

VII. PRIESTLY SACRAMENTAL FRATERNITY

A. Vatican II

LG 28 b & c:

"... The priests, prudent cooperators of the Episcopal college, and its support and mouthpiece, called to the service of the People of God, constitute together with their bishop, **a unique sacerdotal college** [*presbyterium*] dedicated it is true, to a variety of distinct duties. In each local assembly of the faithful they represent in a certain sense the bishop, with whom they are associated in all trust and generosity; in part they take upon themselves his duties and solicitude and in their daily toils, discharge them. Those who, under the authority of the bishop, sanctify and govern that portion of the Lord's flock assigned to them render the universal Church visible in their locality and contribute efficaciously towards the building up the whole body of Christ [cf. Ep 4:12]. And ever anxious for the good of the children of God they should be eager to lend their efforts to the pastoral work of the whole diocese, nay rather of the whole Church. By reason of this **sharing in the priesthood and mission of the bishop** the priests should see in him a true father and obey him with all respect. The bishop, on his side, should treat the priests, his helpers, as his sons and friends, just as Christ calls his disciples no longer servants but friends [cf. Jn 15:15]. All priests, then, whether diocesan or religious, by reason of the sacrament of Orders and of the ministry correspond to and cooperate with the body of bishops, and according to their vocation and the grace that is given them they serve the welfare of the whole Church.

"In virtue of their sacred ordination and of their common mission all priests are united together by **bonds of intimate brotherhood**, which manifests itself in a spontaneously and gladly given mutual help, whether spiritual or temporal, whether pastoral or personal, through the medium of reunions and community life, work and fraternal charity..."

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CD 27 b & e:

"...Among the cooperators of the bishop in the governing of the diocese are included the priests who constitute his **senate or council**, such as the **cathedral chapter, the council of consultors, or other committees** according to the circumstances and character of different localities. These councils, and especially the cathedral chapters, should be reorganized, as far as it is necessary..."

'...It is highly desirable that in every diocese **a special pastoral council** be established, presided over by the diocesan bishop himself, in which clergy, religious, and laity specially chosen for the purpose will participate. It will be the function of this council to investigate and consider matters relating to pastoral activity and to formulate practical conclusions concerning them..."

CD 28 a & b:

"All priests, whether diocesan or religious, **share and exercise with the bishop the one priesthood of Christ**. They are thus constituted **providential cooperators** of this Episcopal order. The diocesan clergy have, however, a primary role in the care of souls because, being incardinated in or appointed to a particular church, they are wholly dedicated in its service to the care of a particular section of the

Lord's flock, and accordingly form **one priestly body and one family of which the bishop is the father**. In order to allot the sacred ministries more suitably and equitably among his priests, the bishop must have the requisite liberty in making appointments to ministries and benefices. All rights and privileges which in any way restrict that liberty should accordingly be abrogated.

"The relations between the bishop and the diocesan clergy should be based before all else on **supernatural charity**, so that their unity of purpose will make their pastoral activity more effective. Therefore, to ensure an increasingly effective apostolate, the bishop should be willing to engage in dialogue with his priests, individually and collectively, not merely occasionally, but if possible, regularly. Furthermore, **the diocesan priests should be united among themselves** and should be genuinely zealous for the spiritual welfare of the whole diocese. They should bear in mind that the worldly goods which they acquire through their ecclesiastical functions are closely connected with their sacred office, and they should therefore contribute liberally to the material needs of the diocesan, according to the bishop's directives [See D, 46, 18]."

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PO 7 b:

"... On account of **this common sharing in the same priesthood** and ministry then, bishops are to regard their priests as brothers and friends, and are to take the greatest interest they are capable of in their welfare both temporal and spiritual. For on their shoulders particularly falls the burden of sanctifying their priests: therefore, they are to exercise the greatest care in the progressive formation of their **diocesan body of priests**. They should be glad to listen to their priests' views and even consult them and hold conferences with them about matters that concern the needs of pastoral work and the good of the diocese. But for this to be reduced to practice **a group, or senate of priests** should be set up in a way suited to present-day needs, and in a form and with rules to be determined by law. This group would represent the body of priests and by their advice could effectively help the bishop in the management of the diocese...."

PO 8 a, b, d, e:

"All priests who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Orders, are bound together by an **intimate sacramental brotherhood**; but in a special way, they form **one priestly body** in the diocese to which they are **attached** under their own bishop. For even though they may be assigned to different duties, yet they **fulfill the one priestly service** for people. Indeed all priests are sent to **cooperate in the same work**. This is true whether the ministry they exercise be parochial or supra-parochial; whether their task be research or teaching, or even if they engage in manual labor and share the lot of the workers, where that appears to be of advantage and has the approval of the competent authority; or, finally, if they carry out other apostolic works or those directed towards the apostolate. They all contribute to the same purpose, namely the building up of the body of Christ, and this, especially in our times, demands many kinds of duties and fresh adaptations.

"For this reason, it is of great importance that all priests, whether diocesan or regular, should help each other, so that they may be **fellow-helpers of the truth** [cf. 3 Jn 8]. Each is joined to the rest of the members of **this priestly body by special ties**

of apostolic charity of ministry and of brotherhood. This is signified liturgically from ancient times by the fact that the priests present at an ordination are invited to impose hands, and when priests concelebrate the sacred Eucharist in a spirit of harmony. So priests are **all united with their brother priests by the special bond of charity, prayer, and total cooperation.** In this way is shown forth that unity with which Christ willed his own to be perfected in one, that the world might know that the Son had been sent by the Father [cf. Jn 17:23]....

"...Under the influence of **the spirit of brotherhood** priests should not forget hospitality, and should cultivate kindness and the sharing of goods. They should be particularly concerned about those who are sick, about the afflicted, the overworked, the lonely, the exiled, the persecuted. They should also be delighted to gather together for relaxation, remembering the words by which the Lord himself invited his weary apostles: 'Come apart into a desert place and rest a little.' [Mt 6:31].

"Moreover, in order to enable priests to find help in cultivating the intellectual and spiritual life, to promote better cooperation amongst them in the ministry to safeguard them from possible dangers arising from loneliness, it is necessary to **foster some kind of community life, or social relations** with them. This, however, can take different forms according to varying personal and pastoral needs; by priests' living together where this is possible, or by their sharing a common table, or at least meeting at frequent intervals. **Associations of priests** are also to be highly esteemed and diligently promoted, when by means of rules recognized by the competent authority they foster priestly holiness in the exercise of the ministry through a suitable and properly approved rule of life and through brotherly help, and so aim at serving the whole orders of priests.

"Finally, because of the same **brotherly bond of priesthood** priests ought to realize that they have an obligation towards those laboring under difficulties. They should offer timely help to them, even by discreetly warning them where necessary. They ought always to treat with fraternal charity and compassion those who have failed in certain ways." They should pray earnestly to God for them and never cease to show themselves **genuine brothers and friends to them.**"

PO 15 c:

"... The priestly ministry, being the ministry of the Church itself, can only be fulfilled in hierarchical union of the whole body of the Church. Hence pastoral charity urges **priests to act within this communion** and by obedience to dedicate their own will to the service of God and their fellow Christians. They will accept and carry out in the spirit of faith the commands and suggestions of the Pope and of their bishop and other superiors. They will most gladly spend themselves and be spent in whatever office is entrusted to them, even the humbler and poorer. By acting in this way they preserve and strengthen the **indispensable unity with their brothers in the ministry** and especially with those whom the Lord has appointed the visible rulers of his Church. They also work towards the building up of the Body of Christ, which grows 'by what every joint supplies' [cf. Ep 4:11-16]. This obedience which leads to the more mature freedom of the sons of God, by its nature demands that priests in the exercise of their duties should be moved by charity prudently to seek new methods of advancing the good of the Church. At the same time it also demands that while putting forward their schemes with confidence and being insistent in making known the needs of the flock

entrusted to them, they should always be prepared to submit to the judgment of those who exercise the chief function in ruling God's Church..."

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AG 19 c:

"... Bishops and their priests must feel and live with the universal Church, becoming **more and more imbued with the sense of Christ and the Church...**

AG 20 c:

"... In the young churches the local priests should give themselves generously **to the work of evangelization. They should work with the foreign missionaries with whom they form one priestly body** under the authority of the bishop, not only in ministering to the faithful .. and in celebrating the divine worship, but also in preaching the Gospel to those who are outside..."

AG 30 b:

"... It is the responsibility of the bishop, as the head of the diocesan apostolate and its center of unity, to promote missionary activity, guide and coordinate it, so that the spontaneous zeal of those who engage in this work may be safeguarded and fostered. All missionaries, event exempt religious, are subject to this authority in all the various activities which have to do with the exercise of the sacred apostolate. For better coordination, the bishop should, as far as is possible, establish **a pastoral council** in which clergy, religious and lay people would have a part through elected delegates. He should also take care the apostolic action is not entirely restricted to those who have already been concerted, but that a fair proportion of workers and funds is directed to the evangelization of non-Christians..."

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Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiae Sanctae* , Aug. 6, 1968 - Normsß

15: The Presbyteral Council and the Pastoral Council [cf. CD 27; PO 7: For that which concerns the Presbyteral Council:

¶ 1: In every diocese there should be instituted in the manner and in the forms established by the bishop, a Presbyteral Council, i.e., a group, or senate of priests, representing the Presbyterate, which might efficaciously assist the bishop with its council, in the government of the diocese. In this council, the bishop will listen to his priests, he will consult them, and discuss with them regarding the needs of the pastoral endeavor and the good of the diocese.

¶ 2: Among the members of the Presbyteral Council there may also be some religious, in so far as they have the care of the ministry to souls and other works of the apostolate.

¶ 3: The Presbyteral Council has only consultative voice.

¶ 4: During the time when the See is vacant, the Presbyteral Council ceases to exist at least in so far as it has not in some particular circumstances received

directions from the Holy See has determined otherwise, or that the Council receives the confirmation of the Vicar Capitular or the Apostolic Administrator...

17: ¶ 1: It is opportune that for the matters that pertain to the Presbyteral Council, or the Pastoral Council, as well as their relationships with each other, or the relationships with the Episcopal Councils that already exist in accord with the law that is already in place, the bishops especially when assembled in conferences, will take those common dispositions and will emanate norms similar for all the dioceses of the territory.

The bishops will also take care that all the diocesan councils be as coordinated as well as is possible through a precise definition of competencies, a mutual participation of their members in common or continuous sessions, and in other ways.

