: Jesus Christ is the SON OF GOD:

I will strike the Shepherd [14:14] - My soul is saddened unto death [v. 34] - why have You abandoned Me [cf. 15:34; Ps 22].

a.] "Abandonment" not in the literal, "ontological" sense, against J.; Moltmann - but, a kind of mystical, dark night.

b.] A Suffering Servant, the Poor Man of Ps 22 - which comes to a close in a Hymn of Hope: God does not disdain the poverty of the poor [cf. St. John Chrysostom].

c/] Rejected by men: He was saddened by the hardness of heart [cf. 3:5] - He was amazed at their lack of faith [cf. 6:6] - He sighed profoundly [cf. 8:11] - alas, my friend, in whom I trusted, who ate bread with me...! [cf. Ps 41:10].

d.] The lack of comprehension of His closest disciples [cf. 4:13 +].

e.] The "blue-print" for Gethsemane and the denials was in the previous chapter: watch, therefore, because you do not know when the lord of the house will return: in the evening [the Last Supper]; at mid-night [Gethsemane]; and cock-crow [Peter's denials], or the morning [Jesus before the Sanhedrin].

...

2.] Mt 28:36-46: Lessons for Discipleship

a. **Fiat** : Jesus' [Mary's] own central disposition - this is My Body/Blood, handed over/poured out **for you** - so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled [cf. Mt 26:54, f.; cf. 1:22; 2:15, 17; 3:4, 14; 13:55] - all was done, following the Father's Will [cf. Mt 7:21; 12:50; 21:31].

b. The Good shepherd: I was sent for the lost sheep of Israel [cf. Mt 15:24; Zc 13:7].

c. Implications for the faithful servant in the Church: Stay here, while I go there to pray [cf.;26:36; cf. Gn 22:5, ff.: Abraham said to his servants: stay here, and I and the boy will go there, we will adore and return to you...But, where is the lamb for the holocaust? Abraham responded: It is God Who will provide the lamb for the holocaust...]

- Jesus is the Suffering Servant of Yahweh [cf. Mt 8:17; 12:18-21] ;

- He is Daniel's Son of Man [cf. Mt 24:10; 15:21;

- there are lessons here in this "fulfillment" theme: remain, come with Me; Peter sinned because he was "at a distance."

...

⁶⁷ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, in: MP, February 4, 1809.

⁶⁸ cf. Mss B # 8787.

- 3.] Lk 22:39-46: The Drops of Blood, the New Creation
- a.] This is the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, of women, prayer, the poor, sinners.
- b.] The angel appeared to Him, and ministered to Him.
- c.] His sweat was like drops [embolia] with the precision of a pathologist [was Luke a doctor?]
- d.] **Agonia** a profound sadness for the things of God [cf. 2 M 3:21; Dn 1:10, Esther - the agony of athletics [cf. 1 Co 9:24, ff.; Ph 3:12, ff.; 2 Tm 2:5].
- e.] He prayed with greater intensity.

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6. St. John and the Sacred Stigmata, Sorrowful AND Glorious

Introduction

- [1] You sent Me into the world, as I sent them into the world, and for them I consecrate Myself, so that they might be consecrated in truth [cf. 17:16, f.].
- [2] One of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance and immediately there flowed blood and water [cf. 19:34; 1 Jn 5:6; cf. LG 3; SC 5].
- [4] All will see Him, even those who have pierced Him [cf. Rv 1:7].

...

a. **The Pierced One: the Wounded Heart, Spouse:** John and the Prophet Deutero-Zecchariah:

- 1.] On that day there will be a great lamentation in Jerusalem as happened on the Plains of Megiddo as for the pierced one, there were lamentation and weeping as over a first-born [cf. Zc 12:10, ff.] - what are these wounds in your breast? The sword will be raised up against my Shepherd [cf. Zc 13:7, ff.] - On that day there will be for the House of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem a stream to wash away sin and stain [cf. Zc 13:1, ff.].
- Is this 'biographical' for 'goo' King Josiah? [cf. 2 K 23:28-30; 2 Ch 35:19-27; Jr 22:10, 15, 18; Lm 2:1-3; cf. Si 49:1-4].

- 2.] The "Pierced One" and the Lamb of God, Spouse of the Church :
- As a Holocaust [Redemption, Expiation, New Creation];
 - As a Servant [cf. Jr 11:19; Is 53:4,f; 1 P 1:19];
 - As a Shepherd [cf. Rv 6:16, f.; 7:17; cf. Ezk 34; Jn 10].

b. **The Glorious Wounds: Paschal Faith and the Apostolic Mission**

- 1.] Four Encounters:
- The Disciple whom Jesus loved: he saw and believed [cf. 20:8].
 - Mary Magdalene: the first Witness of the resurrection [vv. 11-18].
 - The Disciples with the doors closed [cf. vv. 19-23: **Open the Doors to the Redeemer!**
 - Thomas and conversion to Paschal Faith - transformed into an Apostolic Missionary of Paschal faith.

- 2.] Three Gifts
- the Holy Spirit
 - Pardon
 - The Apostolic Mission : Peace be to you! Having said this, He showed them His hands and His side... AS the Father has sent Me, now I send you...! [cf. Jn 19:19, ff.].

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CONCLUSION

Two Saints: Ignatius of Loyola and Gaspar Bertoni and the Stigmatine Response: *Obsequium*

A reading of the Constitutions of the Stigmatine Founder
An Imitation/Following of Christ, a Putting on of the Mind of Christ Jesus

[1] The Biblical Aspect: the Loving, Filial Obedience of Jesus of His Father

A new priesthood, holy to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ [cf. 1 P 2:4, ff.]

Offer your bodies as a living oblation to the Mercy of God [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.]

And for Him we say AMEN to God for His glory [cf. 1 Co 1:20].

Jesus, the High Priest, merciful - His function is to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin [cf. Heb 5:1-10]

For this He came into this world, and stated: I have come to do Your will [cf. Heb 10:7, ff.].

[cf. especially Jn's presentation of Jesus' unique relationship to His Father]:

The Father who sent Me [cf. Jn 8].

For this the Father loves Me, because I give My life to take it up again. I have the power to hand it over - the Father consecrated Me and sent Me into the world [cf. Jn 10].

Obsequium : the relationship of Jesus to His Father, and the Christian to God.

[2] The Magisterium of the Church: a Definition, Description of Faith

[The Council of Trent, quoted, then, by Vatican II]

To the God Who reveals there is due the 'obedience of faith' [cf. Rm 16:26; 2 Co 10:5, f] - hence, the believer hands himself over totally to God who reveals in the full ***obsequium*** of intellect and will [cf. DV 1; 5]. ***Obsequium*** is part of the Act of Faith.

It is a religious submission [***obsequium***] in faith [cf. Lg 25]. Hence, ***obsequium*** indicates obedience in the Church.

