

Part III

Suggestions for the Third Millennium

[Has there been an Excessively Single Apostolic Emphasis:
Unilateral Parochial Ministry???)

Pressing needs for these times:
Further Possible Apostolic Choices
In St. Gaspar Bertoni's Apostolic Missionary Ideal

[1] In all apostolic service, we need to bear more in mind the Founder's *Original Constitutions*:

4. [The Missionaries are to remain] free of all dignities, residences, benefices, and the perpetual and particular care of souls and nuns.

290. Moreover, as it was stated from the outset, our Congregation does not admit of the ordinary care of souls. This is understood with respect had for any community of seculars, and especially of the monasteries and congregations of religious women. But this is also so that no confrere will accept any ordinary care of singular persons, either men, or especially women, as a personal office, or as an obligation binding both parties, or one of the two, nor accept the obedience of another person.

[2] We need men of study to meet two suggestions very central to the *varied AND proper* Stigmatine services in the Apostolic Mission:

A. Catechetics:

[I] Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation,
Evangelii Nuntiandi
December 8, 1975

... each individual can achieve the kingdom and salvation by a total spiritual renewal of himself, which the gospel calls *metanoia*, that is by a conversion of the whole man by virtue of which there is a radical change of mind and heart... [# 10].

...this proclamation of the kingdom of God by Christ is achieved by the assiduous preaching of the word - a word which is peerless: 'Here is a teaching that is new and with authority behind it. 'And all spoke well of him and wondered at the gracious words which came from his lips.' 'No man ever spoke like this man.' For the words of Christ reveal the secrets of God, his plan and his promises and thereby change the heart of man and his destiny. [# 11]

...In this way, they establish a community which becomes itself a herald of the Gospel... [# 13].

...'We wish to affirm once more that **the essential mission of the Church is to evangelize all men...**' [# 14].

...The church appreciates that evangelization means the carrying forth of the good news to every sector of the human race so that by its strength it may enter into the hearts of men and renew the human race. 'Behold, I make all things new.' But, there cannot be a new human race unless there are first of all new men, men renewed by 'baptism', and by a life lived in accordance with the gospel. It is the aim of evangelization, therefore, to effect this interior transformation. In a word, the Church may be truly said to evangelize when, solely in virtue of that news which she proclaims, she seeks to convert both the individual consciences of men and their collective conscience, all the activities in which they are engaged, and finally their lives and the whole environment which surrounds them... [# 18].

... Finally, the man who has been evangelized becomes himself an evangelizer. This is the proof, the test of the genuineness of his own conversion. It is inconceivable that a man who has received the word and surrendered himself to the kingdom should not himself become a witness and proclaimer of the truth... As we have already said, **evangelization is a complex process involving many elements**, as, for example, a renewal of human nature, witness, public proclamation, wholehearted acceptance of, and entrance into the community of the Church, the adoption of the outward signs and of apostolic works... These elements... are complementary and perfect each other... [# 24]

...This preaching by which the gospel is proclaimed may assume many forms and zeal for souls will suggest an almost infinite variety... [#43]

...**Catechetical instruction** is another instrument of evangelization which must on no account be neglected. A systematic course of religious instruction should lead the minds of all and especially those of children and adolescents to an understanding of the principal components of that living treasure of truth which God has been pleased to communicate to us and which the church in the course of her long history has always been zealous to enunciate ever more comprehensively. No one will deny that this doctrine is to be imparted, not as a mere intellectual exercise, but in order to inculcate the Christian way of life... [# 44]

..Accordingly, in addition to this public and general proclamation of the gospel, the other form of individual communication of the gospel from person to person must be encouraged and esteemed. This is the method which Our Lord himself constantly employed - as we see in his discussions with Nicodemus, with Zacchaeus, with the Samaritan woman and with Simon the Pharisee - it is the method employed by the apostles. It may indeed be said that the only true form of evangelization is that by which **the individual communicates to another**

those truths of which he is personally convinced by faith¹³². We must not allow the necessity of proclaiming the good news to the multitude to make us neglect this method which **the personal conscience of the individual is touched by some inspiring words which he hears from another**. We cannot sufficiently extol the outstanding merit of those priests who, **in the sacrament of penance, or in their personal interviews**, exercise their zeal in leading souls in the ways of the gospel, in encouraging those who are striving to advance, in bringing back those who have fallen and in helping all with discernment and generosity... [# 46]

...Religious, for their part, find in their own lives consecrated to God an instrument of special excellence for effective evangelization. By the very nature of religious life, they are involved in the dynamic action of the church which, aspiring ardently towards the 'Absolute' which is God, is called to sanctity. They themselves are witnesses to this sanctity since they are the living expression of the church's aspiration to respond to the more urgent demands of the beatitudes. By their manner of life they are a symbol of total dedication to the service of God, of the church and of their fellow men. Accordingly, religious have a special importance in regard to that form of witness which, as we have already said, is a primary element of evangelization. This silent witness of poverty, of detachment from the things of this world, of chastity, pure innocence of life and voluntary obedience, as well as offering a challenge to the world and to the church herself, constitutes an excellent form of preaching which can influence even non-Christians who are of good will and appreciative of certain values... [# 69].

...In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the holy apostles, Peter and Paul, we urge all those who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the mandate of the church, are true heralds of the gospel, to be worthy of the vocation to which they have been called, to yield to no fear or hesitation in carrying it out and to omit nothing which can prepare the way for evangelization or make it effective and fruitful. ..[#74].

...We, too, have many obstacles to contend with in our own times. We shall mention one which is complex and all the more serious because it arises from within: that is the apathy and especially the lack of joy and hope in many of our evangelizers. We earnestly exhort, therefore, all those who in any capacity are engaged in the work of evangelization to nourish and increase their fervor... to proclaim Christ and his kingdom with all due respect for others is not merely the right of the evangelizer: it is his duty... [# 80]

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¹³² Cf. CF ## 163, 1, 2; 165.