¶ 2: Meanwhile, the councils of the bishop which do exist in the strength of law in force, meaning the Cathedral Chapter, the Meeting of the Consulters and others should they exist, conserve their tasks and their competencies, while awaiting revision.

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C. Canon Law - Jan. 25, 1983

Can 275 ¶ 1: Since all clerics are working for the same purpose, namely for the building up of the body of Christ, they are bound to be united with one another in **the bond of brotherhood and prayer**. They are to seek to cooperate with one another, in accordance with the provisions of particular law.

Commentary: The obligations of brotherhood, co-responsibility in the common task, and of mutual cooperation among the clerics, which are formalized here, respond to PO 7-8. They act as bases or are conditions *sine qua non* for an effective pastoral organization. They also have a juridical basis, however, which is incardination, considered not as a bond that subjects the cleric to the bishop, but as a relationship of full service. The juridical bonds of the relationship are three-directional: bishop, presbyterium and people.

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Can. 280: Some manner of common life is highly recommended to clerics; where it exists, it is as far as possible to be maintained.

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Can 533, ¶ 1: The parish priest is obliged to reside in the parochial house, near the church. In particular cases, however, where there is a just reason, the local Ordinary may permit him to reside elsewhere, especially in a house common to several priests, provided the carrying out of the parochial duties is properly and suitably catered for.

Commentary: The legislation for residence is unchanged. The period allowed for a parish priest for holidays is restricted to one month. The norm regulating absences is simplified, however, since the diocesan bishop can take the necessary steps by way of particular norms.

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Can. 545, ¶ 1: Whenever it is necessary, or opportune for due pastoral care of the parish, one or more assistant priests can be joined with the parish priest. As cooperators with the parish priest and sharers in his concern, they are, by common counsel and effort with the parish priest and under his authority, to labor in the pastoral ministry.

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Can. 550 ¶ 1: The assistant priest is bound to reside in the parish, or, if he is appointed for a number of parishes at the same time, in one of them. For a just reason, however, the local Ordinary may permit him to reside elsewhere, especially in **a house common to several priests**, provided the carrying out of the pastoral duties does not in any way suffer.

¶ 2: The local Ordinary is to see to it that where it is possible, **some manner of common life** in the parochial house be encouraged between the parish priest and the assistants.

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D. Pastores Dabo Vobis
John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation, March 25, 1992

17: By its very nature, the ordained ministry can be carried out only to the extent that the priest is **united to Christ through sacramental participation in the priestly order**, and thus to the extent that he is in hierarchical communion with his own bishop. The ordained ministry has a radical '**communitarian form**' and can only be carried out as a '**collective work**' [cf. PO 7-9]. The Council dealt extensively with this communal aspect of the nature of the priesthood, examining in succession the relationship of the priest with his own bishop, with other priests, and with the lay faithful.

"The ministry of priests is above all communitarian and a responsible and necessary cooperation with the bishop's ministry, in concern for the universal Church and for the individual particular churches, for whose service they form with the bishop, a single presbyterate.

"Each priest, whether diocesan or religious, is united to the other members of this presbyterate on the basis of the sacrament of holy orders and by particular bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and fraternity. All priests, in fact, whether diocesan or religious, share in the one priesthood of Christ the head and shepherd: 'they work for the same cause, namely the building up of the body of Christ, which demands a variety of functions and new adaptations, especially at the present time' and is enriched down the centuries by ever new charisms..."

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29: "...This meaning [of chastity] is fully found in virginity which makes evident, even in the renunciation of marriage, the '**nuptial meaning**' of the body through a **communion** and a personal gift to Jesus Christ and his Church which prefigures and anticipates the perfect and final communion and self-giving of the world to come: 'In virginity, or celibacy, the human being is awaiting, also in a bodily way, the

eschatological marriage of Christ with the Church, giving himself or herself completely to the Church in the hope that Christ may give himself to the Church in the full truth of eternal life.' [*Familiaris Consortio*, # 16].

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50: "... Of the greatest importance for formation for chastity in celibacy are the bishop's concern and **fraternal life among priests**. In the seminary, i.e., in the program of formation, celibacy should be presented clearly, without any ambiguities and in a positive fashion. The seminarian should have a sufficient degree of psychological and sexual maturity as well as an assiduous and authentic life of prayer, and he should put himself under the direction of a spiritual father...."

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E. Directory for the life and Ministry of Priests
Jan. 31, 1994

27: The presbyterate is a privileged place in which the priest should be able to find the means of sanctification and evangelization and of being helped to overcome the limits and the weaknesses which are proper to human nature and which are particularly felt today.

" He will therefore make every effort to avoid living his own priesthood in an isolated and subjective way, and must try to **enhance fraternal communion** in the giving and receiving - from priest to priest - of the warmth of friendship, of affectionate help, of acceptance of fraternal correction, well aware that the grace of Orders 'assumes and elevates human relations, psychologically, affectionately, cordially and spiritually [PO 12-14].

"All this is expressed in the Liturgy of the mass, In *Coena Domini*, of Holy Thursday which shows how through the Eucharistic Communion - born in the Last Supper - the priests receive the capacity to love one another, as the Master loves them

28: "The profound ecclesial sense of the presbyterate fosters the personal responsibility of each priest in carrying out the particular ministry entrusted to him by the Bishop. The capacity to develop and profoundly live priestly friendship; is a source of serenity and joy in the exercise of the ministry, a decisive support in difficulties and a valuable help in the growth of pastoral charity. Priests must exercise this friendship in a particular way precisely towards those brothers most in need of understanding, help and support.

29: "A manifestation of this communion is also the *common life* always supported by the Church, recently emphasized by the documents of Vatican Council II and of the successive Magisterium and applied in many Dioceses with positive results.

"Among the diverse forms of this communal house, community of table, etc.] one must look highly upon the communal participation in liturgical prayer. The diversity of forms must be encouraged according to the possibilities and practical situations, without necessarily emphasizing models proper to religious life. Particularly

praiseworthy are those associations which support priestly fraternity, sanctity in the exercise of the ministry, and communion with the Bishop and with the entire Church.

"It is necessary that parish priests be available to encourage common life in the parochial house with their vicars, effectively considering them as their cooperators and sharers in the pastoral care. And the vicars, in order to build priestly communion, must recognize and respect the authority of the parish priest."

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EUCCHARISTIC REFLECTIONS

1. Magisterium

DC, '80, n. 4:

[1] ...The Church was founded as the new community of the People of God, in the apostolic community of those Twelve who, at the Last Supper, became partakers of the body and blood of the Lord under the species of bread and wine. Christ has said to them: 'Take and eat... Take and drink...'. And carrying out this command of His, they entered for the first time **into sacramental communion with the Son of God, a communion that is the pledge of eternal life**. From that moment until the end of time, *the Church is being built up through that same communion with the Son of God, a communion which is a pledge of the eternal Passover...*

...But, the Church is not brought into being only through the union of people, through the experience of brotherhood to which the Eucharistic Banquet gives rise. The Church is brought into being when, in that fraternal union and communion, **we celebrate** the sacrifice of the Cross, **when we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes [1 Co 11:26], and later, when being deeply compenetrated with the mystery of our salvation, we approach as a community the Table of the Lord, in order to be nourished there, in a sacramental manner, by the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice of propitiation. Therefore in Eucharistic communion we receive Christ, Christ Himself; and our union with him which is a gift and grace for each individual, brings it about that in Him we are also associated in the unity of His body which is the Church.**

[2] 6. *The authentic sense of the Eucharist becomes of itself **the school of active love for our neighbor**.* We know that this is the true and full order of love that the Lord has taught us: 'by this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples.' [JN 13:35]. **The Eucharist educates us to this love in a deeper way;** it shows us in fact what value each person, our brother or sister, has in God's eyes, if Christ offers Himself equally to each one, under the species of bread and wine. If our Eucharistic worship is authentic, it must make us grow in awareness of the dignity of each person. The awareness of that dignity becomes *the deepest motive **our relationship** with our neighbor...*

[3] 8. ...***In persona*** means in specific **sacramental identification** with the eternal High Priest', Who is the author and principal subject of this sacrifice of His, a sacrifice in which, in truth, nobody can take His place. Only He - only Christ - was able and is always able to be the true and effective 'expiation for our sins and ... for the sins of the whole world [1Jn 1:2; 4:10]. Only His sacrifice - and no one else's - was able and is able to have a 'propitiatory power' before God, the Trinity and the transcendent holiness. Awareness of this reality throws a certain light on the character and significance of the priest celebrant who, *by confecting the holy Sacrifice and acting 'in persona Christi'*, is sacramentally [and ineffably] brought into that most profound *sacredness*, and made part of it,

[4] **n. 11:** ... **[The Table of the Bread of the Lord]** ... I ask this [watchfulness on the part of Bishops] of you in the name of that unity that we have received from the Apostles as our heritage, **collegial unity**. This **unity** came to birth, in a sense, at the table of the Bread of the Lord on Holy Thursday. With the help of your brothers in the priesthood, do all you can to safeguard the sacred dignity of the Eucharistic ministry and **that deep spirit of Eucharistic Communion** which belongs in a special way to the Church as the People of God and which is also a particular heritage transmitted to us from the Apostles, by various liturgical traditions, and by unnumbered generations of the faithful, who were often heroic witnesses to Christ educated in **the school of the Cross** [Redemption] and of the Eucharist ...

[5] '93, **pp. 45- 50, passim:**

...For priests, as well as for bishops, it is a sharing in the third aspect of Christ's threefold **munus** [**prophetic, priestly, royal**]: a reflection of the high priesthood of Christ, the one Mediator between God and men, **the one Teacher, the one Shepherd**. In an ecclesial perspective **pastoral work consists principally in the service of unity**, that is, in ensuring the union of all in the Body of Christ which is the Church [cf. PDV # 16]...

... The presbyter-pastor [i.e. shepherd] must exercise this authority by modeling himself on Christ the *Good Shepherd*, who did not impose it with external coercion, but **by forming the community through the interior action of His Spirit**.

He wanted to **share His burning love with the group of disciples** and with all those who accepted His message, in order to give life to a 'community of love', which at the right moment he also established visibly as the Church...