[3] St. Thomas Aquinas

Obsequium indicates the relationship of Jesus Christ with His Father - and also the Religious Vows - Jesus began to wash the feet of His disciples, offering this ***obsequium*** of humility to His Father ⁶⁹.

4. St. Ignatius of Loyola

In Part VII of the Jesuit Constitutions, the theme is: ***De Missionibus Summi Pontificis*** - and this corresponds to **Part IX** of the Constitutions of St. Gaspar Bertoni: ***De Gradu Professorum***.

a. The Ignatian Definition of the Apostolic Mission:

⁶⁹ cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium Joannis*, c. 12, Lectio 2.

"... The Missions are those Apostolic expeditions, undertaken by order of the Supreme Pontiff or the Superiors of the Society, for the greater glory of God and the assistance of souls, and usually outside the places of our residences ⁷⁰ .

b. The Ignatian Law: ***ad maiorem*** - an ever 'greater' abandonment to God, the Church. A similarity with the Franciscan OFM: the ever **lesser** Friars. For St. Ignatius, the overriding principle remains : **For the Greater Glory of God** ⁷¹:

- greater necessities;
- greater disposition, devotion, suitability;
- a more universal good, more divine, more spiritual ⁷².

c. ***Obsequium Romani Pontificis***

- ***maius Dei et Domini nostri obsequium et animarum profectum... magnus divinae gloriae at obsequi proventus speratur...***⁷³;

- ***intentio quarti voti*** ⁷⁴;

- ***maius Dei obsequium mittere cogitaret*** ⁷⁵;

- ***ad maius Dei et Sedis Apostolicae obsequium fore*** ⁷⁶;

- ***ad Dei obsequium ... ad huiusmodi missiones aptiores*** ⁷⁷;

- ***ut in omnibus ad Dei et Sedis Apostolicae obsequium utilius...missionibus Summi Pontificis iuvare poterit: ut melius quod ad Christ Domini obsequium quaeritur...***⁷⁸;

- ***in Christi Domini nostri obsequium*** ⁷⁹;

- ***principalius missionis atque intentionis Summi Pontificis... obsequii posthabebit... sine detrimento missionis...***⁸⁰;

- ***Societatis peculiari voto circa missiones ad Dei gloriam se obstrinxit...***⁸¹.

[For St. Ignatius, ***obsequium*** indicates that Apostolic Service rendered to the Roman Pontiff and it is the content of the Fourth Vow].

[According to Fr. Lenotti, the second Successor of the Stigmatine Founder, there is this analogy: as the Jesuits are directed toward the Pope, so the Stigmatines are the Bishops:

- ***quocumque in Dioecesi et mundo;***

- ***ministerium Dei Verbum quocumque;***

- ***gratis omnino .***

[As has been noted, this is a Geographic, Apostolic, Personal and of the Personnel for the entire Congregation].

[5] The Law of "Progress" built into St. Gaspar Bertoni's Constitutions: largely, through the use of comparatives: **more than ordinary, common, than others.**

⁷⁰ cf. Epitome to the Jesuit Constitutions, # 612.

⁷¹ cf. Jesuit Constitutions, # 622.

⁷² Jesuit Constitutions, Part VI, Chapter

⁷³ ib. # 603.

⁷⁴ ib. # 605.

⁷⁵ ib. # 608.

⁷⁶ ib. # 609.

⁷⁷ ib. # 611

⁷⁸ ib. # 614.

⁷⁹ ib. # 615.

⁸⁰ ib. # 616.

⁸¹ ib. # 617.

- Spiritual
- Intellectual
- Apostolic, Missionary.

CF # 6: one's own spiritual perfection;
the perfect dominion over the ecclesiastical sciences.

CF # 7: Even to the highest grade of the Priestly Ministry, assuming the Apostolic Mission.

Part IV: [Progressive Formation]

a. SPIRITUAL

CF # 47: The first means is Prayer, common prayer; divine office, meditation, reading, examen, spiritual exercises, confession, manifestation of one's defects to the Superior.

CF # 48: The second means is a diligent commitment through purification, in making the virtues grow, in renunciation, in observing the precepts: making every effort to occupy oneself in that is related to Ecclesiastical Ministry.

b. INTELLECTUAL

CF # 49: Our finality is not only to contemplate in itself, but also to hand on to others the truths contemplated.

CF # 56: All this [academic perfection] pertains to the Congregation as a whole, or in the totality of its membership. For the whole Congregation it is necessary that there be perfection in the above noted disciplines and languages - in the Body of the Congregation, this would very well be achieved. this means that there is required in each one of its members an authentic excellence in all the Disciplines.

c. APOSTOLIC: cf. Part V: The Promotion of the Confreres

CF # 76: Finally, they will be charged with directing the Missions, and being dedicated with all means to the salvation of souls.

Part IX: The Grade of the Professed

CF # 158: To the **Profession** may be admitted only those priests to whom the government of the Congregation pertains. They are called **carry out the most important ministries**, and these demand the priestly dignity.

6. A Brief Reflection on the Part of the Stigmatine Founder and His Use of the Singular and the Plural to describe the Apostolic Mission : Mission/MissionS; OBSEQUIUM/ OBSEQUIA ⁸²:

a. In the Singular:

CF # 7: the members are to be promoted to the highest grade of the priestly ministry, assuming the Apostolic Mission.

CF # 48: striving to occupy themselves assiduously in all that is related to the apostolic ministry.

CF # 62: to use that balance in studies so that all might dedicate enough time to study and to the cultivating of languages and sciences, and everything for the service of the Church [***in Ecclesiae obsequium***].

⁸² This study is more complete in the reflection on Fr. Francis Surez, SJ and the Original Constitutions of the Stigmatine Founder.

CF # 125: in studies, as in everything, all is for the greater glory of God and the greater service of the Church [***et ecclesiae maius obsequium***].

CF # 163: ***Verbi Dei Quodcumque Ministerium***

CF # 195: this is the principal point of charity and the mutual offering of service [***se invicem obsequio***].

CF # 255: the principal end of our Congregation is the conversion of souls.

b. In the Plural:

CF # 57: with special study to be able to conduct the different ministries [***ad varia Ecclesiae obsequia***] in behalf of the Church, always in harmony with the diversity of times and circumstances.

CF # 158: the function is to conduct the more important ministries.

CF # 162: beseeching God by means of the celebrations of Holy Masses, that the preaching [***implorantes fructus missionum***] and the confessions might achieve the desired fruit.

CF # 182: not only to teach the fundamental, or useful truths with a view to eternal life, by means of the preaching, ministries, teaching class - but also through communicating even the very rudiments of the faith - the Oratories, teaching catechism...

CF # 185: since the scope of our Congregation is to serve the Church through the multiple ministries proper to her vocation [***obsequium praestare per varia et propria suae vocationis munera***] - we do not seek on our own to go to this, rather than to some other place or to assume this or that activity, in accord with our own personal choices. Rather each will try to be in harmony with the directives of the Bishop...

