

# St. Gaspar Bertoni



**Parte VI**

[CF ## 83 - 89]

of his

## ***Original Constitutions***

A Study by

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## SIXTH PART

### THE VOWS WHICH ARE PRONOUNCED IN THE INSTITUTE

[cc. 1-2- ## 83-89]

#### Chapter 1

#### Concerning those Vows, privately made, in the Time of Formation

[CF ## 85-86]

#### Premise:

[1] This short **Sixth Part**, specifying the various kinds of vows taken by members of the Society, is treated by St. Ignatius throughout his own Part V, describing the different Grades of Membership. Fr. Bertoni inserts this brief **Sixth Part** just prior to his treating of the Religious Life, as practiced through the evangelical counsels, in his Institute.

[2] In this brief part, the discussion will center on the different types of vows taken by those assigned to the different Grades of membership. These vows may be “Private” made out of personal devotion [## 83-84]; Solemn for the “**Professed**”, the “**Apostolic Missionaries**” [# 85]; Simple [# 86]; Perpetual [# 87]; Poverty, ownership not lost [# 88]; Public [# 89]. This chapter seems to be a clarification of the different situations experienced by the various members of the Institute who are living under its central authority.

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#### **[A] Ignatian Influence [cf. Part V]**

[1.] There is a manner of making a commitment, taking Vows that are made solely to God and not to human beings. However, these first vows in the Society were nonetheless recognized as public vows [cf. n. 539]. This is the vow that the Coadjutors take also as perpetual, if the Society wishes to retain them.

[2.] From the Generalate of St. Francis Borgia on, this kind of rather vague admission procedure was not practiced any more. The private pronouncement of these vows was a previous condition in order for the approved Scholastics to be accepted. This means:

- they would have taken the three customary vows of the evangelical counsels, plus this vow to enter the Society one day;
- they would have had at least a two year Novitiate;
- there would have to be on the part of the Society some indication that these men were accepted. In later years, this composite structure was reduced both by particular and common, and thus canon law.

[3.] It seems that this was all brought about due to the situation of one Brother, Antonio Rion, on March 11, 1549 - and the process was remarkable in that it sought grace through the blood of Jesus Christ [cf. n. 540] - and it has remained in the Constitutions, **the sole passage appealing to the mediation of Jesus Christ** <sup>1</sup>.

[4.] Certain **Vows of Devotion** could have been made by a candidate prior to the end of his two years of probation, out of his own personal devotion. These “private vows” as a Novice would have the same juridical binding force as the public vows taken later. When these became public, they would have to be pronounced before the Blessed Sacrament [cf. n. 546].

[5.] In whatever Grade of membership a candidate has made his vows, he should then remain “content” with that Grade [cf. nn. 117; 118; 542]. However, the option was left open that the candidates could at least make a petition to their Superior, but should leave the matter entirely up to his discretion.

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**[B] St. Gaspar Bertoni:**  
**Part VI a, cc. 1-2, ## 83-89**

**Chapter 1: Concerning Vows privately made in the Time of Formation**

**CF # 83:** Vows that are privately pronounced during the time of probation are not admitted by the Institute. As a result, they do not have any binding force. The community might freely decide to dismiss the Novice. In which case, these vows would cease altogether, unless the intention of the one making the vow was different.

**[NB: Fr. Bertoni does not treat directly of dismissal in the same sense that St. Ignatius does, who has given his entire Part II, cc.1-4, nn. 204-242 to this painful subject].**

- **nn. 14; 121; 283; 541:** sometimes the three classical vows would be taken, plus a promise of one day entering into the Society;
- **n. 17:** the community is not bound by these;
- **n. 205:** despite private vows, the Society may decide to dismiss a candidate;