[6] 7. In any case, everything depends on the Eucharist, which contains the vital principle of pastoral leadership. At the Council says: 'No Christian community is built up which does not grow from, and hinge on the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. From this all education for community spirit must begin' [# 20; CCC # 1565]. **The Eucharist is the course of unity and the most perfect expression of the union of all the Christian community's members. It is the presbyters' task to ensure that this is really so...**

... **The Eucharist, therefore, is the vital principle of the Church** as the community of Christ's members: here pastoral leadership finds its inspiration, strength and extent...

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[7] **PDV # 12:**

'The priest's identity; as the Synod Fathers wrote, 'like ever Christian identity, has its source in the Blessed Trinity', which is revealed and is communicated to people in Christ, establishing in Him and through the spirit, the Church as 'the seed and the beginning of the kingdom' [LG 5]. The apostolic exhortation, **Christifideles Laici** [# 8], summarizing the Council's teaching, presents the Church as mystery, communion and mission: 'She is mystery because the very life and love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the gift gratuitously offered to all those who are born of water and the Spirit [cf. Jn 3:5] and called to relive the **very communion of God** and to manifest it and communicate it in history [mission]'

[7 a] It is within the Church's mystery, as a **mystery of Trinitarian communion in missionary tension**, that every Christian identity is revealed, and likewise the specific identity of the priest and his ministry. Indeed, the priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the sacrament of orders, is sent forth by the Father, through the mediator-ship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is configured in a special way as Head and shepherd of His people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world.

[7 b] In this way **the fundamentally 'relational' dimension of priestly identity** can be understood. Through the priesthood which arises from the depths of the ineffable mystery of God, that is, from the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ and **the Holy Spirit's gift of unity**, the priest sacramentally enters into **communion with the bishop and with other priests** [PO 7-8] in order to serve the People of God who are the Church and to draw all mankind to Christ in accordance with the Lord's prayer: *Holy Father, keep them in your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one ... even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me...*[Jn 17:11,21].

[7 c] Consequently, the nature and mission of **the ministerial priesthood cannot be defined except through this multiple and rich interconnection of relationships which arise from the Blessed Trinity and are prolonged in the communion of the Church, as a sign and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity of humanity** [LG 1]. In this context the **ecclesiology of communion** becomes decisive for understanding the identity of the priest, his essential dignity, and his vocation and mission among the People of God and in the world. Reference to the Church is therefore necessary, even if not primarily, in defining the identity of the Priest. *As a mystery, the Church is essentially related to Jesus Christ.* She is his fullness, his body, his spouse. She is the 'sign' and living 'memorial' of his permanent presence and activity in our midst and on our behalf. The priest finds the full truth of his identity in being a derivation, a specific participation in and continuation of Christ Himself, the one high priest of the new and eternal covenant. The priest is a living and transparent image of Christ the priest. **The priesthood of Christ** constitutes the one source and essential model of the priesthood shared by all Christians and the priest in particular. Reference to Christ is thus the absolutely necessary key for understanding the reality of the priesthood....

[8] PDV # 16:

The priest's fundamental relationship is to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd. Indeed, the priest participates in a specific and authoritative way in the 'consecration/anointing' and in the 'mission' of Jesus Christ [cf. Lk 4:18-19]. But intimately linked to this relationship is the priest relationship with the Church. It is not a question of 'relations' which are merely juxtaposed, but rather of ones which are **interiorly united in a kind of mutual immanence**. The priest's relation to the Church is inscribed in the very relation which the priest has to Christ, such that the 'sacramental representation' to Christ serves as the basis and inspiration for the relation of the priest to the Church...

...**The relation of the priest to Jesus Christ**, and in him **to His Church**, is found in the very *being* of the priest by virtue of his sacramental consecration/anointing and in his *activity*, that is, in his mission or ministry. In particular, 'the priest minister is the servant of Christ present in the Church as mystery, communion and mission. In virtue of his participation in the 'anointing' and 'mission' of Christ, the priest can continue Christ's prayer, word, sacrifice and salvific action in the Church. In this way, the priest is a servant of the Church as mystery because he actuates the Church's sacramental signs of the presence of the risen Christ. He is a **servant of the Church as communion** because – **in union with the Bishop and closely related to the presbyterate** – he builds up the unity of the Church community in the harmony of diverse vocations, charisms and services. Finally, the priest is a servant to the Church as mission because he makes the community a herald and witness of the Gospel.'

[9] PDV, # 17:

By its very nature, the ordained ministry can be carried out only to the extent that the priest is united to Christ through sacramental participation in the priestly order, and thus to the extent that he is in hierarchical communion with his own bishop. The ordained ministry has a **radical 'communitarian form'** and can only be carried out as a **collective work**. The Council dealt extensively with this **communal aspect and nature of the priesthood** [PO 7-9], examining in succession the relationship of the priest with his own bishop, with other priests and with the lay faithful....

... Each priest, whether diocesan or religious, is united to the other members of this presbyterate on the basis of the sacrament of holy orders and by particular bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and fraternity. All priests, in fact, whether diocesan or religious, share in the one priesthood of Christ, the Head and Shepherd; 'they work for the same cause, namely, the building up of the body of Christ, which demands a variety of functions and new adaptations, especially at the present time', and is enriched down the centuries by ever new charisms...

[10] # 18Furthermore, precisely because within the Church's life the priest is a man of communion, in his relations with all people he must be a man of mission and dialogue. Deeply rooted in the truth and charity of Christ, and impelled by the desire and imperative to proclaim Christ's salvation to all, the priest is called to witness in all his relationships to fraternity, service and a common quest for the truth, as well as a concern for the promotion of justice and peace ...

[10 a] PDV 23:

...Within the Church community the priest's pastoral charity impels and demands in a particular and specific way his personal **relationship** with the presbyterate, united in and with the bishop, as the Council explicitly states: 'Pastoral charity requires that a priest always work in the bond of communion with the bishop and with his brother priests, lest his efforts be in vain...[PO 14].

[10 b] PDV # 25:

...In this way the exercise of the ministry deeply involves the priest himself as a conscious, free and responsible person. The **bond** with Jesus Christ assured by consecration and configuration to him in the sacrament of orders gives rise to and

requires in the priest the further **bond** which comes from his 'intention', i.e., from a conscious and free choice to do in his ministerial activities what the Church intends to do. This **bond** tends by its very nature to become as extensive and profound as possible, affecting one's way of thinking, feeling and life itself: in other words, creating a series of moral and spiritual 'dispositions' which correspond to the ministerial actions performed by the priest...

[11] '93, pp. 103-108, *passim*.

... A primary aspect of this 'self-denial' appears in the renunciations connected with the **commitment to communion** that priests are called to fulfill between them and their Bishop... LG # 28; PDV # 74]

[11 a] 2. ... This community of vocation doubtless implies an **openness of one another** to the other and of each one to all, so as to live and work in communion...

...**Priestly communion** is deeply rooted *in the Sacrament of Orders*, in which self-denial becomes an ever closer spiritual sharing in the sacrifice of the Cross. The Sacrament of Orders implies each one's free response to the call addressed to him personally. The response is likewise personal. However, in consecration, the sovereign action of Christ, at work in ordination through the Holy Spirit, creates as it were a new personality, transferring the mentality, conscience and interests of the one receiving the sacrament into the priestly community beyond the sphere of individual aims....there will be **priestly communion**: a gift of the Holy Spirit, but also the fruit of a generous response by the priest.

[11 b] ...3. **Priestly communion** presupposes and implies that all bishops and presbyters, are attached to the Person of Christ....By remaining united in Christ they would all remain united among themselves [cf. Jn 15:4-11]...

In calling new presbyters to the priesthood, Jesus Christ also ask them to offer their lives to His own person, thus intending to unite them to each other by a special relationship of communion with Him. This is the true source of the profound harmony of mind and heart that unites presbyters and bishops **in priestly communion**.

[11 c] This communion is fostered by *collaborating in one and the same work*: spiritually **building the community of salvation**. Certainly every priest has his own field of activity to which he can devote all his abilities and talents, but this field belongs to the broader work by which every local Church strives to develop the kingdom of Christ. This work is essentially communitarian, so that each one must act in cooperation with the other works of the same kingdom.

[11 d] We know how much the desire to work on the same task can support and spur the common effort of each one. It creates a feeling of solidarity and makes it possible to accept the sacrifices that cooperation requires, by respecting others and welcoming their differences. Henceforth it is important to note that this cooperation is structured around the relationship between the Bishop and his presbyters; the subordination of the latter to the former is essential for the life of the Christian community. Work for the kingdom of Christ can be carried out and developed only in accordance with the structure he established.

[12] 4.... Now I would like to call attention to **the role of the *Eucharist* in this communion.** ... with ***Eucharistic communion*** they received the ability to live **ecclesial communion and, in it, their specific priestly communion...** Communion in the power of celebrating the one Eucharist has to be the sign and source of unit for the Apostles – and for their successors and co-workers....in Trinitarian communion: what a sublime ideal!

[13] **'93, pp. 115- 120:**

1. The priestly community or presbyterate that we have spoken of in the preceding catecheses establishes among those who belong to it a network of reciprocal relationships that are situated within the ecclesial communion arising from baptism. The most specific foundation of these relationships is the common sacramental and spiritual sharing in the priesthood of Christ from which a spontaneous *sense of belonging* to the presbyterate stems [cf. PO 8]. ... Because of the mutual knowledge, closeness and habits of life and work, this relationship with the diocesan presbyterate further develops that *sense of belonging*, which creates and nurtures fraternal communion and opens it to pastoral cooperation... This is signified liturgically from ancient times by the fact that the priests present at an ordination are invited to impose hands, along with the ordaining bishop, on the chosen candidate, and when priests concelebrate the sacred Eucharist in a spirit of harmony. In these cases there is a representation for sacramental communion, but also that spiritual communion which **in the liturgy finds the *una vox* to proclaim to God unity of spirit** and to give **testimony** of it to the brothers and sisters.

... **Associations of priests** are also to be highly esteemed and diligently promoted, when by means of rules recognized by the competent authority they foster priestly holiness in the exercise of the ministry through a suitable and properly approved rule of life and through brotherly help, and so aim at serving the whole order of presbyters

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[14] **EdeE '03, 16:**

16. The saving efficacy of the sacrifice is fully realized when the Lord's body and blood are received in Communion. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is intrinsically directed to the inward union of the faithful with Christ through communion; we receive the very One who offered Himself for us, we receive His body which he gave up for us on the Cross and His blood which 'he poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' [Mt 26:28]. We are reminded of the words: 'As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me' [Jn 6:57]. Jesus Himself reassures us that this union which He compares to that of the life of the **Trinity**, is truly realized. *The Eucharist is a true banquet*, in which Christ offers Himself as our nourishment ...