CF # 262: Since the scope of our Congregation is the salvation of souls, there is demanded of its members the practice of **proportionate ministries** to achieve this end: the first apostolate, is the spiritual well being of one's own confreres.

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Section Three

The Divine Indwelling: The Source and Scope of the Apostolic Mission

Joseph Henchey, CSS

[The English original of an article published in Italian]

L'inabitazione divina: sorgente e scopo della Missione Apostolica

in:

Compendio di teologia spirituale in onore di Jordan Aumann, OP

Roma: PUST 1992, pp. 121-142]

[Translated into Italian by Fr. Giorgio MARCATO, OP]

Introduction

Following the Consistory of March 13, 1989, the date for the Canonization of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni - [Priest of the Diocese of Verona, Italy, and Founder of the Congregation of the Sacred stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ] - was set for All Saints' day of the same year. The beatification was celebrated on the same date in the Holy Year of 1975. These "honors of the altar" are the culmination of a life that began on October 9, 1777, and which came to a close in Verona on June 12, 1853, in Verona.

Born into a family of Notaries, his early years were lived in a relatively well-to-do setting. However, a series of events gradually unfolded in his life that had profound effects on the work of grace developing within him:

- deaths of his loved ones, including his only sister;
- the periodic and then definitive separation of his parents;
- ill health that plagued his life;
- aspects of the apostolate that did not succeed, due either to hostile civil laws, or to the lack of acceptance;
- his religious family which did not fully develop in his own life-time: at the time of his death, 37 years after its foundation, the community numbered only a handful of members.

From his first year in the diocesan seminary (1796) until the founding of his community of "Apostolic Missionaries for the assistance [in *obsequium*] of Bishops" on November 4, 1816, Verona was to experience 20 years of upheaval due to the Napoleonic war.

The community established by Fr. Bertoni was intended for "any ministry whatsoever of the Word of God." Historically, this broad scope centered on the Christian education of youth, dedication to the development of vocations to the clerical and consecrated life and the preaching of the Word of God.

From the outset, he committed his congregation to the patronage of Mary and Joseph, reflecting on the mystery of their Holy Espousals. This devotion found inspiration from a painting depicting this mystery that hung over the main altar of the first church offered to the community. However, the devotion enabled the community to see in these heavenly patron models and instructors in the way of holy abandonment through service of Jesus Christ and the living availability to the Church.

The men who joined Fr. Bertoni in the newly formed community were called "Stigmatines" from the title of the church named in honor of the Stigmata of St. Francis, adjoining their dwelling. Providentially, the Decree of Approbation, dated September 15, 1890, officially gave this title to the community: The Congregation [of the Priests] of the Sacred Stigmata of our Lord Jesus

Christ"⁸³. This reflected the desires of the early community, as well as the devotion to the Five Wounds practiced by the Founder and first members.

This present study reflects on various elements that constitute the spirituality of the recently canonized Fr. Gaspar Bertoni. He was an assiduous student of mystical theology, and the following aspects emerge from a review of his life and writings:

1. TRINITARIAN DIMENSION: The central mystery of the faith appears often in Fr. Bertoni's personal writings as well as in the legislation he left for his community. In the late summer and early autumn of 1808, he noted these thoughts in his personal diary.

August 24th : St. Joseph's Convent. God can be found in the depths of one's own nothingness. This evening I saw a painting of the Most Blessed Trinity. This inspired much reverence and love for the three Persons. The eternal Father was depicted with His arms opened, which explained His Mercy to me, and the ready communication of His gifts⁸⁴.

September 27th : Meditation today was on the Incarnation. I experienced feelings of gratitude toward the Most Holy Trinity and of correspondence with Jesus Christ...⁸⁵.

September 28th : During meditation today and afterwards, there was the desire and prayer for martyrdom... this evening, expressions of repentance. There was a sentiment of great love toward the Most Holy Trinity in giving us the son ... toward Him, there were feelings of much tenderness, together with a very vivid faith and a great desire for union. There was also the yearning for association in His sufferings and shame - with a prayer for the grace to suffer and to be disregarded as He was...⁸⁶.

Fr. Bertoni concentrated more on the "economic" Trinity: the divine Indwelling, the Eucharist, a sense of apostolic mission and on the virtue of hope. His missionary zeal flowed from a life shared together. A wide variety of ecclesial services was envisioned as coming out from, and enriching a fraternal union. In his original Constitutions⁸⁷, the Founder of the Stigmatines was much indebted to Francis Suarez' Commentary on the Rule of St. Ignatius of Loyola⁸⁸. Throughout these constitutions,, one can see that the Stigmatine Founder did indeed draw much inspiration from the Trinity.

The early Stigmatine rule contained the following points regarding the needed balance between the wide variety of service to be offered, and the need of community life. Fr. Bertoni presented his ideal on unity in these terms:

⁸³ The most recent and complete biography of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni is by Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, CSS, *Vita e pensiero di Gaspare Bertoni*. Verona: Stigmatini [6 volumes]; cf. id., *Un modello di santo abbandono. Fisionomia spirituale del ven. Gaspar Bertoni*, Verona. Scuola tip. A.M.B. 1951.

⁸⁴ *Memoriale Privato*. Verona: Stigmatini 1977 [Reprinted from 1911]. [Abbreviation MP] August 24, 1808.

⁸⁵ MP September 27, 1808, p. 215.

⁸⁶ ib., September 18, 1808, p. 215.

⁸⁷ cf. *Costituzioni del ven. Servo di Dio, D. Gaspare Bertoni. Fondatore dei Preti delle Stimate di N.S.G.C.* Verona: Scuola Tip. A.M.B. 1951. (Abbreviation: CF)

⁸⁸ Francis Suarez, SJ, *De Religione Societatis Iesu in particulari*, in: *Opera Omnia*, Tomus XVI. Tractatus Decimus. Paris: Ludovicum Vives 1860.

(A disposition for unity) depends on our interior spiritual progress: as true charity, i.e., love for God and Christ increases, so, too, union among the confreres is increased and perfected, in so far as each one unites himself to God and to our Father ⁸⁹.

... there is nothing which causes us to love another more than to perceive the special endowment of virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit and contemplate him as the image of God painted with the most beautiful colors of grace ⁹⁰.

A united fraternal community remained the ideal in the Founder's insistence on a diversified mission:

... in this clerical congregation whose purpose is not only contemplation, but also to hand on to others the truths that have been contemplated, a more than ordinary knowledge is needed ⁹¹.

... the more important duties of the ministry pertain to the Graduate Fathers ...⁹².

the end of the Congregation is to serve the Church by the various ministries of its vocation, under the direction of the bishops...⁹³.