**[II] Pope John Paul II,
Apostolic Exhortation,
Catechesi Tradendae
October 16, 1979**

...The image of Christ the teacher was stamped on the spirit of the Twelve and of the first disciples, and the commission: 'Go... and make disciples of all nations...' set the course for the whole of their lives.... The whole of the book of the Acts of the Apostles is a witness that they were faithful to their vocation and to the mission they had received.... [# 10]

...to begin with, it is clear that the Church has always looked on catechesis as a sacred duty and an inalienable right... [# 14]

... The second lesson concerns the place of catechesis in the Church's pastoral programs. The more the Church, whether on the local or the universal level, **gives catechesis priority over other works and undertakings the results of which would be more spectacular**, the more she finds in catechesis a strengthening of her internal life as a community of believers and of her external activity as a missionary Church. As the 20th century draws to a close, the Church is bidden by God and by events - each of them a call from him - to renew her trust in **catechetical activity as a prime aspect of her mission**. She is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy, without sparing effort, toil, or material means, in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel. This is no mere human calculation; it is an attitude of faith. And an attitude of faith always has reference to the faithfulness of God, who never fails to respond... [# 15]

...The third lesson is that catechesis always has been and always will be a work for which the whole Church must feel responsible and must wish to be responsible... **Priests and religious have in catechesis a preeminent field** for their apostolate... [# 16]

...All in all, it can be taken here that catechesis is an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life. Accordingly, while not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's pastoral mission that have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or that spring from it. These elements are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel, or missionary preaching through the kerygma to arouse the faith, apologetics or examination of the reasons for belief, experience of Christian living, celebration of the sacraments, integration into the ecclesial community, and **apostolic and missionary witness**... [# 18]

...It is reassuring to note that, during the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod and the following years, the Church has widely shared in concern about how to impart catechesis to children and young people. God grant that the attention thus aroused will long endure in the Church's consciousness. In this way, the Synod has been valuable for the whole Church by seeking to trace with the greatest possible precision the complex characteristics of present-day youth; by showing that these young persons speak a **language into which the message of Jesus must be translated with patience and wisdom and without betrayal**; by demonstrating that, in spite of appearances, these young people have within them, even though often in a confused way, not just readiness or openness, but rather a real desire to know 'Jesus... who is called Christ'; and by indicating that if the work of catechesis is to be carried out rigorously and seriously, it is today more difficult and tiring than ever before, because of the obstacles and difficulties of all kinds that it meets; but it is also more consoling, because of the depth of response it receives from children and young people. This is a treasure which the Church can and should count on in the years ahead... [# 40].

...It must be restated that nobody in the Church of Jesus Christ should feel excused from receiving catechesis. This is true even of young seminarians and young religious, and of those called to the task of being pastors and catechists. They will fulfill this task all the better if they are humble pupils of the Church, the great giver as well as the great receiver of catechesis... [# 45].

...It is on the basis of Revelation that catechesis will try to set its course, Revelation as transmitted by the universal Magisterium of the Church, in its solemn or ordinary form. This Revelation tells of a creating and redeeming God, whose Son has come among us in our flesh and enters not only into each individual's personal history but into human history itself, becoming its center. Accordingly, this Revelation tells of the radical change of man and the universe, of all that makes up the web of human life under the influence of the Good News of Jesus Christ. If conceived in this way, catechesis goes beyond every form of formalistic moralism, although it will include every true Christian moral teaching. Chiefly, it goes beyond any kind of temporal, social or political 'messianism'. It seeks to arrive at man's inner most being... [52].

...For your part, priests, here you have a field in which you are the immediate assistants of your Bishops. The Council has called you 'instructors in the faith', there is no better way for you to be such instructors than by devoting your best efforts to the growth of your communities in the faith. Whether you are in charge of a parish, or are chaplains to primary or secondary schools or universities, or have responsibility for pastoral activity at any level, or are leaders of large or small communities, especially youth groups, the Church expects you to neglect nothing with a view to well-organized and well-orientated catechetical effort. ... [#64].

...Many religious institutes for men and women came into being for the purpose of giving Christian education to children and young people, especially the most abandoned. Throughout history, men and women religious have been deeply committed to the Church's catechetical activity, doing particularly apposite and effective work. At a time when it is desired that the links between religious and pastors should be accentuated and consequently the active presence of religious communities and their members in the pastoral projects of the local Churches, I wholeheartedly exhort you whose religious consecration should make you even more readily available for the Church's service to prepare as well as possible for the task of catechesis according to the differing vocations of your institutes and the missions entrusted to you, and to carry this concern everywhere. Let the communities dedicate as much as possible of what ability and means they have to the specific work of catechesis... [# 65].

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[III] Fr. Gaspar Bertoni's Challenge of the Catechism in his Apostolic Mission

Fr. Gaspar Bertoni understood his Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ as being inspired by the Holy Spirit, as 'Apostolic Missionaries for the assistance of Bishops', through any Ministry of the Word of God whatsoever - through preaching, the assistance of priests and the consecrated life in general, and the youth.

In his plan, as outlined for us in his incomplete Constitutions, we find great emphasis placed upon the Catechism, upon its study and teaching. The Catechism, or catechetics, are mentioned in **8 different Constitutions** [cf. **## 37; 51; 55; 72; 163; 165; 170; 182: and four of these are in the important Part IX, Concerning the Grade of the *Professed*].**

As was true with St. Ignatius, St. Gaspar Bertoni legislated diffusively throughout his Constitutions from a life of grace that he personally lived. From the originals of his own catechetical instructions of almost two centuries ago, we read these words from the heading of his Instructions on the Lord's Prayer, young Bertoni placed in his own hand:

From the 7th of May to the 20th of September 1807, Feasts within which 'Doctrine' is taught

In his introduction to the typed Manuscripts, Fr. Louis Benaglia, CSS, noted the following:

...Their Origin: concerning the origins of these pages, we might very well use Fr. Bertoni's own 'Conclusion' to them as our 'Introduction':

"... I undertook this little project for the greater glory of God and the edification of my brothers, under obedience to him, who has been placed over me..."

As is true in the Jesuit Constitutions and the Commentary of Suarez on them, Fr. Bertoni proposes the Catechism both as a tool for formation, and also a most important part of his Apostolic Mission.

1. For Formation:

a. For Novices:

#37: *[Under the procedure for testing the Novices]: “Also, each one shall be trained, according to his ability and the needs and places and the times, in explaining Christian Doctrine to the youth and the uneducated. For this purpose, each one after his entrance into the Novitiate, shall apply himself to the study of Christian Doctrine, unless he already knows it well enough”*

b. Progress in Ecclesiastical Studies:

#51: *[Chapter II: The Branches of Knowledge]: “Since the Apostle says: ‘For I am determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified’ [I Co 2:2] - and since Christ said of Himself: ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End’ [Ap 1:8] - therefore, all the confreres shall start here: that is, to learn by heart, if possible, the Christian Doctrine as set forth for everyone’s understanding in the Catechism of Cardinal Bellarmine. Moreover, those who devote themselves to study shall constantly return to the Roman Catechism, profiting by their study and obtaining an ever deeper knowledge of it.”*

First of all it is necessary to show the difference between the Catechism of Cardinal Bellarmine and ‘the return to the Roman Catechism’. The Roman Catechism, which is also the Catechism of Trent, because it was mandated by that Universal Council of the Church - like the present day Catechism of the Catholic Church - are called **General** Catechisms - that of Cardinal Bellarmine, as that of the Council of Baltimore in the USA (1884) are called **Particular** Catechisms, intended for a given area.