[14 a] 19. The eschatological tension kindled by the Eucharist *expresses and reinforces our communion with the Church in heaven..* It is not by chance that the Easter Anaphoras and the Latin Eucharistic Prayers honor Mary, the ever-Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God, the angels, the holy apostles, the glorious martyrs and all the saints. This is an aspect of the Eucharist which merits greater attention: in celebrating the sacrifice of the Lamb, we are united to the heavenly 'liturgy' and become part of that great multitude which cries out: 'Salvation belongs to

our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!' [Rv 7:10]. The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth. It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem which pierces the clouds of our history and lights up our journey.

[14 b] 20 ... Significantly, in their account of the Last Supper, the Synoptics recount the institution of the Eucharist, while the Gospel of John relates, as a way of bringing out its profound meaning, the account of the 'washing of the feet' in which Jesus appears as the Teacher of Communion and of service....

[15] Chapter II: The Eucharist builds the Church [## 21-25]

21. The IInd Vatican Council teaches that the celebration of the Eucharist is at the center of the **process** of the Church's growth ... 'At the same time in the sacrament of the Eucharistic Bread, the unity of the faithful, who form one body in Christ [cf. 1 Co 10:17] is both expressed and brought about...' [LG 3]....

[15 a] A **causal influence of the Eucharist** is present at the Church's very origins, The evangelists specify that it was the 12, the Apostles, who gathered with Jesus at the Last Supper [cf. Mt 26:20; Mk 14:17; Lk 22:14]. This is a detail of notable importance, for the Apostles 'were both the seeds of the new Israel and the beginning of the sacred hierarchy' [AD 5]. By offering them His body and blood as food, Christ mysteriously involved them in the sacrifice which would be completed later on Calvary. By analogy with the Covenant of Mount Sinai, sealed by sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood [Ex 24:8], the acts and words of Jesus at the Last Supper laid the foundations of the new messianic community, the People of the New Covenant.

[15 b] The Apostles, by accepting in the Upper Room Jesus' invitation: 'take, eat', 'Drink of it, all of you' [Mt 26:26-27] entered for the first time into sacramental communion with Him. From that time forward, until the end of the age, the Church is built up through sacramental communion with the Son of God Who was sacrificed for our sake: 'Do this in remembrance of me... Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' [1 Co 11:24-25; cf. Lk 22:19].

[16] 22. Incorporation into Christ, which is brought about by Baptism, is constantly **renewed and consolidated** by sharing in the Eucharistic sacrifice, especially by that full sharing which takes place in sacramental communion. We can say not only that *each of us receives Christ*, but also that *Christ receives each of us*. He enters into friendship with us: 'You are My friends' [Jn 15:14]. Indeed, it is because of Him that we have life: 'He who eats me will live because of Me' [Jn 6:57]. Eucharistic Communion brings about in a sublime way the **mutual 'abiding'** of Christ and each of His followers. 'Abide in me, and I in you!' [Jn 15:4].

[16 a] By its union with Christ, the People of the New Covenant far from closing in upon itself, becomes a 'sacrament' for humanity [LG 1], a sign and instrument of the salvation achieved by Christ, the light of the world and the salt of the earth [cf. Mt 5:13-16], for the redemption of all [LG 9]. **The Church's mission stands in continuity with the Mission of Christ: 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.** [Jn

20:21]. From the perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross and her communion with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, the Church **draws the spiritual power** needed to carry out her mission. The Eucharist thus appears as both the source and the summit of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit [PO 5].

[16 b] 23. Eucharistic communion also confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ. St. Paul refers to this *unifying power* of participation in the banquet of the Eucharist when he writes to the Corinthians: 'The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is **one bread**, we who are many are **one body** for we all partake of the one bread.' [cf. 1 Co 10:16-17]. St. John Chrysostom's commentary on these words is profound and perceptive: 'For what is the bread? It is the body of Christ. And what do those who receive it become? The Body of Christ – **not many bodies but one body**. For **as bread is completely one, though made up of many grains of wheat, and these, albeit unseen, remain nonetheless present in such a way that their difference is not apparent since they have been made a perfect whole, so, too, are we mutually joined to one another and together united with Christ.**' The argument is compelling: **our union with Christ**, which is a gift and grace for each of us, makes it possible for us, in Him, to share in the unity of His body which is the Church. The Eucharist reinforces the incorporation into Christ which took place in Baptism through the gift of the Spirit [cf. 1 Co 12:13, 27].

[16 c] The joint and inseparable activity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, which is at the origin of the Church, of her **consolidation** and of her continued life, is at work in the Eucharist....

[17] Communion superabundantly fulfills the yearning for fraternal unity deeply rooted in the human heart; at the same time it elevates the experience of fraternity already present in our common sharing at the same Eucharistic table to a degree which far surpasses that of the simply human experience of sharing a meal. Through her communion with the body of Christ the Church comes to be ever more profoundly 'in Christ in the nature of a sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument of intimate unity with God and of the unity of the whole human peace.' [LG 1].

[17 a] The seeds of disunity, which daily experience shows to be so deeply rooted in humanity as a result of sin, are countered by the *unifying power* of the body of Christ. The Eucharist, precisely by building up the Church, creates human community...

[17 b] 32... All of this shows how distressing and irregular is the situation of a Christian community which, despite having sufficient numbers and variety of faithful to form a parish, does not have a priest to lead it. Parishes are communities of the baptized who express and affirm their identity above all through the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice....

[18] 34. The Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985 saw in the concept of an 'ecclesiology of communion' the central and fundamental idea of the

documents of the second Vatican Council. The Church is called during her earthly pilgrimage to maintain and promote communion with the Triune God and communion among the faithful. For this purpose she possesses the word and the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist by which she 'constantly lives and grows [LG 26] and in which she expresses her very nature. It is not by chance that the term *communion* has become one of the names given to this sublime sacrament... The Eucharist thus appears as the culmination of all the sacraments in perfecting our communion with God the father by identification with His only-begotten son through the working of the Holy Spirit.,,

[19] 35. The celebration of the Eucharist, however, cannot be the starting point for communion; **it presupposes that communion already exists**, a communion which it seeks to **consolidate** and **bring to perfection**. The sacrament is an expression of this **bond of communion** both in its **invisible** dimension, which, in Christ, and through the working of the Holy Spirit, unites us to the Father and among ourselves, and in its **visible** dimension, which entails communion in the teaching of the apostles, in the sacraments and in the Church's hierarchical order. The profound relationship between the invisible and the visible elements of ecclesial communion is constitutive of the Church as the Sacrament of salvation. Only in this context can there be a legitimate celebration of the Eucharist and true participation in it. Consequently it is an intrinsic requirement of the Eucharist that it should be celebrated in communion, and specifically **maintaining the various bonds of that communion intact**.

[20] 36. Invisible communion, **though, by its nature** always growing, presupposes the life of grace, **by which we become 'partakers of the divine nature' [2 P 1:4], and the practice of the virtues of faith, hope and love. Only in this way do we have true communion with the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Nor is faith sufficient; we must persevere in sanctifying grace and love, remaining within the Church 'bodily' as well as in our heart; what is required, in the words of St. Paul, is 'faith working through love.' [Ga 5:6]....**
39...Every valid celebration of the Eucharist expresses this universal communion with Peter and with the whole Church, or objectively calls for it, as in the case of the Christian Churches separated from Rome.

[21] 40. The Eucharist *creates communion* and *fosters communion*. **St. Paul wrote to the faithful of Corinth explaining how their divisions reflected in their Eucharistic gatherings, contradicted what they were celebrating, the Lord's Supper. The Apostle then urged them to reflect on the true reality of the Eucharist in order to return to the spirit of fraternal communion [cf. 1 Co 11:17-34]. St. Augustine effectively echoed this call when, in recalling the Apostle's words: 'You are the body of Christ and individually members of it' [1 Co 12:27], he went on to say: 'If you are his body and members of him, then you will find set on the Lord's table your own mystery. Yes, you receive your own mystery.' [Sermon 272]. And from this observation, he concludes: 'Christ the Lord... hallowed at his table the mystery of our peace and unity. Whoever receives the mystery of unity**

without preserving the bonds of peace receives not a mystery for his benefit but evidence against himself.'

[22] 41. The Eucharist's particular effectiveness in promoting communion is one of the reasons for the importance of Sunday Mass. ... In *Dies Domini* I recalled that the faithful have the obligation to attend Mass, unless they are seriously impeded and that pastors have the corresponding duty to see that it is practical and possible for all to fulfill this precept...

[22 a] 42. The safeguarding and promotion of ecclesial communion is a task of each member of the faithful, who finds in the Eucharist, as the sacrament of the Church's unity, an area of special concern. ...

[22 b] 43 ... In the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Church prays that God, the Father of mercies, will grant his children the fullness of the Holy Spirit so that they may become one body and one spirit in Christ [LG 11]. In raising this prayer to the Father of lights, from whom comes every good endowment and every perfect gift [cf. Jas 1:17], the Church believes that she will be heard, for she prays in union with Christ, her Head and Spouse, who takes up this plea of His Bride and joins it to that of His own redemptive sacrifice.

[22 c] 44. Precisely because the Church's unity which the Eucharist brings about through the Lord's sacrifice and by communion in His Body and Blood, absolutely requires full communion in the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance...

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St. Gaspar Bertoni
Eucharistic Reflections

756:

SERMON 17
Frequent Communion

Preached on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, in St. Paul's, of Campo Marzio, on March 20th, 1803. On the left bank, in Verona.

Beloved brothers and sisters, whenever I consider the Gospel for today [Jn 6:1-15], I am always much moved by those hungry crowds which followed Christ. While they put aside all other cares, Christ corresponded to them with a provident liberality. He fed them prodigiously with the multiplied bread. Each time I read this there comes to my mind a kind of pleasant, welcome comfort. This is present in witnessing your devotion towards this most august and divine Sacrament, expressed also in the laudable frequency you approach it. This is particularly so in these days, when you approach the sacred altar seeking there that same loving Master and Lord. He has chosen to remain with us even to the consummation of the world, veiled under the sacramental species.