With this varied apostolic mission, the emphasis on unity within the group constitutes the most extended part of the original constitutions. The Founder's ideal for community life would warrant a study in itself as it is the central concern of the first Stigmatine rule. For this diversity in the Apostolic Mission, Fr. Bertoni asked of his confreres a truly competent and continuing formation. He envisioned a broad program of intellectual specialization to keep pace with the spiritual progress of the community as a whole. His ideal asked for eminence in the sacred sciences, all for a better service of the Church ⁹⁴:

...this community will not be able to continue unless it has the solid support of learning in its various members: ignorance will be the first germ of corruption of this community ⁹⁵.

Variety in unity is one of the paradoxes that Fr. Bertoni yearned for his community. He dreamed of a plurality of talents along with an intense common life, all at the service of the Church in a competent dedication to the apostolic mission. The source of this dream seems to have been the Most Holy Trinity.

Fr. Bertoni often pondered the mystery of divine love within the Trinity. Prayer for him was also a "seeking of the Lord" to discern His will, translating this quest into sentiments of effective gratitude to the merciful God for his vocation. In his view, service of the Church is its supreme expression. He considered the experiences of life as a kind of "oblation" [*obsequium*] to the Lord, providing special opportunities to imitate Christ. In expressions that seem unusual, Fr. Bertoni pondered the distinction of the persons within the Trinity. On one occasion as a young priest, his revered Bishop [Liruti, OSB] came to hear one of his catechism lessons already in progress, and the episode was later recorded in his diary::

⁸⁹ cf. CF # 221.

⁹⁰ cf. CF # 223.

⁹¹ cf. CF # 49.

⁹² cf. CF # 158.

⁹³ cf. CF # 185.

⁹⁴ cf. CF # 56.

⁹⁵ cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Letter to Leopoldina Naudet, March 8, 1813. Manoscritti Bertoni (Mss B) [Stigmatine General Archives] Vol. 5, # 9209.

One has to be prepared to stand with confidence before Christ at any time, no longer as Father, but as Judge ⁹⁶.

In such reflections, there may be a "soteriological inversion" by which certain properties of the Trinity are applied to one, or other of the divine Persons.

2. CHRISTOLOGICAL DIMENSION: This aspect has been already the object of a published study ⁹⁷ . which traces the gradual intensification of the life of grace, in so far as it appears through his writings and activities. His was an experience of intimate friendship with Christ, the Father's Servant [cf. Is 53; Ph 2:5-11]m and Spouse of the Church [cf. Ep 5:22, ff.; Rv 21 & 22]. The concrete form of his imitation of Christ has also been studied ⁹⁸. It is readily apparent that the Person of Jesus Christ dominated Fr. Bertoni's life:

Today's meditation was on the Reign of Christ. I experienced a strong inspiration to follow the Lord closely, even at the cost of life, through poverty and ignominy ⁹⁹.

I desire to imitate Christ in poverty and in the hardships of poverty...¹⁰⁰.

We are called to draw a portrait of Jesus Christ within ourselves...¹⁰¹.

While praying before Mass, I experienced drowsiness, but heard these words from the Cross: 'Look at this, My Heart!' With this, it seemed that a wondrous light pervaded my intellect, along with a sudden and intense fervor. With this, there was the great desire to see the Lord's heart. The effect of all this was a most tender devotion to the Sacred Heart. There was great affection during Holy Mass, expressed through tears of joy at Holy Communion. Then I experienced recollection and devotion all day with an increase of the three theological virtues...¹⁰².

With much naturalness, the Stigmatine Founder used a variety of terms to describe his relationship with Christ: "to follow the Lord more closely" - "to imitate Him" - "to correspond" to Jesus Christ. It may be that the Synoptics stress more the "following" of Christ, while Paul speaks of "imitating" Him, but it does not seem that in Fr. Bertoni there is any such distinction. He simply chose to follow/imitate/respond with Jesus Christ in His poverty, shame, crucifixion, and was encouraged through His resurrection, ascension and glory. In all the sufferings of his own, Fr. Bertoni was able to "identify" with Christ, the Servant of the father, and the Spouse of the Church.

The Stigmatine Founder did not specifically meditate on the biblical symbol of the Immolated, Spouse of the Church. However, this does capture many elements of his thought. His "Christology" presents dimensions of St. Paul's Christological Hymn and the *kenosis* ¹⁰³., along with reflections from the Calvary and resurrection scenes in John's Gospel, with particular

⁹⁶ cf. MP, November 20, 1808, p. 221.

⁹⁷ cf. Joseph Henchey, CSS, "L'esperienza di Gesu' Cristo nella vita di P. Gaspare Bertoni." in: *Saggi sullo spirito del B. Gaspare Bertoni*, 3. Roma: Curia Generalizia degli Stigmatini 1984, 59 pp.

⁹⁸ cf. Nello Ddalle Vedove, CSS, *Un modello d santo abbandono*. pp. 260, ff.

⁹⁹cf. MP, September 25, 1808.

¹⁰⁰ ib., November 22, 1808.

¹⁰¹ ib., February 26, 1809.

¹⁰² ib., May 30, 1812, pp. 241, ff.

¹⁰³ cf. Ph 2: 5-11.

attention given to the wound in Christ's side. In a letter to Pope Gregory XVI, dated in 1844, Fr. Bertoni describes a devotion that he personally conducted every Friday evening from 1822 on, i.e., from the time of his re-opening the Church of the Stigmata to the public:

Every Friday of the year ... towards evening, a devotion has been held which follows this pattern:

For the "Steps of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ" are sung. Then, for about one half hour, an instruction is given that has as its purpose that of promoting Christian virtue, but especially veneration and devotion towards our crucified Lord; there immediately follows the adoration of the Five Wounds...

Our purpose is that the piety of the faithful towards the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ might be intensified, and also that the number of the faithful might be increased. The gaining of the indulgences depends on the veneration ...and adoration of the Five Wounds, following the instruction ...¹⁰⁴.

Fr. Bertoni's consistency is an expression of his own innermost conviction. Being enriched by St. Thomas ¹⁰⁵, he was profoundly convinced that true devotion consists in the will to give one's entire self over to God, a life-long *obsequium*, in dedication to His service ¹⁰⁶.

While the style of the time concentrated for the most part on the passion and death aspects of the Paschal Mystery, Fr. Bertoni also was moved by the mystery of the wounds retained in the risen body of Christ and the apostles' mission [cf. Jn 20:19, ff.]. An interesting phenomenon takes place in the Stigmatine Founder's writings. By a kind of coupling of the Good Friday and Easter aspects of the Stigmata [*binomes de totalite'*?] Fr. Bertoni very often paired both dimensions in his preaching and writing.

This may be noted in a Good Friday sermon ¹⁰⁷ as compared with a later Easter homily ¹⁰⁸, he eloquently speaks of a new spring-time pushing up through the bitter cold of the winter a new life. He quotes Cornelius a Lapide: ' ... if you wish to find me, look for me in the Wound of Christ's side...'