Fr. Stofella compiled his magisterial commentary on the Founder’s Constitutions almost a half a century ago. He noted for this Part IV, c. 2 - treating of the progress in studies for the members, following Fr. Bertoni’s challenge for their progress in perfection of themselves, that the Founder followed here St. Thomas’ ideal of only handing on to others, what one has first contemplated himself [78] . This idea is presented by Fr. Bertoni in his CF # 49, which is taken almost *verbatim* from Suarez [79].

c. The Branches of Knowledge which aid and embellish Theology

#55: *...”Lastly, they will study Sacred Eloquence and the art of teaching Christian Doctrine...”*

2. Promotion to the Priestly Office:

#72: *“Without giving up the particular study of those sciences in which they already excel to a greater degree, or which are the more necessary, they shall gradually train themselves in preaching in our churches, in teaching catechism to children and the uneducated, and in hearing the confessions of children and adolescents”.*

The promotion of candidates to the ministeria graviora ... sacerdotale officium is also considered in Jesuit studies by the late Father General, Fr. Pedro Arrupe [and by Fr. Antonio M. Aldama, SJ, long time Secretary of the Jesuit Curia.

3. Promotion to the ‘Grade’ of the ‘PROFESSED’ [the Apostolic *Missionaries*]

Part IX of Fr. Bertoni’s *Original Constitutions* corresponds to Suarez’ Book IX, of his Commentary on Part VII of St. Ignatius’ Constitutions “**Concerning the Missions**’ This Part is the heart of the Jesuit rule and the charism of Fr. Bertoni - and would need its own special study. Fr. Bertoni speaks of the Catechism in the following Chapters of this Part IX:

- **Chapter II: Any Ministry of the Word of God whatsoever [# 163]**
- **Chapter III: Regarding the instruction given to children and the young [# 165]**
- **Chapter IV: Regarding the Means to be employed for maintaining a moral life in the young [# 170]**
- **Chapter VI: The Tasks of the ‘Professed’ [# 182] - i.e., those raised to the Grade of Apostolic Missionary.**

These four original Constitutions need their own special reflection - as they are found almost copied from the earlier work of Suarez, who was commenting on the Mission of the Jesuit Professed. Fr. Bertoni wanted this same idea lived ‘for the assistance of Bishops’:

a. Ministry to the Young, the Unlettered: this aspect of the Stigmatine Apostolic Mission pertains to the very purpose of the community, and is one of the special tasks in which the ‘Professed’ are meant to be experts:

165: *Our members shall undertake the Christian education of children and of youth, also of the uneducated, in every possible way, by means of the oratories, by teaching catechism, and even through private instructions.*

170: *Concern above all must be had that the young be well instructed in Christian Doctrine. They shall be taught it once a week; they shall learn it well and be able to recite it.*

b. The Catechism: A Ministry of the Stigmatines: ‘The Means by which Congregation promotes the Salvation of Others:

163: *The Ministry of the Word of God under any aspect whatsoever:*

Preaching publicly, or instructing the people by public and private catechism lessons...

182: Special Duties of the 'Professed' Fathers:

Their duty is to teach not only by preaching, by giving the Spiritual Exercises, and by lecturing on the truths which are useful and necessary to know for the attainment of eternal life, but also by explaining the rudiments of faith and morals, especially to the uneducated and to children, in public and private catechetical instructions, and in the oratories. This also is highly beneficial to the Church, and is to be highly recommended to them.

Fr. Stofella had already pointed out that this entire section, as compiled by Fr. Bertoni, follows Suarez' commentary quite closely for these various chapters for the 'Professed' of the Stigmatine Congregation [88]. Some of Fr. Stofella's citations might have suffered a misprint - but, at any event, Fr. Bertoni follows Suarez here most closely.

In his Book I, Suarez treats of the introductory question regarding the Society of Jesus in general. In Chapter 3, he brings up the matter of those means by which the Company of Jesus reaches its goal. In number 10 of this Chapter 3, he treats of the 'Positive **Means, those formally spiritual**'. He makes the central point that will be repeated by Fr. Bertoni in CF # 185, viz. that **the means are both proper and varied**. Suarez notes that the order of those means that are directly concerned with the reaching out to other human beings, are **both varied and multiple**. Some of these 'means' might be thought of as consisting in action - and other means are privations - and then, there are those means that refer to the disposition of the entire Society, regarding its very reason of living.

The first emphasis is that this way of life asks the members of the Company of Jesus to live in the habit and carrying out the tasks of the clerical state. Therefore, the first 'means' is the assumption of the clerical state of life. In this manner, the Society is to offer assistance to its fellow human beings. Thus, each member is called to live every disposition that would be necessary for assuming such a state in a worthy manner. This is especially so in taking on the responsibility of living that manner of perfection [89].

The second series of 'means' are all those sacred ministries that are useful for the cleansing, the illuminating and perfecting others. The primary means in this category would be the administration of the Sacraments, especially that of Confession and the Eucharist, and these are supremely proper ministries for this Society. This is evident from the various papal documents, and Suarez notes those of Paul III, Julius III, and Gregory XIII. The very 'form' of the Institute is explained in these documents. Much emphasis is also given to those sacrifices [of Masses] that greatly assist the Church, help in the conversion of infidels, the correction of heresies - and bring great profit to the faithful asking that they be offered. Suarez develops the sacramental aspect of the apostolate more fully when he develops his commentary on Ignatius' idea of the Apostolic Mission, in Book IX, Chapters 2 & 3. [90]

The third series are those **principal means**, as Suarez calls them - these would be included under the expression taken from the Formula of St. Ignatius, # **1: *Verbi Dei quodcumque ministerium***. This is carried out in **various ways, that are proper to this Institute**. Suarez then offers a list of seven - Fr. Bertoni has made use of the first six: these are the means by which the Community is to work for the salvation of their neighbors:

- **first, through public sermons, or sacred lectures to the people** [cf. Book 9, c. 1 of Suarez];
- **secondly, by communicating the very rudiments of the faith to the young and to the uneducated** - in this sense the divine word is most useful not only as it is preached in the Churches, but also in public ways and squares it should be publicly disseminated;
- **thirdly, by assisting one's neighbors through private colloquies and holy conversations**, either by fraternally correcting their vices, or by exhorting them to frequenting the sacraments - by instructing them in the works of perfection, and encouraging them to follow these [Suarez develops this further in Book 9, chapter 8];
- **fourthly, to these is joined the giving of the spiritual exercises**. In these Spiritual Exercises, believers are able to change their lives for the better, they are able to come to know themselves more deeply, and seriously to ponder the eternal truths. They also learn in these Exercises to work out with God the grave matter of their own salvation, and to ask His assistance in this;
- **fifthly, there can be enumerated the various congregations that have been set up under direction of the Society - and which have been endowed with the Indults of the Pontiffs, where in so many different ways, and in a very informal manner, the matter of one's eternal salvation might be promoted;**
- **sixthly, here also pertains the assistance of our neighbors at the point of death, that they might meet it in a pious and holy manner.**

All these are the means for reaching out to our fellow human beings, and they are discussed throughout **Book IX of the Commentary of Suarez**. Fr. Bertoni's **Constitution 163** ends here, whereas Suarez adds a further paragraph:

- **in the seventh place, there might be added here all those means that are assumed in the Society for the conversion of any unbelievers whatsoever, whether among the gentiles or living among heretics. This would include all that pertains to the Fourth Solemn Vow of obeying the Supreme Pontiff in the matter of the Missions, even the most difficult, and anywhere whatsoever in the world - even to the most remote regions, and even among the most hostile nations. We are to do this without receiving any money for the journey. The only reward we await is the salvation of souls.**

This is one of the descriptions of the **Apostolic Mission with its varied and proper ministries** - to be agreed upon, in accord with the changing circumstances of time and place, between the ecclesiastical superiors and the religious community.