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<sup>1</sup> *Almighty and eternal God, I, N, though altogether most unworthy in Your divine sight, yet relying on Your infinite goodness and mercy and moved with a desire of serving You, in the presence of the most Holy Virgin Mary and Your whole heavenly court, vow to Your Divine Majesty perpetual poverty, chastity and obedience in the Society of Jesus; and I promise that I shall enter that some Society in order to lead my entire life in it, understanding all things according to its Constitutions. Therefore, I suppliantly beg Your Immense Goodness and Clemency, through the blood of Jesus Christ, to deign to receive this holocaust in an odor of sweetness; and that just as You gave me the grace to desire and offer this, so You will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it... [CSJ 540].*

- **n. 346; 544**: one may take private vows for an increase of devotion, and for a greater confirmation of one's call; the formula would be the same as for the public vows;
- **n. 536; 539**: the private vow to enter the Society is always based on the condition that the Society should so choose to admit the candidate.

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**CF # 84:** Since, therefore, the young might the more easily pronounce such vows out of fervor, these should not be permitted unless with much reflection and consultation, and all the while maintaining the due form and subordination to the Superior. Furthermore, these vows are temporary, rather than being pronounced without any limitation of time.

- **nn. 17; 121**: these cannot be pronounced without the Superior's permission;
- **n. 283**: some years should be allowed to pass before doing this.

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## Chapter 2: Concerning the Vows of the Institute

**CF # 85:** No one will pronounce vows with solemnity in this Institute except the one who would merit the Grade of 'Apostolic Missionary' in accord with its scope.

**The Ignatian *Constitutions* speak of these vows:**

- **nn. 204, f.**: one should not easily be admitted, nor dismissed from solemn vows;
- **nn. 208; 311; 422; 511; 551; 557; 582**; the "Professed";
- **537; - nn. 817, f.** : great care in admitting them; then these members are ineligible for Prelatures!

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**CF # 86:** All the other Collaborators will take simple vows only in the Institute in the presence of the Superior, after a fitting Formation, as is in accord with common law and the particular rule of this Institute.

- **nn. 11; 519-521**: there can be those with only three vows solemnly professed.

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**CF # 87:** These simple vows are perpetual, in so far as the intention and obligation on the person making them: although, for a legitimate reason, it is licit for the Institute, which has received them under condition, to render these null and void.

- **nn. 17; 209; 536; 539**: the Community is not bound by them.

Fr. A. deAldama notes that the vows are four: poverty, chastity, obedience and 'entrance into the Society.' They are conditional vows, at least to some degree - **only if the Society wishes to retain the person making such a vow [cf. n. 539]**. Incorporation was not made by means of these vows, but by a different and independent juridical act<sup>2</sup>.

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**CF # 88** Similarly by these vows the ownership of temporal goods is not taken away, nor is every acquisition of them from the right of succession, gift, bequest, or anything similar. But, what is to be subordinated to the will of the Superior is their use and administration.

**[This almost seems out of place here, and really belongs in the next chapter. However, under the discussion of the various vows, at least this still holds true for simple vows [CF # 90, ff. - and CSJ nn. 553-581 consider the Vow of Poverty].**

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**CF # 88**: Those who are assigned to studies pronounce simple vows after Novitiate. The promise is to the Divine Majesty at the same time, and indeed publicly, that each is willing to receive that Grade of membership assigned to him by the superior after the ***Experiences*** and sufficient formation.

**[NB: these *Experiences* have been mentioned throughout as an apt tool for the gradual apostolic missionary formation of the candidates - [cf. above CF # 38; 42].**

- **nn. 64, ff**; the first mention of the ***Experiences*** in the Ignatian *Constitutions*.
- **nn. 116; 117; 541**: all are to be content and to attempt a change - this is their "first vocation";
- **n. 131**: before God, one may propose an elevation - leaving all up to the Superior.

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**CF # 89**: Those taking vows will express their "contentment" with whatever **Grade** will be assigned to them - this is a form of **abandonment** [cf. CSJ nn. 55; 57; 60; 63;; 98; 100; 118; 119; 121; 125; 133; 148; 213; 524].

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<sup>2</sup> cf. deAldama, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. An Introductory Commentary...* o.c., pp. 211, ff.