In 1810, he preached an Ignatian retreat to the newly approved confessors of the Diocese of Verona. one of the conferences was reserved for the passion of Christ, His agony in the Garden and redeeming blood. This was followed by a reflection on the resurrection and ascension into heaven, in which Fr. Bertoni states:

... Imagine that you see Him as He appeared to some of His disciples, so full of life and with the scars of His wounds inviting you, too, to heaven... Christ entered heaven with the signs of His wounds: this is the price, He says, with which I bought this kingdom. It cannot be had for anything less...¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁴ cf. *Epistolario del ven. Servo di Dio, D.G. Bertoni. Fondatore dei Preti delle Ss. Stimate di N.S.G.C.* Verona: Scuola Tip. A.M.B. 1955, 345 pp. (abbreviation Ep.).

¹⁰⁵ cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 82, a. 1 c.

¹⁰⁶ cf. Sermon II "La divozione", in: *Pagine di vita cristiana del ven. Servo di Dio, D.G. Bertoni, Fondatore dei Preti delle S. Stimate di N.S.G.C.* Vicenza: Stocchiero 1947, pp. 200 (Abbreviation: PVC).

¹⁰⁷ cf. Sermon 4, "La Passione", April 3, 1801, and April 4, 1806, in: OPVC pp. 270, ff.

¹⁰⁸ cf. Sermon 38, "La santa Pasqua, Vita spirituale", April 5, 1801, in'; PVC pp. 289, ff.

¹⁰⁹ Retreat to the Clergy, September 18010, "Passione, Risurrezione e Ascensione", in: Mss B, Vol II, ## 2613;2632; 2635; 2637; 2647.

In tribute to his outstanding preaching ability, he was called upon twice to give "Franciscan" panegyrics that have come down to us: one in honor of St. Francis of Assisi in 1808, and the other for the canonization of the Capuchin mystic, St. Veronica Giuliani, in 1839. In his thoughts concerning the stigmatist of Assisi, Fr. Bertoni speaks of "crucified love", union with the crucified, quoting the Song of Songs. In this presentation, Fr. Bertoni brings together the nuptial theme and the stigmata: only the faithful "spouse" will follow the wounded Christ in the adult school of love ¹¹⁰.

In his reflections regarding the Capuchin mystic, Fr. Bertoni emphasized the impression of the stigmata on St. Veronica Giuliani together with her formal "nuptials" with Christ. She is presented as "the Spouse of the Crucified God" ¹¹¹. Fr. Bertoni describes her glorious nuptials:

... On Holy Saturday, Jesus Christ appeared to her, informing her of her nuptials the next day... the marriage would be contracted during her (Easter) Communion...

The integral aspects of the paschal Mystery are found also in Fr. Bertoni's description of his own devotion to the Sacred Heart. In his *Memoriale Privato*, he notes that he is being called to make an "oblation" [*obsequium*] of all that is created to the Creator and mentions the crucifix beckoning to him ¹¹². In a sermon on the Sacred Heart a few days later, Fr. Bertoni speaks of the wounded Heart of Christ - and of the Church, His Spouse:

...The side opened after His death shows us that Heart... wounded by the lance, that wound preserved in His glorious body... It is impossible to venerate the wounded Heart without remembering and venerating His immense love ... The abyss of misery calls out to the Abyss of Mercy...¹¹³.

Fr. Bertoni was deeply moved by the divine Son's obedience as an expression of His love for the Father and for humanity:

'I have not come of Myself... I really come from Him ... I was sent, and by him ... for I always do what is pleasing to Him ... My food is to do the will of the One Who sent Me... I honor My Father... when a man's doctrine is his own, he is hoping to get honor for himself - but when he is working for the honor of the one who sent him, then he is sincere... ¹¹⁴.

3. EUCHARISTIC DIMENSION : One of the key words in Fr. Bertoni's vocabulary was *obsequium*. In the Vulgate, it can be found in St. Paul's exhortation to the Romans: "... think of God's mercy... offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God..."¹¹⁵. In the choice of this particular ideal, Fr. Bertoni drew heavily also from St. Ignatius of Loyola, particularly his "mysticism of service". The Jesuit Founder repeatedly used the Spanish *servir/servicio* in describing the Company's apostolic mission at the service of the Roman Pontiff. The Latin

¹¹⁰ cf. Panegyric in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4, 1808, in: Mss B, Vol. II, ## 1783-1874.

¹¹¹ Panegyric in honor of St. Veronica Giuliani, December 29, 1839, in: Mss B, Vol. II, ## 2126-2172.

¹¹² cf. MP, July 2, 188, p. 207; May 30, 1812, pp. 241, ff.

¹¹³ cf. Sacred Heart, June 5, 1812, in: Mss B II, ## 1755, ff.

¹¹⁴ Some important Johannine texts showing the relationship of Jesus to His Father: 4:34; 5:43; 6:3; 7:18; 8:16, 18, 28, 42, 50; 10:36; 12:49; 14:31. cf. F. M. Braun, OP, "La Mission du Christ", in: *Jean le theologien. Sa theologie. Le mystere du Jesus-Christ*. Paris: Gabalda Vol. 3, 1, pp. 58-75; in: "La mission apostolique", in: *Jean le theologien. Le Christ, notre Seigneur hier, aujourd'hui, toujours*. Paris: Gabalda 1972, Vol. III, 2, pp. 57-63.

¹¹⁵ cf. Rm 12:1, ff.; cf. also 1 P 2:5.

translation for this in the Jesuit Constitutions finds a variety of expressions: *servire/ servitium; auxiliium/a uxilari* - and the oft-repeated *obsequium/ obsequi*.

In the Latin text of the Ignatian Constitutions, Part VII is wholly dedicated to the "Missions" of the Roman Pontiff, to which the Society is specifically dedicated, with repeated emphasis on *missio/missiones in obsequium*. This ideal is inspired by the Eternal Son's loving deference, offering Himself to the Father on behalf of the Church - memorialized in the Eucharistic celebration.

Fr. Bertoni's diary is permeated with a Eucharistic spirituality, expressing the sacrificial oblation out of love:

After Mass today, during the thanksgiving, I experienced the most vivid sentiment of faith in the presence of Our Lord and much confidence: I yearned to offer myself to suffer with an for Him..¹¹⁶.

During Mass today, I received from the Lord the gift of making a continual offering of my whole endeavor to the Sacrifice, with much affection ...¹¹⁷.

During Mass today, at the Secret memento, I experienced a kind of broadening of my understanding to know with whom I was engaged, and also great affections and expansion of charity in prayer. There followed then certain movements of my heart to God, and something like inspirations of the Spirit in God. It seemed much like one friend who suddenly meets someone whom he had not seen for a long time. At this unexpected encounter there is the sudden impulse to embrace him. There followed a deep desire that this meeting become more intense, along with the inspiration to reach out to the Supreme Good. At the same time, there was some fear of vanity, as I was in public - so, I had recourse to the consideration of grave sins. Both the recognition of goodness and love intensified, which led to tears of joy. This lasted until after Communion. Faith and confidence grew even more, together with humility and loving reverence.