From his own early teaching of the Catechism, Fr. Bertoni offers a real challenge today. In his Introduction to the Creed, he cites the qualities of humility, diligence, firmness and simplicity

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Summary

From his earliest writings, right up through the compilation of his Constitutions, one of Fr. Bertoni's traits was that of relying on what he felt was a 'superior' text, or authority. Fr. Benaglia put it this way in his Introduction to the five typed volumes of the **Manuscritti Bertoni**:

*... he followed the Catechismus ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini ad parrochos...In these catechetical instructions, there is a meticulous adherence to the 'Catechism.' This indicates a tendency that places in bold relief a psychological trait of the Founder, which manifests itself on various occasions. It was always his concern, or perhaps a need he experienced, of having solid support in his statements. His use of a document of incontestable guarantee, was this both for himself and for those he instructed. He lived and taught in an era that our own civilization is in the process of radically changing. He spared no effort in basing himself on those intellectual and social tenets, most in adherence with the development then in vogue, staunchly defending the valued conquests of the past. As an educator and teacher, he manifested a readiness to accept revised programs and the more current approach, when facing problems connected with methodology. However, he was an instructor to whom was entrusted the exposition of a doctrine that is essentially immutable. Thus, he entrenched himself within the confines of a tradition from which he derived not on concepts, but also its precise order, and not infrequently **the identical expressions, cited precisely - and at length**.. As is true of so many other human phenomena, so, too, is this compliance open to a varied interpretation.... Nonetheless, it does constitute a characteristic in the make-up of our Founder that cannot be neglected by anyone desirous of penetrating his soul.*

He taught some of these catechism lessons that have come down to us in the year 1807, from May 7th to September 20th, and notes that in this time there were 24 Sunday and Feast Day lessons. [94]. This custom was continued throughout the history of the Stigmatine community.

We conclude these initial reflections with quotes from the Chronicles of Fr. Charles Zara, from the years 1875 - 1884, the year of his death. Fr. Zara had a very broad idea of the Apostolic Mission - in preparing for the General Chapter of February 1874, a few years after Fr. Marani's death, Fr. Zara was assigned to the House of the Stimate in Verona. The house submitted a proposal to the General

Chapter, signed by Frs. P. Vignola, J. Marchesini, T. Vicentini, L. Morando, P. Beltrami, L. Pizzini, L. Rigatti, along with Fr. Charles Zara, with this wording:

...there is proposed that an Elementary and High School be opened, and if this is not immediately possible, there is requested that a Night School be opened...

This would accomplish the following:

- first, it would correspond to one of the principal purposes [ends] of our Congregation, that was born, and made itself loved through instruction...

Throughout the years that Fr. Zara kept the house Chronicles, he much admired the ministry of the **Fourth Class**, the summer teaching of the Catechism throughout Verona, by so many of the early Stigmatines:

May 6, 1875: Ascension Thursday. Today, consecrated to the memory of Jesus Christ, ascended into heaven: after dinner, our Fathers fanned out through our city, to teach the so-called Quarta Classe: or, catechism to the faithful... Five of our priests are thus employed each Sunday for the advantage of souls, to break for them the bread of the divine word, to instruct them in the maxims and the truths of our Religion. What a beautiful experience this is! **And what an important mission! This is perhaps the most useful and necessary among all the missions!**

May 7, 1877: Sunday. Today our Fathers began the so-called Fourth Class of Christian Doctrine. **..This is the life of the Missionary.** To be all things to all.

May 6, 1880: Feast of the Ascension. Today the so-called Fourth Classes of Christian Doctrine began... **This is the Summer Mission: to catechize the people**

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[B] Ministry to Priests and Religious:
[Lists of Documents]

This aspect of the Apostolic Mission has a hallowed place in the tradition of St. Gaspar Bertoni. As would be expected, preparation for this ministry asks for much study and preparation of the Stigmatine. Some insight might be had by a reflection on the abundance of official interventions from the Magisterium especially in this Post-Vatican II era:

[I] Reflections on The Stigmatine
Apostolic Mission to Priests

[1] Vatican II : SC [Dec.4, 1965]; UR [Nov. 21, 1964]; UI [Nov. 21, 1964]; OT [Oct. 28, 1965]; PO [Dec 7, 1965].

[2] Papal Documents:

Paul VI:

Encyclical, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* [1967]

John Paul II:

Post-Synodal Ap. Ex., *Pastores dabo vobis* [1992]

Encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor* [1993]
 Ap. Letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* [1994]
 Ap Letter, *Oriente Lumen* [1995]
 Encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint* [1995]
 Encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae* [1995]
 Post-Synodal Ap. Ex., *Vita Consacrata* [1996]
 Encyclical, *Fides et ratio* [1998]
 Post Syn. Ap. Exhortation, *Ecclesia in America* [1999]
 Ap. Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* [2001]
 Encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* [2003]

[3] Canon Law [232-264; 641-672; 1024-1054]

[4] Documents of the Holy See

Congregation for Catholic Education

The Study of Philosophy in Seminaries [1972]
 A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy [1964]
 The Theological Formation of Future Priests [1976]
 On Liturgical Formation in Seminaries [1979 – *In ecclesiam futurorum*]
 Circular Letter Some of the More Urgent Aspects of Spiritual Formation [1980]
Ratio fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis [1970; 1985]
 Pastoral Care of People on the Move in the Formation of Future Priests [1986]
 Guide to the Training of Future Priests concerning the Instruments of Social Communication [1986]
 Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Future Priests [1988].
 The Virgin Mary in Intellectual and Spiritual Formation [1989]
 Directives concerning the Preparation of seminary Educators [1993]
 Directives on the Formation of Seminarians concerning problems related to Marriage and the Family [1995]
 Instruction to the Episcopal Conferences on the Admission to Seminary of Candidates Coming from Other Seminaries, or Religious families [1996]
 Instruction, *Inspectis Dierum*, On the Study of the Fathers of the Church in the Formation of Priests [1989]

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism [1993]

Congregation for the Eastern Churches

Instruction for applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches [1996]

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

Circular Letter to the Most Rev. Diocesan Bishops and other Ordinaries with Canonical Faculties to Admit to sacred Orders concerning: Scrutinies regarding the Suitability for Orders [1997].