757: While the fervor of those crowds may be admired, in you there is even more to be admired, your faith. This assures you of seeking with all firmness that which your senses do not perceive. And therefore, without doubt even greater is the gracious correspondence that He renders to our affections. He is not multiplying for you an earthly bread, but offers you a heavenly loaf and Himself as your food, to nourish your spirits superabundantly. But, if the fact from the Gospel crowd has served to excite your faith, your faithful religious practice every day is the ore needed each day for the outstanding edification that is very necessary in these times that see such dissipation and transgressions.

758: The fact that many Christians today are tepid, or almost cold to surprising degrees, and so only rarely, or, at the least, they are almost forced to approach Christ once a year. They all need to be enkindled and inspired to this. And so, far as I can see what provides greater fruit is the good example of the many, if they persevere. This is worth more than words, even though I do add my own today. Perhaps this is easier to do as you all move on ahead of me to obtain with the good odor of your example, the desired result. I follow along, as though to urge onward with the efficacy of the divine word, to attract some. It may very well be that there may be some here who perhaps just by chance are here to listen to me. I hope to inspire in them a greater willingness for the future, to come to this celestial banquet.

It should not be believed, my listeners, that these surely are not very fervent Christians will not have ready their apparent arguments and subtle excuses. All of these serve to dispense the frequenting of this sacred table. And these are precisely the ones that I feel I must have primarily in my sights to take them by the hand. Otherwise, as they are still standing, every other even more efficacious means to persuade them will be in vain.

759: One of the most usual excuses is that of the duties of their state in life, the need to watch over their families that are their responsibility. These requirements do not leave them either the time, nor the commodity as would be necessary in order to come more often to the Sacraments. But, I would really like to ask them if these matters and those cares every keep them from sitting each day down to the earthly tasks that they magnify a bit, ever leave their bodies without food, even for a single day - and I would not say for weeks, or months.

760: And if they reply that these matters are indeed necessary and absolutely indispensable, I would reply: And do you not have a like necessity to feed your souls frequently, and a need to restore your forces lost in sustaining your lives? And is not the Eucharist the soul's daily bread? For the Lord has said: *...For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed... [Jn 6:56], ... He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has everlasting life... [v. 55]... except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you... [v. 54].*

So, they feel so deeply the requirements of their bodies that to satisfy them, they feel it necessary at different times every day to interrupt their most interesting cares to meet them. Could they, then, remain so insensible toward the needs of their souls already languishing and exhausted by such a long fast! It seems that it never even enters their heads for many weeks on end that they cannot find even on feast days, the need to nourish their souls with its own bread!

761: But, if they would only they would approach Christ more often than what they are presently doing, how much help would they not find in this also for their earthly matters! By uniting themselves to the true Wisdom, which Christ is, their minds would be better illuminated to handle their interests with even greater prudence. Were they to come and find strength from Fortitude Himself, they would be more able to sustain the weight that wears down on them, without being overburdened. They would even be helped and their cares lightened as Christ Himself tells us: *...Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you... [Mt 11:28].*

762: And would they not perhaps be better assisted in all their needs? In this day, the disciples showed themselves in the Gospel that they were afraid that such a numerous crowd would die of hunger. They had all abandoned their own self-interest to follow after Christ. And you know how Christ was able to multiply the bread for them, that many basketfuls remained over. Even St. Peter, left behind his own means of earning a living, and followed after Christ. And when it was time to pay the tribute, did not Christ provide it, by having it taken right from the fish's mouth? [Mt 17:26]. And another time, when they had worked the whole night through without catching a single fish, the divine Master came upon them. In the next instant they drew in the net so full of fish that his own boat, and that of his companions almost gave under the weight [Lk 1:5, ff.]. This is all so true that the loving Lord not only takes delight in bestowing graces on the soul, but also takes very special care of the interests of those who lovingly approach Him.

For we see indeed - for it seems to me that I a being approached by these tepid ones - we can see how useful it would be for them. And we will then be even the more easily convinced to interrupt our occupations to participate more often in such a wonderful good. We should pay no heed if the observation of the world come to deride our frequency, and call us names that surely would be displeasing to us.

763: O, such an excuse is more worthy to be pitied than to be combated! O, such an excuse is more worthy to be pitied than to be combated! This would mean that the Christians of this time would be ashamed to follow Christ and to be called Christian. They would be like those important people among the Hebrews who really did believe in Christ. Yet, they did not dare to approach Him out of respect for the Pharisees, and for fear of being excluded from the Synagogue. They would lay more account to the honor of this world than being honored by Christ. And so, for a vain and base glory they lose one that is authentic and eternal. Christ has already made it quite clear in the Gospel: *...For he that shall be ashamed of Me and My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed...* [Lk 9:26; 12:9]. If anyone will not be ashamed of confessing My Name before men, then neither will I be ashamed of confession his Name before My Father, Who is in heaven. And in another passage: *...Blessed are you when you shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, for my sake...* [Mt 5:11]...*Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven..* [v. 12].

764: Surely, if we have been courteously invited by an earthly Prince to His table, and were treated there as friends and members of his household, we would not pay very much attention to the empty criticisms of an unknowledgeable crowd. In comparison to the honor that we would receive from the Prince, and from his courtesans, we would never just because of the futile views of others, lose so favorable a grace.

But we - the timid souls might reply - if only we thought of ourselves more worthy, we would approach this sacrament with every good will. But, we are sinners, full of imperfections, and far from that fervor in which we see so many other good souls. Therefore, we are afraid of receiving condemnation, rather than salvation.

765: And this is the final argument that to them seems invincible, under which they cover their timidity. I would like to respond to this in kind, since they seem to be citing the very words of the Apostle: *...for he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord...* [1 Co 11:29]. Such as these, should also note the text that is connected with this one: *... But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice...* [v. 28]. These words are so interpreted with every assurance from the constant practice of the entire Church. They require that all the faithful examine their consciences. Should anyone find that he is cognizant of a grave fault, he should hurry in sorrow to purge it through sacramental Confession, along with the fir proposal not to sin any more. And then: *...let him eat of the bread...* When this is done, then such a person could approach

and eat without any fear of that bread. St. Augustine speaks of it in these terms ²²⁵: receive it securely, for He is Bread, not poison.

766: And if Christ is indeed Life, and comes to give this, how could He ever give death to those who come to Him in order to live? And if He indeed did die in order to give us life, even while we were still enemies [Rm 5:10] - how, then, now will He give eternal death of damnation to those who have been reconciled and washed in His Blood?

Such as these should keep in mind the reception accorded the prodigal son whom his father in the Gospel received so lovingly. This son returned to his father's feet after having consumed his patrimony in the most infamous vices. He confesses that he has sinned, and immediately receives the most tender signs of affection. He is dressed anew in fine clothing after removing his coarse garment and he is introduced into his father's house to share in that festive banquet. [Lk 15:11-32]. Let the timid all notice that these importunate fears are nothing more than deceptions covered over by the devil.

767: Let them understand this well, states St. Cyril of Alexandria ²²⁶ that all the baptized have been made participants of divine grace. If, for a long time, through a false practice of religion, or, out of some very harmful fear of going to communion, stay away from it, they may deprive themselves of eternal life. Should one decide not to receive, even if he should be kept away by fear, or by humility, he creates scandal and sets a trap for other souls. It would be more fitting that one make every effort and take every care to set about cleansing the soul taking on a new resolution to live. All should, therefore, hasten forthwith to the participation in life. The devil uses various stratagems to deceive. First he may induce one to live licentiously. Then, when one has a real heavy burden of vices and sins, such a one is persuaded to have a horror for the very sacrament through which he could indeed be **healed**.

768: Thus far the thoughts of the saint. St. Ambrose ²²⁷ and St. Augustine ²²⁸ and St. Bernard ²²⁹ all agree in this: they all say that the Eucharist is an excellent **medicine** against sin. St. Cyprian ²³⁰ wrote this: The Lord's chalice inebriates the one who drinks it in such a manner that it makes him sober, that it conducts the mind to spiritual wisdom. It reaches anyone who has a taste for this world and directs such a person to the reflection and taste for God. And as happens to anyone who drinks earthly and common wine, that the mind is loosened, and the spirit is recreated, and there is chased away all sadness. In like manner, when the Blood of the Lord and this salutary drink, the memory of the old person goes away. There is forgotten all worldly conversation. The heavy and sad breast that first was oppressed by sins that brought

²²⁵St. Augustine, *In Io.* 26, 11. t. 3/2, 4980.

²²⁶St. Cyril of Alexandria - no citation given.

²²⁷St. Ambrose, *De Benedictionibus Patriarcharum*, c.9, 39. t. 1, 525 b.

²²⁸St. Augustine, *Sermo* 17. t. 5, 96 G.

²²⁹St. Bernard, *Sermo in Coena Domini.* 3.

²³⁰St. Cyprian, *Epist.* 63, 11. pp. 229 b, ff.

anguish to it, is exchanged for the joy of the gift bestowed by God. All anguish is resolved, and worries are discharged.

769: As for those who do not want to receive Communion and adduce as their reason that they do not feel fervor, act just like those persons whose faith is cold. They do not want to approach the heat until they are already warm. St. John Damascene²³¹ teaches that the Eucharist is a burning coal that chases away the cold and tepidity. Hence, just as those who go away from the fire feel the cold more and more - so, those who keep away, armed with variously depicted pretexts, from this celestial fire, will end up frozen, and totally hardened.

And it is very salutary, as I will conclude with St. Bonaventure²³², and also useful for a person to prepare to take this **medicine** often, and strive to partake of it the most devoutly as he possibly can. And although it sometimes happens that one feels totally bereft of fervor, such a one should confide in the divine mercy and receive it with great trust. When one feels unworthy, then all the more is it necessary for such a person to seek out the **doctor**, the more he feels the illness.

770: I confess, my listeners, that after having responded to the objections of the tepid individuals, that I think that I may have disarmed them from those arguments, under which they covered themselves. Now all that remains is to urge their hearts on. In order for me to do this, it would be only right for me to have my own ardor and all aflame, to be able to accomplish this effectively. I know quite well the task that lies before me. I will beg them to turn their glance but once to that sacred ciborium, and to listen with the ears of their hearts to that sweet invitation that this divine Lover of their souls extends to them: .. *Come, eat My Bread...* [Pr 9:5].