Finally, at the Communion, there was a deep sense of devotion and sentiments, much like those I experienced at my First Communion as a young boy, which, so far as I can remember, I had never experienced since. A sense of recollection remained afterwards, all day until evening...¹¹⁸.

The Eucharistic spirit is one of the "constants" of his growth in grace:

During Mass today, I experienced brief, but very vivid illuminations and a deep sense of the divine presence, with confidence, love and the desire to be transformed into Him: that Jesus might even more truly live in me and that I would live no longer for myself. After Mass, this experience of union did not last but it came back again along my way, as I was taking care of some family business, just like it was when I was in church...¹¹⁹.

There is some indication of a certain harmony between his Trinitarian and Eucharistic devotions:

Today I experienced a rather vivid, reverential and loving sentiment of the Father's presence at the *Te igitur* of the Mass - together with intense confidence and love for the

¹¹⁶ MP, July 11, 1808, p. 208.

¹¹⁷ ib., July 24, 1808, p. 209.

¹¹⁸ cf. ib. October 9, 1808, pp. 216. - this was Fr. Bertoni's 31st birthday.

¹¹⁹ ib., November 25, 1808, p. 219.

Son. I also experienced a sense of the priestly dignity in the person of Christ before His Father. Then a greater tenderness and profound humility came over me in holding Christ in my hands right after the consecration: this was really Supreme Goodness joined to supreme malice: the Most Pure with the most unclean: the Most Holy, with the greatest sinner. This sentiment lasted through Communion. Afterwards, until evening, compunction...¹²⁰.

On Christmas Day that year, Fr. Bertoni experienced a most profound appreciation of his vocation during the celebration of the Eucharist:

During the three Masses today: recollection - and the sentiment of the great benefit of my vocation. What a great good it is to forget and to despoil oneself of the created world to seek the Lord alone. How God honors and loves His humiliated Son. O what a debt is ours to do for Him, at least in part, what He first has done for us...¹²¹.

4. BIBLICAL DIMENSION: Early in his vocation and throughout his life, Fr. Bertoni considered the Word of God as the rule of his life and activity ¹²². God's Word is compared to the star leading the Magi. The Stigmatine Founder's interest and esteem for the Word of God is evident particularly when he entered the seminary. From this time on especially, it is clear that he read the scriptures many times, making them his principal and favorite study ¹²³. Everything he accomplished was imbued with God's Word: from his first parish sermons as a newly ordained priest, through his more sophisticated and scholarly meditations on biblical themes and on the various books of scripture. This is most evident in his preaching to the clergy and in the spiritual direction to religious, as also in his own diary. All of his intense priestly activity offers abundant evidence that he was permeated with God's Word.

5. ECCLESIAL DIMENSION: In accord with St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians [c. 5], the Book of Revelations and St. Ignatius' **Formula** of the Company of Jesus, Fr. Bertoni very often thought of the Church as "the Spouse of Christ." His central text in this regard is found in one of his letters of spiritual direction:

(Remaining firm while waiting for greater clarity) seems to be the practice of His Spouse, which is the Church. As she has been assured by the divine promise of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, she never gives up seeking light for her activity, either in the defense of the Truth entrusted to her, or in matters of discipline. And when she does see her way clearly, she never holds back on her activity, or on further study, or consultation, so that she might proceed in the light and in her task.

¹²⁰ ib., December 11, 1808, p. 222. This "Trinitarian" aspect of the Eucharist was also present to him on January 11, 1809, pp. 224: 'During Mass, at the Consecration, I experienced a rather vivid sentiment of the presence of Christ like that of a friend who speaks with another: and also of the Father's presence. In some way, I experienced the distinction of these divine persons in one sole nature. There was much reverence and love: this lasted for about a half hour.' Also cf. M.V. Bernadot, OP, *The Eucharist and the Trinity*. Wilmington: Glazier.

¹²¹ cf. MP, December 25, 1808, p. 224.

¹²² This was the title of his Sermon 35, preached on the Epiphany in 1806, in: PVC, pp. 251-262. cf. also Giuseppe Furlani, CSS, "La parola di Dio - regola del pensiero e dell'azione del v. Gaspare Bertoni", in: *Saggi sullo spirito del B. Gaspare Bertoni*, 1. Roma: Curia Gen. degli Stigmatini 1983, 29 pp.

¹²³ cf. Furlani, "La parola di Dio", p. 11. cf. also Divo Barsotti, *Magistero dei Santi*. AVE 1971, pp. 131, ff. The author writes that it would be very difficult to find among spiritual writers, at least in more recent times, any greater dependence on Sacred Scripture than in Fr. Bertoni.

And in both these manners, her abandonment to God is always uniform. This, unless I am mistaken, is the perfect model of our abandonment in the Lord.

To abandon oneself to the omnipotent power of Divine Providence is a beautiful virtue when we are not able to act on our own. But, it is even more perfect and consummate virtue when we can act ... and yet, never cease from being equally and totally abandoned to His power...¹²⁴.

However, with the sensitivity that was so characteristic of him, Fr. Bertoni noted in his diary:

Whoever is drawn by the Spirit to a way of greater perfection, such as being totally abandoned in everything to God, should not look down on others who may seem to be of inferior virtue, making us of lesser, but good means...¹²⁵.

His dedication to the Church has been the object of a recent well-documented study ¹²⁶ It is clear that Fr. Bertoni as a diocesan priest had a truly dedicated commitment to the local church, but stipulated in his original rule that each Stigmatine is called to an inner disposition to go *anywhere in the diocese, or the world*, a kind of geographical abandonment [*quocumque*]¹²⁷. His diocesan spirituality ¹²⁸ was coupled with a universal missionary zeal. He hoped that the Stigmatine would bring "a more than ordinary" competence to the far corners of the globe, to assist the various bishops in their pressing needs that might indeed change with the times, and in accord with the different areas served.

His great ideal was to see the Stigmatines espoused solely to Christ our Lord: each is called to be presented to Christ as a chaste virgin, holy in mind and body ¹²⁹.

Fr. Cornelio Fabro reflected on this ecclesial aspect of the Stigmatine Founder's spirituality ¹³⁰. He writes:

In drawing up his Constitutions, (Fr. Bertoni) was inspired by 'that outstanding model, which is the Company of Jesus', in that he excluded none of its ministries. His 'going anywhere in the diocese and the world' develops his first Constitution. In fact, his sons have indeed gone everywhere that the voice of the Church has called them: to preaching, schools, missions...¹³¹.