***Redemptionis Sacramentum*, On Certain Matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist [2004]**

Interdicasterial Instruction

***Ecclesiae de Mystério*, On Certain Questions regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests [1997].**

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**[II] Reflections on the
Stigmatine Apostolic Mission to the Members of the Consecrated Life
The Total Self-Giving of the Consecrated Life in the Modern
Magisterium: “The Absolute Infinite” [ET 34]**

From the opening document of his Pontificate, Pope John Paul II considered the last forty years of this 20th century, as a kind of “New Advent” for the Third Millennium of the Church, the setting for the “New Evangelization”:

“... We are in a certain way in a season of a New Advent, a season of expectation ... through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that He intended man to have from his first beginning: he has granted that dimension definitively - in the way that is peculiar to him alone, in keeping with his eternal love and mercy, with the full freedom of God... [O happy fault... which gained us so great a Redeemer...! (16).

“... In fact, preparing for the year 2000 has become, as it were, a hermeneutical key of my Pontificate. It is certainly not a matter of indulging in a New Millenarianism, as occurred in some quarters at the end of the first millennium. Rather: it is aimed at an increased sensitivity to all that the Spirit is saying to the Church and to the churches [cf. Rv 2: 7, ff.]; as well as to individuals, through charisms meant to serve the whole community. The purpose is to emphasize what the Spirit is suggesting to different communities - from the smallest ones, such as the family - to the largest ones, such as nations and international organizations, taking into account cultures, societies and sound traditions...” (17).

With so much else, this period has been very rich in official documents that have developed the theology of the Consecrated Life throughout this “New Advent”:

LUMEN GENTIUM, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, November 21, 1965, ## 39 - 42:

“... Likewise, the Church’s holiness is fostered in a special way by the manifold counsels which the Lord proposes to his disciples in the Gospel for them to observe. Towering among the counsels is that precious gift of divine grace given to some by the Father [cf. Mt 19:11; 1 Co 7:7] to **devote themselves to God alone** more easily with an undivided heart [cf. I Co 7:32-34] in virginity, or celibacy...The Church bears in mind also the apostle’s admonition when calling the faithful to charity and exhorting them to have the same mind which Christ Jesus showed who ‘emptied himself, taking the form of a servant... and became obedient unto death’ [Ph 2:7, f.] and for our sakes ‘became poor though he was rich’ [2 Co 8:9]. Since the disciples must always imitate this love and humility of Christ and bear witness of it, Mother Church rejoices that she has within herself many men and women who pursue more closely the Savior’s self-emptying and show it forth more clearly, by undertaking poverty with the freedom of God’s sons, and renouncing their own will: they subject themselves to man for the love of God, thus going beyond what is of precept in the matter of perfection, so as to conform themselves more fully to the obedient Christ...” [cf. LG 42 c, d].

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PERFECTAE CARITATIS, Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life, October 28, 1965:

“...From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels. They led lives dedicated to God, each in his own way. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits, or founded religious families. These, the Church, by virtue of her authority, gladly accepted and approved. Thus, in keeping with the divine purpose, a wonderful variety of religious communities came into existence. This has considerably contributed towards enabling the Church not merely to be equipped for every good work [cf. 2 Tm 3:17] and to be prepared for the good work of the ministry unto the building-up of the Body of Christ [cf. Ep 4:12], but also to appear adorned with the manifold gifts of her children, like a bride adorned to her husband [cf. Apoc 21:2] and to manifest in herself the multiform wisdom of God...” [# 1].

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EVANGELICA TESTIFICATIO, Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life, June 29, 1971 (18):

“...And yet, it is well known that the Council recognized ‘**this special gift**’ as having a place in the life of the Church, because it enables those who have received it to be more closely conformed to ‘that manner of virginal and humble life which Christ the Lord elected for himself and which the Virgin Mother also chose...[# 2] ...From the first centuries, the Holy Spirit has stirred up, side by side with the heroic confession of the martyrs, the wonderful strength of disciples and virgins, of hermits and anchorites...[# 3 b]...Dear

sons and daughters, by a free response to **the call of the Holy Spirit**, you have decided to follow Christ, **consecrating yourselves totally to him...** [# 7 a]...In reality, the charism of religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood, or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is **the fruit of the Holy Spirit**, who is always at work in the Church... [# 11]...through obedience, you offer to God **a total dedication** of your own wills as a sacrifice of yourselves [# 27]...This grace will be given to you by Christ Jesus in proportion to **the fundamental gift** which you have made of yourselves and which you do not retract [# 31]..."

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MUTUAE RELATIONES, Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church. The Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, April 23, 1978 (Some Doctrinal Elements) (19):

"... From the day of Pentecost onwards (LG 4))there exists in the world a 'new' people which, vivified by the Holy Spirit, is united with Christ and has access to the Father (Ep 2:18). The members of this People are gathered from all nations and are bound together in such an intimate unity (LG 9) that it cannot be explained solely by axioms of the sociological order: there exists between them a kind of 'newness' which transcends the human condition. It is only in this **transcendent perspective** that mutual relations between the various members of the Church can be correctly understood. The reality upon which this unique nature is based is the very presence of the Holy Spirit... The spiritual and pastoral re-awakening of recent years ... is due to the presence of the Holy Spirit and is clear evidence of a specially privileged moment (EN 75) for the renewal of the youth of the Church as she looks forward to the Day of her Lord (Rv 22:17).. " [# 1]

"...Vocation to the Apostolate: the whole Church is driven by the Holy Spirit to do her part for the full realization of the plan of God (LG 17; AA 2I AG 1-5)... This vocation demands of every man, as a sign of his ecclesial communion, that he recognize the primacy of the life in the Spirit upon which depends docility to the word, interior prayer, awareness of life as a member of the whole body, desire for unity, dutiful accomplishment of one's official mission, **the gift of self in service** and the humility of repentance... From this common baptismal vocation to *life in the Spirit* there come to light clearer demands and effective means in what concerns relations between Bishops and Religious..." [# 4].

"...Religious institutes are numerous in the Church and they differ one from the other according to their own proper character (PC 7-10). Each in fact, contributes its own vocation as a **gift raised by the Holy Spirit**, through the work of 'outstanding men and women' (LG 45; PC 12) and authentically approved by the sacred hierarchy. The 'charism of the Founders' (ET 11) appears as '**an experience of the Spirit**' transmitted to their followers to be lived by them, to be preserved deepened and constantly developed in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in a process of growth. It is for this reason that the distinctive character of the various religious institutes is

preserved and fostered by the Church (LG 44; CD 33, 35, § 1 and 2, etc.). [# 11].

“... The historical fact between charism and cross, apart from other factors which may give rise to understanding, is an extremely helpful sign in discerning **a call from the Spirit**. Individual religious also possess personal gifts coming from the Spirit to enrich, develop and rejuvenate the life of the Institute, to further unite the community and to show forth its renewal. But the discernment of these gifts and their correct use can be recognized to the extent to which they harmonize with the community commitment in the Institute and with the needs of the Church, as determined by legitimate authority...” [# 12]

“... Religious and their communities are called upon in the Church to give a visible testimony of their **total consecration to God**. This is the fundamental option of their Christian existence and the first objective to be attained in their distinctive way of life, whatever the specific character of their Institute, religious are, in fact, consecrated in order to proclaim publicly in the Church-sacrament that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes (LG 31)...” [# 14].