771: This is the table that I am preparing for you: that same food that in heaven the princes of My court nourish themselves with. It is precisely this that I present to you, pilgrim exiles on earth: ...*take and eat. This is My Body...* [Mt 26:26]... *for this is My Blood... which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins...* [v. 28]. This has redeemed you from slavery to your enemies. Just look at how many sufferings, how many agonies, the kind of death, the preparation of this table for you cost Me. Can you, then, render Me any less gratitude than to go along with My desire that you frequently make use of this Sacrament?

Therefore, I will stay here all days and all nights: ...*and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world...* [Mt 28:20]. Will you, then, allow even years to pass before coming to Me? Do you care so little for My love? And to whom will you go, then, in order to receive life, if you do not come to Me, Who alone can bestow it on you? And who will give you peace of soul? And who will satisfy your desires of your hearts, if not Me, since: ... *I am the Alpha and the Omega, beginning and the end...* [Apoc 1:8].

²³¹St. John Damascene, *De Fide orthodoxa*, 4, 3.

²³²St. Bonaventure, *De Profectu Religiosorum*, 2, 77.

772: Is it that you are afraid to approach Me? Is it that you are afraid to approach Me? I am your Master, Father, Friend, Brother. And if you are infirm, I am still your **Doctor**. I am your Health, and one day, I will be your Beatitude, your Glory. While I do reside here as though on a throne, with all the splendor of My Majesty, I would have compassion on your timidity on your pusillanimity. But since I am in this Sacrament, hidden and brought to your level to be with human beings - then, why do you not approach with every confidence, knowing that all my delights are to be with the children of men [Pr 8:31].

O, my listeners, my brothers and sisters! Who is there among you with hearing so dense that he would not listen to these loving words, and these most binding invitations in the depths of your hearts? - Blessed are they who hear the divine voice:*Blessed are they rather who hear the word of God, and keep it...* [Lk 11:28].

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Sources

OT

Pr 8:31 # 772 Pr 9:5 # 770

NT

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|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
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| 12 | # 763 | 15:11-32 | # 726 |
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| 17:26 | # 762 | 54 | # 760 |
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St Gaspar Bertoni's Writings
[cf. Ignazio BONETTI, *Grammatica*]

THE EUCHARIST – THE ETERNAL EASTER

104: The Sacrifice of the New Covenant

Everywhere they bring sacrifice to My name and a pure offering [Mt 1:11]. This is that sacrifice which is totally pure and holy and is offered in every place on earth by all people. We know through faith that this pure and holy oblation is the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. There is nothing in the whole world which magnifies the name of God and celebrates His glory so much as the Eucharistic sacrifice, in which Christ offers Himself as a victim to God through the hands of His priests.

The Eucharist is called incense above all because it is the sacrament of the Body of Christ burnt in the fire of charity on the altar of the Cross, on which He has softened the wrath of God with His sweet perfume, and reconciled man with God. The Eucharist not only represents, but really contains Christ immolated for us, burnt with sorrow and love as a sacrifice to God.

Incense symbolically stands for the fervent prayers and aspirations of both the priests who consecrate the Eucharist and the faithful who receive and consume it. The angels offer to God: ***Bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones.*** [Rv 5:8]. Therefore, let us leave that table like lions, spitting fire, ready to strike terror in the devils, with our minds and hearts filled with the love with which Christ, our leader, has inflamed us.

The Body of Christ is a truly pure and holy oblation that cannot be defiled by any unworthy act, or ill will, either on the part of the priest or the faithful. The Eucharist always maintains its purity and its sacramental purifying strength, even in those cases which the celebrant may not be worthy.²³³ The Eucharist is able to cleanse us not only from sin, but even from the root of sin, of concupiscence, of temptations, of passions. It is capable of removing even the occasion of sin and to confer the strength to overcome them.²³⁴

105: The Sacred Banquet

Come, eat of my food [Pr 9:5]. This is how the Lord invites us: behold the table I have prepared for you, that food on which the angels and saints of heaven nourish themselves. This is the same food I offer to you, pilgrims and exiles of the earth. ***Take and eat, this is my body, this is my blood.*** [Mt 26:26, ff.] With which I have redeemed you from your sins and from the slavery of your enemies.

Look at how much suffering, and what kind of death it cost Me to prepare this table for you. The best way to show your gratitude is to correspond to My desire that you constantly approach this table. To whom shall you go to receive life, if you do not come to Me, who alone is able to give it to you? Who will give you peace of mind, who

²³³ cf. Council of Trent: Sess. XXII, c. i. Denz. 1742.

²³⁴ Retreat Meditations. **MssB 3438-3443.**

will satisfy the desires of your heart if not I, who am your beginning and your last end? I am your Father, teacher, friend, and brother. And if you are sick, I am your doctor, I am your health, and one day, I will be your happiness and your glory.

If I were to sit here on a throne with all the splendor of my majesty, I could understand your timidity; but since I am hidden in the Blessed Sacrament and well known to people, why do you not approach Me with great confidence, knowing that My delight is to be with you? [cf. Pr 8:31]. Who does not want to hear these loving words and accept that moving invitation deep within his heart? Happy are they who listen to the divine voice; happier still are they who keep it and put it into practice²³⁵.

106: Spiritual medicine

Some say that if we would consider ourselves worthy, then we could easily receive the Eucharist. But, we are sinners, full of imperfections, and far removed from that fervor that we notice in practicing Christians. Hence, we hesitate to receive it more out of fear of condemnation than for our salvation.

He who reasons in this fashion bases his actions on that saying of St. Paul: ***Whoever eats in an unworthy manner, eats his own condemnation.*** [1 Co 11:27, 29]. But, we need also to reflect on the advice that the Apostle adds: ***A man should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup.*** [ib]. From the constant practice of the Church these words have been interpreted with certainty in this sense: a man is obliged to examine his conscience, and if he is aware of any grave sin, he must hasten to cleanse his soul in the sacrament of Penance, with the firm resolution never to sin again. Having done this, without any fear, he may eat this Bread, about which St. Augustine says: 'Partake of It for It is bread, not poison.'²³⁶

Recall the warm reception given by the father of the prodigal son, who returned to him after dissipating his patrimony on bad habits. He confessed his sins, and immediately he received the most tender signs of affection. He was clothed in the finest robe, and brought into his father's house for a festal banquet.

Those who stay away from receiving this sacrament because they do not feel any sort of fervor act in the same way as persons who are cold, but do not want to approach the fire, unless they first warm up. But, the Eucharist, as St. John Damascene says: 'Is a lighted piece of coal that gets rid of the cold and lukewarmness'²³⁷. And those who keep away from the fire become colder likewise, those who, with different excuses stay away from the heavenly fire, find themselves spiritually frozen and hardened.

St. Bonaventure tells us: 'It is healthy and useful to man to receive this medicine frequently, and try to receive it with the greatest devotion. But, even if sometimes he feels dry and without any fervor, trusting in divine mercy, let him receive It with confidence. If he is unworthy, let him remember that it is all the more necessary to see the doctor the more you feel sick.'²³⁸

²³⁵ Early Sermons. N. 17. Frequent Communion. **MssB 770-772. PVC pp. 110, f.**

²³⁶ St. Augustine. Tract on John XXVI, 11. PL 35,1611.

²³⁷ St. John Damascene, On Orthodox Faith. Book IV, c. 13. PG 94, 1150.

²³⁸ Early Sermons. Frequent Communion. **MssB 764-769. PVC, pp. 107-110.** The quote from St. Bonaventure is found in the ***Perfection of Religious.***

107: The right disposition

Let us reflect on the table where we are seated at the Eucharist. That table which the angels look at with amazement and at which they dare not to look because of the splendor that radiates from it, at this table we are fed, and are changed into one body and one flesh with Christ.²³⁹

The great effect of this sacrament, as St. Thomas teaches, is to transform us into God, and to make us one with Him out of love.²⁴⁰ What faith must be absorbed, what hope should strengthen us, with what charity must we be inflamed, with what innocence must we be adorned if we are to receive the Lord and be transformed mystically into Him?

If it be true that disposition must be of the same category as the form, as the philosophers claim, then undoubtedly a divine disposition is needed in order to receive divine food, a commitment to regulate life in such a way that it is supernatural and divine, radically different from carnal and mundane life. God alone should be the object of our will and intellect. God alone should be present during our conversations; God alone in all our actions. Nothing should remain that smacks of the world, that savors of the flesh and senses.

Let us examine our life, and if we notice that it is not what it should be because it is still influenced by the world, let us take steps to change our ways by diligent practice of virtue, and bring it to that point to which the Eucharist urges us.²⁴¹

198: The attraction of love is love itself

Jesus gave His Body and Blood, His very being, to His disciples to show the richness of His love for His people. Just as in the Incarnation He unites our flesh hypostatically to His divinity, so likewise in the Eucharist He unites sacramentally that same flesh and divinity to each one of the faithful who communicates, so that we become a divine person almost like another Christ and God.

Christ loved us to the end [Jn 13:1], that is, He loved us with the greatest everlasting love, leaving Himself entirely in the Eucharist, because He is always present to us, so that we might live in him, converse with Him, and let Him know about our difficulties, our temptations and all our troubles, so that we might seek and ask His help. ***I found delight in the sons of men***, as He says in the book of Proverbs [8:31].

Do we find our delights with Him, or do we find them in the world? Christ loved us in this manner in order to kindle in us joy and also endeavor to love Him ardently. Love is like a magnet: one loves because he is attracted by love. Let us give ourselves entirely to him, to Him, who being God, gave Himself entirely to us, and He does this every day. Let us give ourselves to Him without any reservation, to Him who has given everything to us without holding back anything of Himself.

St. Cyprian wrote during the time of persecution: 'The most difficult and bitter struggle is at hand. For this, the soldiers of Christ must prepare themselves with

²³⁹ cf. St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew. 82, 5. PG 58, 743.

²⁴⁰ St. Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. III, q. 73, a. 3, ad 3m; q.75, a.1.

²⁴¹ Retreat Meditations. **MssB 3469-3472.**

undefiled virtue and with strong faith, recalling that every day they drink the chalice of the Blood of Christ, so that they may shed their own blood for Christ.’²⁴² It was this chalice that inspired St. Lawrence to face the flames, St. Sebastian the arrows, St. Ignatius the lions, and all the mother martyrs many other forms of torment. They did this to return love for love, life for life, their death for the death of Christ. It was the Eucharist that gave the martyrs strength and joy. That is the reason why during the time of persecution the Christians received Communion every day, and they even carried the Eucharistic Bread to their homes.²⁴³

109: Benefits to be had from the Eucharist

When I recall in the Gospel the great devotion of the people, who, neglecting other concerns, followed Christ, and the gracious generosity with which the Master rewarded them by feeding them with the bread He had multiplied, I like to make a comparison with the devotion of the faithful toward the Blessed sacrament, and the great diligence with which these people approach the altar to meet their Lord and Master, who is present under the sacred species.