Fr. Bertoni's response to the changing demands of the Church in the various parts of the world asks of each member [*quicumque*] a kind of "personal abandonment" and an abandonment of each of the personnel, to be prepared in the Congregation, taken as a whole, for "any ministry whatsoever of the Word of God" - an "apostolic abandonment" [*Verbi Dei quodcumque ministerium*] ¹³².

¹²⁴ Letter 39 to L. Naudet, October 16, 1839, in: Ep pp. 99, ff.

¹²⁵ cf. MP, October 12, 1808, p. 217.

¹²⁶ Fuasto Longo, CSS, *Don Gaspare Bertoni. Uomo ecclesiale*. Verona: Curia Provinciale degli Stigmatini 1987, 53 pp.

¹²⁷ cf. CF # 5.

¹²⁸ cf. F. Longo, *Uomo ecclesiale...*, pp. 33, ff.

¹²⁹ cf. CF # 109.

¹³⁰ cf. Cornelio Fabro CSS, *Un sacerdote ecclesiale. Beato Gaspare Bertoni*. Verona: Stigmatini 1975.

¹³¹ cf. ib., p. 10.

¹³² cf. CF # 163.

6. ESPOUSALS DIMENSION: To achieve this ideal, Fr. Bertoni thought of Mary and Joseph precisely in their holy espousals as the principal patrons of the Congregation. With Jesus Christ as the central inspiration of his charism, the Stigmatine Founder considered the Holy Spouses in their total self-giving to Christ, while thinking of Him as the Servant of the Father and the Spouse of the Church and of the faithful.

During the first Marian Year of 1954, Fr. Joseph Stofella wrote:

Why would Fr. Bertoni decide that his community should have Mary most holy, and St. Joseph for its heavenly patrons, precisely in the mystery of their Espousals? There might be those who would smile when they hear that the Founder wanted this mystery of the Espousals as the heavenly patrons for a religious congregation of ... apostolic missionaries ...¹³³.

Citing St. Thomas Aquinas¹³⁴, Fr. Stofella responded:

...among the various arguments of convenience why Christ should be born of a married virgin there is the following: 'So that by this there would also be implied the universal Church: while the Church is a virgin, she is espoused to one man, Christ' [St. Augustine]. In this, there is a synthesis of the nuptials of the soul with God...¹³⁵.

Fr. Stofella continues:

...the mystery of this virginal espousals was taken up by Fr. Bertoni, not in some partial manner, nor as a simple addition to some other mystery. Rather, he chose it precisely for itself as it is, in all its doctrinal, devotional and practical integrity. There is also the further reason that in this, he could contemplate the example that is beyond all comparison of what constitutes the very heart of his own spirituality, i.e., the spirit of holy abandonment... The Holy Espousals is the most fitting devotion to draw believers to a total union with Him, being a most attractive and eloquent example of total service to God...¹³⁶.

It is interesting to note that in all his own references to Mary, Fr. Bertoni most often. Even though he does not speak of her as "spouse" refers to the mysteries of her Immaculate Conception, her Virginity and her Divine Maternity¹³⁷. Even though he does not speak of her as "spouse", the devotion to the Holy Spouses in the community from the beginning has been its central Marian devotion. In a recent exegetical study, Fr. Ignace de la Potterie, SJ¹³⁸ shows that there is a "transposition" of the personalities in John's account of Cana¹³⁹. There is evidence of "substitution" of the married couple who remains always in the background - by Jesus, Who is the real Spouse of the Church in the New Covenant. This is simply the fulfillment of the prophetic tradition with its Christological realization. The fourth gospel is indeed an ecclesial gospel, presenting Jesus as the divine Spouse of the new People of God: John the Baptist is seen as the

¹³³ cf. Giuseppe Stofella, CSS, "Il culto e la devozione dello Sposalizio di Maria Vergine nei primi Padri delle Stimmate", in: *Collectanea Stigmatina di documenti e di studi riservati agli Stigmatini*. Roma: Curia Gen. Stigmatini. Vol. I, fasc. III, pp. 357, ff. [Abbreviation: CS].

¹³⁴ *Summa*, III, q. 29.

¹³⁵ cf. Stofella, "Il culto e la devozione dello Sposalizio", in: CS I, p. 358.

¹³⁶ *ib.*, pp. 361, 363.

¹³⁷ cf. MP, May 24, 1810. Prayer cited by Fr. Bertoni: *Buon giorno, Madre mia...*

¹³⁸ cf. Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, "Il mistero delle nozze. Sposa delle nozze messianiche", in: *Maria nel mistero delle nozze*. Genova: Marietti 1988, pp. 177, ff./

¹³⁹ cf. Jn 2:1-12.

"friend of the groom" ¹⁴⁰. In Fr. de la Potterie's interpretation, Mary is considered as the Spouse in the messianic banquet, Christ's unique helpmate in the work of salvation.

Guided by Fr. Bertoni's spirituality, the Espousals of Mary and Joseph are presented in these terms in the recently approved Constitutions of the Stigmatine community:

The Congregation is placed under the patronage of the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph. The confreres look to them as models of intimate communion with Christ and honor them according to our tradition ¹⁴¹.

Entrusted to the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph, we implore their help and protection to fulfill our vocation. We see in their help and protection to fulfill our vocation. We see in them a model of intimate union with Christ and the example of a confident and generous availability ¹⁴².

...

CONCLUSION

The Stigmatine Founder summarized his ideal of Abandonment to God and Availability to the Church in his first Constitution:

Missionarii Apostolici in obsequium Episcoporum ¹⁴³

In this brief formula there is synthesized his missionary ideal:

Verbi Dei quodcumque ministerium ¹⁴⁴.

By establishing this purpose for his community, Fr. Bertoni was able to express the spirit of holy abandonment to the merciful will of God, as well as present the ideal of competent apostolic missionary availability to the Church through the bishops. This combination of "self-abandonment to God" ¹⁴⁵ and "availability to the Church" ¹⁴⁶ is the heart of the charism manifest in his own devotions: to the Trinity, to Jesus Christ, to the Eucharist, to the Word of God and to the Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph. His Christological charism is apostolic, missionary, growing out of an intensely devout life.

¹⁴⁰ cf. Jn 3:29.

¹⁴¹ *Constitutions and General Directory of the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. 1984, n. 11.

¹⁴² *ib.*, # 42.

¹⁴³ cf. CF # 1.

¹⁴⁴ cf. CF # 185.

¹⁴⁵ cf. Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence*. Great Britain: Collins 1972.

¹⁴⁶ Fr. Bertoni's central idea came from St. Ignatius' charism described in recent times by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, *Integrazione e disponibilita'. Lettere del Padre Generale 1976-1977*. Presso la Curia Provinciale d'Italia 1977. cf. also *Entorno a una consigna disponibles. El corazon de nuestra identidad*. Borgo S. Spirito, 5. Roma: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritulitatis, Vol. IX, 1978: 2.