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THE CONTEMPLATIVE DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE, by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, March 1980 (20):

“...The contemplative dimension is basically a reality of grace, experienced by the believer as **God’s gift**. It enables persons to know the Father (cf. Jn 14:8) in the mystery of Trinitarian communion (cf. 1 Jn 1:3), so that they can enter into the depths of God (I Co 2:10). It is not the intention here to discuss the many and delicate aspects of different methods of contemplation, nor to analyze contemplation in so far as it is **an infused gift of the Holy Spirit**. We describe the contemplative dimension fundamentally as the theological response of faith, hope and charity, by which the believer opens up to the revelation and communication of the living God through Christ in the Holy Spirit, ‘The concentration of the regard of one’s heart on God, which we define as contemplation, becomes the highest and fullest activity of the spirit, the activity of which today, also, can and must order the immense pyramid of all human activities’ [Paul VI, Dec. 7, 1965].

“As the unifying act of all human movement towards God, the contemplative dimension is expressed by listening to and meditating on the Word of God; by participating in the divine life transmitted to us in the sacraments, particularly, the Eucharist; by liturgical and personal prayer; by the constant desire for God and the search for His Will in events and people; by the conscious participation in His salvific mission; **by self-giving to others** for the coming of the Kingdom. There results, in the religious, an attitude of continuous and humble adoration of God’s mysterious presence in people, events and things: an attitude which manifests the virtue of piety, an interior fount of peace and a person who brings peace to every sphere of life ad apostolate.

“All this is achieved in continual purification of heart, under the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that we can find God in all things and people and become ‘the praise of his glory’ [Ep 1:6]. The very nature of the consecrated life stands out in this way as the profound source which nourishes and unifies every aspect of the lives of religious...” [# 1].

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THE CODE OF CANON LAW, promulgated by Pope John Paul II, by the Apostolic Constitution, *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges*, January 25, 1983, [## 573-730] - this is its own study, with references to the Consecrated Life as a **Gift of the Spirit**, inspiring **the total self-gift** of those who enter it.

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LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II TO UNITED STATES BISHOPS, ON PROBLEMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE, April 3, 1983 (21):

“... Consecration is the basis of religious life. By insisting on this, the Church places the first emphasis on the initiative of God and on the transforming relation to him which religious life involves. Consecration is a divine action. God calls a person whom he sets apart for a **particular dedication to himself**. At the same time, he offers the grace to respond to that consecration is expressed on the human side by a **profound and free self surrender**. The resulting relationship is a pure gift. It is a covenant of mutual love and fidelity, of communion and mission, established for God’s glory, the joy of the person consecrated and the salvation of the world...” [# 5].

“... Jesus lived his own consecration precisely as Son of God: dependent on the Father, loving him above all and completely given to his will. These aspects of his life as Son are shared by all Christians. To some, however, for the sake of all, God gives the gift of a closer following of Christ in his poverty, chastity and obedience, through a public profession of these counsels mediated by the Church. This profession in imitation of Christ manifests a particular consecration which is ‘rooted in that of baptism and is a fuller expression of it’ (PC 5). The fuller expression recalls the hold of the divine person of the Word over the human nature which he assumed and it invites a response like that of Jesus: a dedication of oneself to God in a way which he alone makes possible and which witnesses to his holiness and absoluteness. Such a **consecration is a gift of God**, a grace freely given...” [# 7].

“... The identity (in religious consecration) derives from that **action of the Holy Spirit** which is the institute’s **founding gift** and which creates a particular type of spirituality, of life, of apostolate and of tradition [cf. MR 11]. Looking at the numerous families one is struck by **the wide variety of founding gifts**. The Council laid stress on the need to foster these as **so many gifts of God** (cf. PC 2 b). They determine the nature, spirit and purpose and character which form each institute’s spiritual patrimony, and they are basic to that sense of identity which is a key element in the fidelity of every religious (cf. ET 51)... [# 11].

“...It is proper, though not exclusive to religious life to profess the evangelical counsels by vows which the Church receives. These are a response to **the prior gift of God** which, being **a gift of love**, cannot be rationalized. It is something God himself works in the person chosen...” [# 13].

“... The vows themselves are specific: three ways of pledging oneself to live as Christ lived in areas which cover the whole of life: possessions, affections, autonomy. Each emphasizes a **relation to Jesus, consecrated and sent**. He was rich but he became poor for our sakes, emptying himself, and having nowhere to lay his head. He loved with an undivided heart, universally and to the end. He came to do the will of the Father who sent him, and he did it steadily, learning obedience through suffering and becoming a cause of salvation for all who obey...” [# 15].

“... When God consecrates a person, he gives **a special gift** to achieve his own kind purposes: the reconciliation and salvation of the human race. He not only chooses, sets apart and dedicates the person to himself, but engages him or her in his own divine work. Consecration inevitably implies mission. These are two facets of one reality. The choice of a person by God is for the sake of others: the consecrated person is one who is sent to do the work of God in the power of God. Jesus Himself was clearly aware of this. Consecrated and sent to bring the salvation of God, he was **wholly dedicated** to the Father in adoration, love and surrender, and **totally given** to the work of the Father which is the salvation of the world...” [# 23].

“... (The consecration of religious) calls for **the self-giving** without which it is not possible to live either a good community life, or a fruitful mission. Jesus’ statement that the grain of wheat needs to fall to the ground and die if it is to bear fruit, has a particular application to religious because of the public nature of the profession. It is true that much of today’s penance is to be found in the circumstances of life, and should be accepted there...” [# 31].

“... For each religious, formation is the process of becoming more and more a disciple of Christ, growing in union with, and in configuration to him. It is a matter of taking on increasingly the mind of Christ, of **sharing more deeply his gift of himself to the Father**, and his brotherly service of the human family, and of doing this according to the **founding gift** which mediates the Gospel to the members of a given religious institute. Such a process requires a genuine conversion. The ‘putting on Jesus Christ’ (cf. Rm 13:14; Ga 3:27; Ep 4:24) implies the stripping off of selfishness and egoism (cf. Ep 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10). The very fact of ‘waiting henceforth according to the Spirit’ means giving up ‘the desires of the flesh’ (Ga 5:15). The religious professes to make this putting on of Christ, in his poverty, his love and his obedience, the **essential pursuit of his life**. It is a pursuit that never ends. There is a constant maturing in it, and this reaches not only to spiritual values but also to the fullness of the human personality. The religious grows toward the fullness of Christ according to his or her state of life...” [# 45].

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THE CHURCH'S TEACHING AS APPLIED TO INSTITUTES DEDICATED TO WORKS OF THE APOSTOLATE May 31, 1983. (22).