If we can admire the devotion of that first group, then we can esteem more the faith of these people of today, a faith that assures them with an absolute guarantee that they will find here that which their senses cannot see. Greater then is the gift of grace with which Christ responds to their love, since He does not just multiply earthly bread, but gives Himself as food to nourish their spirit abundantly. It is right to point out the example of these faithful ones for the edification of so many tepid Christians, who rarely, or as if by others’ force, approach Christ in the Eucharist.

One of the most frequent excuses alleged by those Christians who are not practicing is that their duties, such as taking care of their families, do not allow them either the time or the opportunity to frequent the sacraments more often. The thought comes to mind to ask them if these tasks keep them from sitting down each day at their earthly tables. Is not the Eucharist the food of the soul? **My flesh is real food, and My Blood is real drink.** [Jn 6:55].

Yet, if they were to approach Christ more frequently how much help they would find for their tasks and other earthly affairs! Uniting themselves to true wisdom, who is Christ, they would be well informed as to how to act with prudence and skill in their tasks. If only they would charge up their energy at this Powerhouse, they would feel invigorated, and be able to sustain the weight of the cares that overburden them, without feeling weighed down, in keeping with the promise of Christ: **Come to Me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.** [Mt 11:28].

How true it is that our loving Savior not only enjoys conferring graces on souls, but also keeps a special eye on the worldly concerns of those who faithfully approach Him.²⁴⁴

²⁴² St. Cyprian, Exhortation to Martyrs. C. 6. PL 4 686.

²⁴³ Retreat Meditations. **MssB 2594-2599.**

²⁴⁴ Early Sermons. N. 17. Frequent Communion. **MssB 756-762. OVC pp. 102-105.**

110: St. Gaspar's Mass

He celebrated Mass with the greatest devotion, and he was upset when he was unable to celebrate Mass because of illness. Even when he was confined to bed, he wanted to assist at Mass every day. This was celebrated in the chapel next to his room. Likewise, he wanted to receive Holy Communion each day without fail.²⁴⁵

The Eucharistic celebration was the greatest pleasure of his heart. It was here that his spirit found a treasure trove of graces and spiritual gifts which seemed to transform him into another person. He longed for the blessed hour to celebrate mass, and when it was time, he was overjoyed.²⁴⁶

Those who had the good fortune to assist at his Mass relate that such was his modesty and devotion, such his recollection, it appeared as a form of rapture with God, that they were moved to compunction and affection of heart.

In fact, the composure and modesty with which he celebrated Mass, the distinct and careful recital of the prayers, the lifting up of his spirit, was evident, portrayed the image of a perfect priest, a real messenger of the Lord' [MI 2:7].²⁴⁷

111: Contemplation of the Eucharist – living experiences

During the Eucharistic prayer of the Mass, I felt as though my mind opened up so that I recognized the One I was speaking with. Likewise I felt great devotion and an increase of love in my prayer. There followed certain outbursts of my heart toward God. It was just like a person who is surprised by a good friend he had not seen for a long time and then, when he does see him, he has the urge to embrace him.

Then came the desire that the vision would become brighter, and a longing to reach the Greatest Good. But since I was in public, and fearful of my vanity, I resorted to thinking about some grave sins. From this came the realization of His goodness and love, and I broke into tears which lasted until after Communion.

In the meantime faith and confidence grew apace with humility and loving reverence. Finally, at Communion time I felt greatly moved and experienced feelings similar to my first Communion day as a child, feelings that I had never experienced since that day. This recollection lasted for more than an hour, and actually remained with me through the evening.²⁴⁸

During Mass, I experienced brief but vivid impressions and a great feeling of the Divine Presence, confidence, love and the desire to be transformed into Him, so that Jesus would live in me and not I any more. This grace of union did not last beyond Mass, but it returned as I was on my way to do an errand for family matters, just as when I was in Church.²⁴⁹

There was a rather vivid sentiment of reverent love for the presence of the father during the Canon of the Mass. It was accompanied by a loving confidence and love for the Son. At the Consecration, I experienced a sense of priestly dignity in representing the Person of Christ before the Father. Then followed an even greater

²⁴⁵ G. Giacobbe, *Life of the Servant of God, Gaspar Bertoni*. 1858. SA p. 102-105.

²⁴⁶ *Positio*, p. 121.

²⁴⁷ *ib.*

²⁴⁸ *Spiritual Journal*. October 9, 1808. Feast of St. Dennis – St. Gaspar's [31st] birthday.

²⁴⁹ o.c., October 25, 1808.

tenderness and profound humility in holding Christ in my hands right after the Consecration. Here was the greatest good joined to the greatest evil, the Purest to the most impure; the Most Holy, to the greatest sinner. This feeling lasted until after Communion, and was followed by compunction until evening.²⁵⁰



St. Gaspar Bertoni
Spiritual Diary
2nd JULY 1808

[2.] *Feast of the Sacred Heart. During Mass, at Consecration, at Communion and throughout the whole thanksgiving time, many tears of compunction and affection. In particular during Communion I felt for a moment as if my spirit was snatched away from all creatures, at the service²⁵¹ of its Creator.*

The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was introduced in 1765 and quickly adopted in Venice and in the Venetian Republic. In 1808 it was celebrated on the 2nd of July because on its established day, namely Friday 24th of June, the liturgical calendar required the celebration of the Feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist. On this July 2nd, the Church was within the Octave of the Holy Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul. On July 2nd, there was also observed the Feast of the Visitation of Mary Most Holy to St. Elizabeth.

All of this in no way lessens our interest in the fact that In his entry on this Feast of the Sacred Heart, we have the first indication of some characteristic mystical gifts which God was going to grant to Fr Bertoni²⁵². If we may say, here one sees what

²⁵⁰ o.c., December 11, 1808.

²⁵¹ **Web-site Note:** For the first time in this document, St. Gaspar uses the word ossequio [cf. obsequium, in: Rm 12:1, ff.] – one of Fr. Bertoni's favorite words. Cf. '{Published Studies' under St. Gaspar Bertoni's *Trinitarian Charism of Hope*, on this Web-site.

²⁵² **Web-site Note:** Fr. Stofella notes that the Sacred Heart is also near Fr. Bertoni's final entry in his Journal [cf. June 26, 1813 he also noted a mystical grace, his ecstasy regarding the Sacred Heart on May 30, 1812]. For Fr. Bertoni, his devotion to the Sacred Heart often served as his vehicle for the presentation of his integral understanding of the Paschal Mystery – both its sorrowful aspects as well as its glorious dimensions. A few days after his May 30th, 1812 ecstasy, he spoke on the Sacred Heart – emphasizing the wound in the side retained in Christ's Risen Body [cf. MssB 1755-1778] [cf. J. Henchey, 'Una Speranza Missionaria formata ed expressa nelle sue divozioni e nel suo servizio ecclesiale', in: *Symposium Bertonianum*. Verona: Edizioni Stimmgraf 1990, pp.143-160. This idea is found in his parish sermons [cf. MssB ## 464; 475; 490;494; 517; 1300; 1305; 1308; 1312; 1314; 1315; 1317; 1318; 1322; 1759; 1771, , ff. In his Letters: MssB 9510; 9689; 9707. In his preaching to preists and seminarians: MssB ## 2632; 2635; 2637; 2647. It is found often in Fr. Gaspar's Meditations on Primum Regum, based on St. Gregory the Great: MssB ## 4899; 4957; 4984; 4991; 4999; 5094

theologians call **Piety as a gift of the Spirit**²⁵³. Hence, the many tears of compunction and affection. Compunction is intended here as a blend of *spiritual illumination* and a consequent feeling of one's own inadequacy in front of the divine. What stands out here is that gift of **the spirit snatched away from all creatures, at the service [*obsequium*] of its Creator**. To this experience Fr Gaspar had contributed also by his own spiritual attitude²⁵⁴.

St. John of the Cross teaches that "the soul cannot receive the light of divine union unless it first rejects affection for creatures". He also teaches that "every soul who wishes to climb the mountain of the Lord in order to make of himself an altar for the offering of pure love, of praise and service [*ossequio*], should have already fulfilled three conditions. The first is that it rejects from itself all affections and desires which are foreign to God. The second is that it should purify itself from the consequences of those affections which still remain by continually denying them and doing penance. The third condition is that it should change *habits* : only then the Lord himself will clothe it anew. Through such divine favor the soul will finally be free from the old tastes and desires of the earthly man and will receive a new knowledge of God²⁵⁵.

Fr. Bertoni had admired the **detachment from all created things** in the patron Saint of his priesthood, namely Saint Ignatius of Loyola – and certainly for the reason of imitating him. He had copied the following extract from his *Life*: "Ignatius' heart was entirely detached from all created things which he loved only in God, while loving God in them. He used to say that:

*...these are the true attitudes of those who leave the world for Christ: to forget as much as possible the things of the earth in order to better keep in mind those of heaven...*²⁵⁶

Fr. Bertoni's entire *Journal* is permeated by this spirit of total detachment.

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and 9707 – among other texts. The integral theme of the Paschal is found from his earliest written documents: his parish sermons up through his last letters to Fr. Bragato [cf. Web-site. *Stimmate Integre*].

²⁵³ Cf. Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, *Un Modello di S. Abbandono*, pp. 53, 186.

²⁵⁴ **Web-site Note:** there is offered a reflection on the Ignatian spirituality contained in the word *obsequium* - cf. this web-site, *Studies on St. Gaspar's Compendium Rude*.

²⁵⁵ John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*. C. 4, 1; c. 5, 7. Roma 1940: Ed. Opere, pp.17, 24, f.

²⁵⁶ Mariani, *Life...* Book 4, c. 2, pp. 337.

12th JULY 1808

[6.] Those who are too much inclined to action should be directed to prayer: those who are much attached to prayer should be pushed to action.