The Stigmatine is called to inwardly free, able to be led by the Holy Spirit ¹⁴⁷. The living of the Apostolic Mission flows from the lived experience of Christ's relationship to His Father, one of loving obedience, personal self-emptying, deep union, for the sake of the Church.

One of the key terms that appears often in Fr. Bertoni's writings is *obsequium*. Any reading of his texts would show just how often it does appear, and how varied its application:

- *toward God* : the divine *obsequium* is some kind of measure of one's love for God in meeting the strong attraction of this world ¹⁴⁸. Faith itself is an *obsequium* that the created intelligence offers to the Creator. This is the oblation of St. Paul ¹⁴⁹ and God deserves our best ¹⁵⁰.

- *toward Jesus Christ* : put before your mind's eye a king divinely chosen, to whom all power reverence and service [*obsequium*] ¹⁵¹. The soldiers opened His right side by a gaping wound... we are called to make up for this wrong with the just offering [*obsequium*] of our tears ¹⁵².

- *toward the Divine Word* : one walks worthily in this vocation only by submitting one's intellect humbly [*obsequium*] to belief in the Word of God ¹⁵³;

- *toward the Eucharist* : we read of the *obsequium* toward the divine sacrament in the lives of the saints ¹⁵⁴;

- *toward Mary* : who wishes this most pleasing *obsequium* and it is with this that we should pronounce her Name ¹⁵⁵;

The Bishops of Verona who knew Fr. Bertoni in the years of his priestly ministry [1800 - 1853] were most enthusiastic in their description of the apostolic mission of the Stigmatine community.

Bishop Joseph Grasser spoke of the Stigmatine Founder and his community in glowing terms:

- we can testify that Fr. Bertoni is a priest, outstanding in holiness, doctrine and charity, who has made himself all things to all. He is truly extraordinary in his dedication to the formation of the seminarians, especially through retreats and spiritual direction, as well as in the education of youth...¹⁵⁶.

¹⁴⁷ cf. Jose' Alberto Moura, CSS, *O Espirito Santo no carisma do Pe. Gaspar Bertoni*. Roma: Curia Geral dos Estigmatinos 1988, 314 pp.

¹⁴⁸ cf. Sermon 16, "Preparazione alla S. Pasqua", February 22, 1808, in: PVC p. 262.

¹⁴⁹ cf. "Discorso sulla Fede", in: Mss B. Vol. I, # 1555.

¹⁵⁰ cf. Sermon 11, "La devozione", April 20, 184, in: PVC p. 205.

¹⁵¹ Priests' Retreat, September 1801, "Regno di Cristo", in: CS: Vol. I, pp. 167, ff.

¹⁵² Sermon 4, "La Passione", April 3, 1801; April 4, 1806, in: PVC p. 286.

¹⁵³ cf. Sermon 35, "Epifania: La regola del nostro pensare e oeprare", January 6, 1806, in: PVC pp. 259, ff.

¹⁵⁴ cf. "Sacred Heart", June 5, 1812, in: Mss B, Vol. II, # 1760.

¹⁵⁵ cf. Sermon 8, "Casa di Loreto", December 13, 1801, in: PVC pp. 302, ff.

¹⁵⁶ A typed copy of Bishop Grasser's letter, dated June 18, 1831, is found in the Stigmatine Genreal Archives, Rome.

Archbishop Aurelio Mutti, later Patriarch of Venice, testified on December 7, 1853:

...this institute has no other purpose than that of offering every kind of service to the Diocese, on the invitation of the Ordinary... they have been outstanding in zeal and charity, always ready to respond to our requests, especially in hearing confessions, assisting the sick and dying, and serving as prison chaplains. We have no hesitancy at all in stating that we could not ever have expected any greater or more beneficial service from them on behalf of the diocese...¹⁵⁷.

Bishop Benedict Riccabona's Letter, dated July 22, 1854, describes the early Stigmatines in a similar vein:

...From the very beginning, this Congregation has always been dedicated to each and every ecclesiastical ministry whatever ... especially in hearing confessions, teaching, giving parish missions, retreats to the clergy, teaching catechism, assisting the dying and the imprisoned. They often called upon to be professors of philosophy and theology ... for any unexpected need whatever ...they are truly prepared to serve in any ministry to which obedience calls them...

Therefore, the members of this Institute propose to spend themselves in assisting the bishop of the diocese in which they dwell, especially by giving parish missions, retreats, catechetical instructions, sermons, as well as by the Christian formation of the youth, being totally dedicated to guiding them in piety and helping them in their studies, in oratories, in seminaries and in their own schools...¹⁵⁸.

The Decree of Approbation given from the Secretariat of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, September 15, 1890, summarizes these testimonies and describes the Stigmatine ideal in these terms:

...While attending to their own sanctification, they strive above all to assist bishops working for the salvation of their neighbor, through any exercise of the ecclesiastical ministry and through every work of spiritual charity, excluding the ordinary and perpetual care of souls and of sisters...¹⁵⁹.

Fr. Bertoni quoted Paul's Letter to the Church of Philippi, in which the Apostle to the Gentiles is inviting all the members of what is perhaps the first European community, to become better at what they are, to make progress:

...I am quite sure that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the day of Christ Jesus comes...¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁷ cf. *Causa Beatificationis et canonizationis ven. Servi Dei, Gasparis Bertoni. Positio super virtutibus. Summarium Additionale*. Verona 1960. Documento XXIII, Vol. II, p. 250.

¹⁵⁸ ib. *Causa... Summarium Additionale*, Doc. XXIII, pp. 250, ff.

¹⁵⁹ An English Translation of the Decree of Approbation may be found as Appendix II, D, of the actual Stigmatine Constitutions.

¹⁶⁰ cf. Ph 1:6.

The Stigmatine Founder often used this text and it is found in one of his central Constitutions:

...Since the purpose of our Congregation is to serve the Church with the various ministries of her vocation under the direction of the Bishops - and since this is, at times, arduous and difficult; and since - if we consider human frailty alone - it might even seem exposed to dangers - the program of our particular dedication to the Church cannot for this reason be said to be imprudent or rash.

The reason is in the first place we believe that the realization of this plan does not depend on human strength but on the grace of the Holy Spirit: since the One who has inspired and begun this work, will bring it to fulfillment whenever our own resources are not enough to keep it going: this is the special grace of our vocation, a grace that is stronger than every danger and difficulty ¹⁶¹

The Stigmatine community's ideal today is described in these terms by the recent decree for the approval of the revised Constitutions:

The Religious of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with the spirit of their Founder - Gaspar Bertoni, dedicate themselves to the 'Apostolic Mission', serving the Bishops through diverse ministries of the Word of God, particularly through preaching, offering assistance to clerics and the Christian education of youth ¹⁶².

Joseph Henchey, CSS
Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas - Roma

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¹⁶¹ cf. CF # 185.

¹⁶² cf. Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes. Decree Prot. N. V, 14 - 1/82, June 12, 1984, the 131st anniversary of the death of the Founder.