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REDEMPTIONIS DONUM, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, to Men and Women Religious on their Consecration in the Light of the Mystery of Redemption. March 25, 1984 (23):

'...When Christ looked upon you and loved you', calling each one of you... that redeeming love of his was directed towards a particular person, and, at the same time, it took on a spousal character: it became a **love of choice**. This love embraces **the whole person**, soul and body, in that person's unique unrepeatable personal 'I.' The One who, **given eternally to the Father**, 'gives' himself in the mystery of Redemption, has now called man in order that he in his turn should **give himself entirely** to the work of Redemption through membership in a Community, of brothers and sisters, recognized and approved by the Church. Surely, it is precisely this call that St. Paul's words can be applied: 'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...? You are not your own: you were bought with a price [I Co 6:19, f.]... Christ says: 'If you wish ...'. And the response to this call is, therefore, a free choice. You have chosen Jesus of Nazareth, the Redeemer of the world by choosing the way that he has shown you...' [# 3].

"...In this perspective the fundamental treasure of one's own humanity is connected to the fact of 'being', **by giving oneself**. The direct point of reference in such a vocation is the living person of Jesus Christ. The call to the way of perfection takes shape from him, and through him, in the Holy Spirit, who continually recalls to new people, men and women, at different times of their lives, but especially in their youth, all that Christ has said...The vocation in which a person discovers in depth **the evangelical law of giving**, a law inscribed in human nature, is itself a gift! It is a **gift overwhelming with the deepest content of the Gospel, a gift which reflects the divine and human image of the mystery of the Redemption** of the world..." [# 6].

"... Religious profession creates a **new bond**... In this way, religious profession is deeply rooted in baptismal consecration and is a fuller expression of it [PC 5]. In this way, religious profession in its constitutive content, becomes a **new consecration**; the consecration and **giving of the human person to God**, loved above all else. The commitment undertaken by means of the vows to practice the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, according to the determinations proper to each religious family as laid down in the Constitutions is the expression of a **total consecration to God**, and, at the same time, the means that leads to its achievement. This is also the source of bearing witness and of exercising the apostolate..." [# 7].

"...In this form is contained **your answer to the call of redeeming love**, and it is also an **answer of love; a love of self-giving** which is **the heart of consecration**, of the consecration of the person. The words of Isaiah: 'I have redeemed you ... you are mine...' seem to seal precisely this love which is **the love of a total and exclusive consecration to God**. This is how **the special covenant of spousal love** is made, in which we seem to hear an unceasing

oath of the words concerning Israel, whom the Lord ‘has chosen as his own possession.’ For in every consecrated person the Israel of the new and eternal Covenant is chosen. The whole messianic people, the entire Church, is chosen in every person whom the Lord selects from the midst of this people, in every person who is **consecrated for everyone to God as his exclusive possession...**” [# 8].

“...In this particular context of the Jubilee Year of the Redemption, let us then go back again to the mystery of the body and soul of Christ as **the complete subject of spousal and redemptive love**: spousal *because* redemptive. For love he offered himself, for love he gave his body for the sin of the world. By immersing yourselves in the Paschal Mystery of the Redeemer through the consecration of the religious vows, you desire, **through the love of total self-giving**, to fill your souls and your bodies with the spirit of sacrifice, even as St. Paul invites you to do in the words of the Letter to the Romans just quoted: ‘to offer your bodies as a sacrifice’ [Rm 12:1]. In this way, the likeness of that love which in the Heart of Christ is **both spousal and redemptive**, is imprinted on the religious profession.... this love is the beginning of **new life in Christ and the Church; it is the beginning of a new creation...**” [# 8].

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LETTER TO UNITED STATES BISHOPS, John Paul II, February 22, 1989 (24):

“... They are **at the heart of the mystery of the Church**; they **belong inseparably to her life and holiness**. They are called to **a radical living of the baptismal commitment** common to all [#2186].

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DIRECTIVES ON FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES, February 2, 1990.

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PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR THE 1994 SYNOD OF BISHOPS, LINEAMENTA.

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FRATERNAL LIFE IN COMMUNITY - CONGREGAVIT NOS IN UNUM. February 2, 1994.

The Principle of Totality

“The Thirst for the Divine Absolute’ of the Consecrated Life

[cf. EN 69; VC 39] - John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, March 25, 1996: in this document, the challenge to live the “Principle of Totality” is multiplied:

“... In every age there have been men and women who, obedient to the Father’s call, and to the **prompting of the Spirit**, have chosen this special way of following Christ in order to **devote themselves to him with undivided heart** [cf. I Co 7:34]. Like the Apostles, they, too, have left everything in order

to be with Christ and to put themselves as he did, at the service of God and their brothers and sisters...” [# 1].

“... the choice of **total self-giving to God in Christ** is in no way incompatible with any human culture or historical situation...” [# 2].

The consecrated life may experience further changes in its historical forms, but there will be no change in the substance of a choice which finds expression in **a radical gift of self** for the love of the Lord Jesus and, in him, of every member of the human family...” [# 3].

“... These new forms of consecrated life now taking their place along-side the older ones bear witness to the constant attraction which **the total gift of self to the Lord**, the ideal of the apostolic community and the founding charisms continue to exert, even on the present generation. They also show how the gifts of the Holy Spirit complement one another...” [# 12].

“...Many of the baptized throughout history have been invited to live such a life ‘in the image of Christ.’ But, this is possible only on the basis of a special vocation and in virtue of **a particular gift of the Spirit**. For, in such a life baptismal consecration develops into a **radical response** in the following of Christ through acceptance of the evangelical counsels, the first and essential of which is the sacred bond of chastity for the sake of the kingdom. This special way of following Christ, at the origin of which is always the initiative of the **Father**, has an essential **Christological and Pneumatological** meaning: it expresses in a vivid way the Trinitarian nature of the Christian life, and it anticipates, in a certain way, that eschatological fulfillment toward which the whole church is tending.” [# 14].

“... ‘Lord, it is well that we are here!’ [Mt 17:14] ... These words bespeak the Christocentric orientation of the whole Christian life. But, they also eloquently express **the radical nature of the vocation to the consecrated life**: How good it is for us to be with You, to devote ourselves to You, to make You the one focus of our lives! Truly those who have been given the grace of this special communion of love with Christ feel as it were, caught up in His splendor: He is the fairest of the sons of men’[Ps 45:2], the one beyond compare...” [# 15].

“...’This is My Beloved Son!...The words from on high give new depth to the invitation by which Jesus himself at the beginning of his public life called them to follow him, to leave their ordinary lives behind and enter into a close relationship to him. It is precisely this special grace of intimacy which in the consecrated life makes possible and even demands the **total gift of self** in the profession of the evangelical counsels... In the consecrated life, then it is not only a matter of following Christ with one’s whole heart, of loving him more than father or mother, more than son or daughter’ [cf. Mt 10:37] - for this is the required of every disciple - but of living and expressing this **by conforming one’s whole existence to Christ in an all-encompassing commitment which foreshadows the eschatological perfection** to the extent that this is possible in time and in accordance with the different charisms...” [# 16].

“... Contemplation of the glory of the Lord Jesus in the icon of the Transfiguration reveals to consecrated persons first of all the Father, the Creator and Giver of every good thing who draws his creatures to himself [cf. Jn 6:44] with a special love and for a special mission. ‘This is my beloved Son: listen to him!’ [cf. Mt 17:5]. In response to this call and interior attraction which accompanies it, those who are called entrust themselves to the love of God who wishes them to be **exclusively at his service** and **they consecrate themselves totally to him and to his plan of salvation** [cf. I Co 7:32-34].

“This is the meaning of the call to the consecrated life: it is an initiative coming wholly from the Father [cf. Jn 15:16], who asks those whom he has chosen to **respond with complete and exclusive devotion**. The experience of this gracious love of God is so deep and so powerful that the person called senses the need to respond by unconditionally dedicating his or her life to God, **consecrating to him all things present and future, and placing them in his hands**. This is why, with Saint Thomas, we come to understand the identity of the consecrated person, beginning with his or her **complete self-offering, as being comparable to a genuine holocaust** [2-22, q. 186, a. 1]. [# 17;].

“...the practice of the evangelical counsels is also a particularly profound and fruitful way of sharing in Christ’s mission, in imitation of the example of Mary of Nazareth, the first disciple, who willingly put herself at the service of God’s plan **by the total gift of self**. ..” [cf. # 18; cf. all of ## 28 & 34 for the example of Mary’s totality].

“... The eyes of the Apostles are therefore fixed upon Jesus, who is thinking of the Cross [cf. Lk 9:43-45]. There his virginal love for the Father and for all mankind will attain its highest expression. His poverty will reach **complete self-emptying**, his obedience, **the giving of his life**... It is the contemplation of the Crucified Christ that all vocations find their inspiration. From that contemplation, together with **the primordial gift of the Spirit, all gifts, in particular, the gift of the consecrated life, take their origin**. After Mary, the Mother of Jesus, it is John who receives this gift. John is the disciple whom Jesus loved, the witness who together with Mary, stood at the foot of the Cross [cf. Jn 19:26, f.]. His decision to **consecrate himself totally** is the fruit of the divine love which envelops him and fills his heart...” [# 23].

“...the sense of mission is at the very heart of every form of consecrated life... To the extent that consecrated persons live **a life completely dedicated to the Father** [cf. Lk 2:49; Jn 4:34], held fast by Christ [cf. Jn 15:16; Ga 1:15-16] and animated by the Spirit [cf. Lk 24:49; Ac 1:8; 2:4], they cooperate effectively in the Mission of the Lord Jesus [cf. Jn 20:21]... Consecrated persons will be missionaries of having been called and chosen by God, to whom they must therefore direct and **offer everything that they are and have**, freeing themselves from the obstacles that could hinder the totality of their response...” [# 25].

“... Fundamental to every charism is a three-fold orientation: ... charisms lead to the Father in **the filial desire to seek his will**, through a process of unceasing conversion...the attitude [mind] of consecrated persons... is

progressively conformed to Christ..Finally, every charism leads to the Holy Spirit, insofar as it prepares individuals to let them be guided and sustained by him, both in their personal spiritual journeys, and in the lives of communion and apostolic work, in order to embody that **attitude of service** which should inspire the true Christian's every choice..." [# 36].

"... All consecrated persons by practicing the **evangelical discipleship**, commit themselves to fulfilling the Lord's 'new commandment' to love one another as he has loved us [cf. Jn 13:34]. Love **led Christ to the Gift of Self**, even to the supreme sacrifice of the Cross, So, too, among his disciples, there can be no true unity without that unconditional mutual love which demands a readiness to serve others generously, a willingness to welcome them as they are without judging them [cf. Mt 17:1-2] and an ability to forgive seventy times seven..." [Mt 18:22] [# 42].

"...Consecrated men and women are sent forth to proclaim by the witness of their lives the value of Christian fraternity and the transforming power of the Good News, which makes it possible to see all people as sons and daughters of God and **inspires a self-giving love** toward everyone, especially the least of our brothers and sisters. Such communities are places of hope and of discovering of the beatitudes..." [# 51].

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
Directives on Formation [1990]

Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation [1999]

Starting afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to the Consecrated Life in the New Millennium [2002].

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Summary

With a rich and varied vocabulary, the Universal Magisterium of this "New Advent" has emphasized repeatedly that the Consecrated Life is truly a Gift of the Spirit. The witness that the Church needs most of all is that of the challenge to answer as totally as Jesus Christ did to His Father's Mission in the Holy Spirit:

1. The Consecrated Life is based on God's own salvific Self-communication, His divine self-giving. The Life is a gift through grace, from One eternally given to His Father in the Holy Spirit.
2. The Consecrated life is presented as "this special gift" - a call of the Holy Spirit, that places Church members side by side with her martyrs. This gift has been raised up in the Church - this experience of the Holy Spirit is meant to be the fundamental option for all who embrace it. It is a unique gift of God's love, offering a special relationship with the Jesus Christ, consecrated and sent.
3. The following are some of the many expressions to challenge the full living of the gospel life - through a 'Principle of Totality' - asked of all the baptized. The

Consecrated Life is presented as a way imitating Christ's own life with His Apostles, a truly radical discipleship, living all through life the evangelical law of self-giving; a truly radical living of Baptism; a living of evangelical discipleship:

- a progressively fuller configuration to Jesus Christ;
- an expression of devotion to God alone, through the mind of Jesus Christ;
- a total dedication to God and the Church;
- the living of the transcendental perspective;
- a gift of one's entire self to God;
- complete self sacrifice, of one's whole existence;
- giving oneself up for God and His plan;
- the sacrifice of one's whole existence to God and His people;
- the surrender of one's total existence;
- an entire commitment to God;
- a spousal gift of self in service;
- exclusive belonging to God;
- the giving of oneself exclusively to God;
- wholly dedicated, totally given;
- the essential pursuit of one's whole life;
- total and exclusive self-giving
- a whole, specific and exclusive gift of self;
- self- immolation lived as the soul of sacrifice;
- the giving of oneself entirely to the One Who gives of Himself eternally;
- a love of choice by the whole person;
- a gift overwhelming with the deepest content of the Gospel;
- a gift reflecting the divine and human image of the mystery of Redemption;
- a new bond, a total consecration, giving the human person to God as His possession;
- the answer to the call of redeeming love;
- the heart of consecration: an answer to the love of Christ's self-giving;
- the love of a total and exclusive consecration to God;
- a special covenant of spousal love;
- consecrated for everyone to God as his exclusive possession;
- complete subject of spousal and redemptive love of total self-giving;
- new life in Christ, in the Church, the beginning of a new Creation;
- unconditional dedication, consecrating all, present and future;
- complete self-offering, a genuine holocaust;
- the oblation of all that one is and has.

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