This is clearly a principle of St Ignatius. We note that in the first part of the sentence that **too much** means "disorder". In the second that **much** is similar to the first **too much**. What should be done to restore order? By applying to the two cases above the known principle "opposites are corrected by opposites" (*contraria contrariis curantur*), as Fr Bertoni does here. This is merely the application of the principle which Jesus Christ placed as the foundation of all Christian perfection: **Let him deny himself and take up his cross**. St Ignatius accepted this demand of Jesus from the very beginning of his conversion. Fr Bertoni had noted this quote from the biography of Mariani:

*...He made this principle his unquestionable law, namely to break and tread underfoot any desire which does not come from right reason; to seek, as far as it is lawful, what nature shuns and to flee from what nature looks for...*²⁵⁷

This practice produced in St Ignatius the fruit which Fr Bertoni admired. He wrote down from the book of Mariani:

*...Ignatius had that marvelous hold over his passions, without which human judgments gets dreadfully thwarted and even the most expert and prudent people get confused...*²⁵⁸

To illustrate further the subject permit us to take again from the same biography of St Ignatius, a book so dear to Fr. Bertoni:

*...St Ignatius was so much intent on acquiring control over his passions, that there was no other thing that he recommended to other people more than this. It was the subject which he preferred for his public exhortations. It was the topic of his private discussions: 'Conquer yourself'...*²⁵⁹

...Although he prized prayer very much, he however did not measure the perfection of people from this, but rather from the capacity of their own appetites and passions. So much so that when he heard some saintly person praised as "a man of great prayer", he retorted "He is a man of great mortification". To those who, in the Company of Jesus, insisted that he should extend the allotted time for prayer, he answered: "Long time dedicated to prayer is necessary to master one's own passions; but while somebody can reach intimate union with God with a quarter of an hour of prayer, somebody else, who is not keen in mortifying himself, would not reach that same union even after two hours of prayer..."

...Several times he said that he feared that the Company of Jesus could get deceived in the pursuit of perfection by putting more effort in prayer rather than in self-denial."

²⁵⁷ Mariani, SJ, *Life*, Book 1, c. 5, p.22.

²⁵⁸ *ib.*, Book 3, c. 3, p. 205.

²⁵⁹ *ib.* Book 4, c. 9, p 401.

.. "He used to say also that one should turn inwards and give more importance to repress one's own will rather than to restore life to a dead man."... "St Ignatius, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, (this title is self explanatory), aimed exactly at this when he said: "These *Spiritual Exercises* whereby one is directed to conquer oneself..."²⁶⁰

A similar theme will be treated on 16 Nov 1808. Fr Bertoni will then draw also on the teaching of St John of the Cross who, together with St Teresa of Avila, seems to have conspicuous agreement with St Ignatius.²⁶¹

[7.] In the Mass and during Thanksgiving: reverential fear.

This is another instance of a gift of prayer. It is characterized by the spirit of filial fear, of which the main fruit is submission to God²⁶².

We can read another extract from the biography of St Ignatius which provides a good comment of this note:

...In dealing with God he kept great exterior composure and reverence. Of this he had utmost care. He was convinced that this was something one should seek for oneself, rather than looking for heavenly favors. He used to pray often: "Give me humility and loving reverence!..."²⁶³

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25th SEPTEMBER 1808

[51.] Meditation. The Kingdom of Christ. Strong [inner] motion to follow Our Lord closely, at the cost of [my] life, through Poverty and Humiliation.

The Retreat is finished. It seems that Fr. Bertoni wanted to fill in the gaps of an incomplete course of *Spiritual Exercises*, picking up and considering more deeply some Ignatian themes which had been neglected. Fr. Da Ponte is his teacher. In the Manuscripts of Fr Bertoni, at [MssB] [Fascile, n. 92] we have the organized points of more than 50 Meditations of Da Ponte. Titles and sub-titles in such a way that each point could make for a complete Meditation. The first carries this title: *The Kingdom of Christ*, which in Da Ponte's is just a page heading but Fr. Bertoni put it as the title to the whole collection. The Journal too carries here *The Kingdom of Christ*. Fr. Gaspar says that he felt a **strong inner motion**, which indicates a supernatural experience, towards what is the utmost *fruit*, as Ignatius calls it, of this Meditation. Fr. Gaspar feels like one of those generous souls which give away all for all:

²⁶⁰ ib.

²⁶¹ A certain balance and subordination may be found in the *Original Constitutions* [cf. CF ## 127; 284]. A central ideal remains: *Contemplata tradere...* [cf. CF # 49]. cf. Jesuit Constitutions: CSJ 340.

²⁶² Cf. Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, *A Model ... o.c.*, p. 63.

²⁶³ Mariani, *Life... o.c.*, Book 4, c. 1, p. 328.

...Those Religious who imitate the Apostles have as their aim to get concerned not only about their own salvation and perfection, but also about the salvation and perfection of their neighbor...and...profess to be companions of Jesus in this enterprise. They offer themselves with enthusiasm for any labor whatsoever...until the shedding of blood...for the glory of God and the salvation of souls...²⁶⁴

This sentiment was already in Fr Gaspar on **11 and 24 July** when he offered himself *for sacrifice*. It will come strongly again on **27,28,29 September**, coupled with a *humble petition of martyrdom*... too.

†

[52.] The Mass was very recollected with sentiment of reverence. During the Catechism lesson, much zeal and persuasion and some eloquence. Before entering the Lord made me recollect that His Divine Son was preaching in Jerusalem while fasting all day. He used to go back to Bethany in the evening. This moved me very intensely to love and to work. Then when I explained this very insight as introduction [to my Catechesis], my talk became easy and most convincing.

That Sunday 25th September was a full day of grace. Intense inner motions during Meditation. recollection and reverence in the Mass. Great zeal and even eloquence in the ministry of the Christian Doctrine. Fr Gaspar understood that all these things came from *above*, **where every good endowment and every good gift come (Jas 1,17)**. Even that sudden reference to the habitual fasting of Jesus, helped him to make the introduction and present it as a good model for a loving imitation. He will note the *profit* he will draw from this, on 16 November.

†

9th OCTOBER 1808

[59.] Feast of St Denis and the Maternity of the Virgin Mary. During the Eucharistic prayer of the Mass near the time of the *memento*, it seemed that my mind opened up to know with Whom was I speaking. I felt great affection and an enthusiasm of love in prayer. Then some outbursts of my heart for God and some impulses of my spirit towards God. I seemed to be like a person overwhelmed by the appearance of a great friend who had not been seen for a long time and on seeing him suddenly, he wants to throw himself at him and embrace him. Then I felt a desire that the vision could increase and an impulse to be able to reach the Supreme Good. Since I was in public I feared [the feeling of] some vanity and I [made an effort to] think of my most serious sins. As a consequence [I felt] an increase of knowledge of goodness and love which dissolved in most soothing tears which lasted until after Holy

²⁶⁴ DaPonte, Part II, 'Fundamental Meditation', Point 3, n. 4. [This ideal of the imitation of the Apostles in the service of Jesus Christ under-lies St. Gaspar's central dream: Apostolic Missionaries for the Service of Bishops. [CF ## 1; 259; 272; 273].

Communion. In the meantime faith and confidence increased very much together with humility and loving reverence. Lastly, at Communion, a very intense devotion and sentiment similar to that of my First Holy Communion: an experience that I am not aware of having felt since. The recollection lasted for another hour and it remained for the rest of the evening.

It was the second Sunday of October, the 18th after Pentecost, and Fr. Bertoni's birthday. He was 31 year old. It was also his name-day because Denis was the third name given him on his Baptism day. That day the commemoration of St. Denis had to give liturgical precedence to the celebration of the feast of the Maternity of the Virgin Mary. That feast was commemorated in the regions under the Venetian Dominions on the second Sunday of October. Could not all this have had some bearing in preparing the soul of Fr Bertoni **for the visits of His Divine Majesty?**

It seems that one should read this day's entry on one's knees! What can we say? Fr. Gaspar found himself taken over by a very special state of grace. Let us note first that **opening** of his mind and heart. This prompted these **outbursts** of his spirit toward God. Such a desire and impulse reached Him. Then, on the apparent threshold of ecstasy, in order not to fall into vanity in front of the public, he made an effort to **think of his very serious sins**. This reminds us of what St Teresa of Avila used to say to her nuns :

... Let us be on guard when we are taken by these great impulses of such desires, not to add anything nor to increase them. We have to cut the thread gently with some other consideration... ²⁶⁵

However, it seems as though Grace took firm hold of Fr Gaspar even after the ecstasy. He was given a certain consciousness of the Divine Goodness. He experienced gentle tears, and an increase in virtues. He was being granted literally what he prayed for in that familiar Ignatian prayer written for his own private use: **Give me humility and loving reverence** (cf. 12 July). What can be said about his remembrance of his First Holy Communion day? ... The sway of grace in his soul seems to go back a long time in his life.

†

10th OCTOBER 1808

[60.] Tears during Mass, followed by recollection. And silence.

A very short note. It is however sufficient to make us aware that Fr Gaspar was still enveloped in the same atmosphere of the day before. He experience those same sweet tears during Mass. The same recollection after Mass. And then: **silence!** Is this not his **keeping an ear open to the most gentle whispering of our Creator**²⁶⁶. Or is

²⁶⁵ St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, c. 19.

²⁶⁶ *Epistolario*, l.c., p. 68.

this not a certain **whispering** that is already in progress? On this day, this, too, is *the secret of the King*.

†

23rd OCTOBER 1808

[70.] During Mass: much recollection and reverence. The recollection lasted also afterwards, even while hearing Confessions.

This recollection was once again of a supernatural order and a gift of God. It was noted as a debt of grateful memory - ***Be grateful!*** (Col 3,15) -and so that its influence should last. It seems that this month of October was particularly outstanding for such experiences. ***And reverence:*** this too was a gift from above. We should pay attention to the fact that even if the human expressions of the vocabulary do not vary much, the divine gift can have infinite variations every time. God does not like to repeat himself!

†

25th OCTOBER 1808

[72.] During Mass: short but vivid enlightenments. Intense feeling of the presence of God. Trust, love, desire to transform myself into Him. That Jesus may live in me, no longer myself. After Mass this grace of Union would pass, but it came back while [walking] along the street, on family business, just as when I was in Church.

Fr. Bertoni himself had synthesized the experience of this day as a **grace of Union**. This is a grace which can come from above and solely from on high. The grace was withdrawn after Mass in Church, but it took hold of him again **along the street** when he was **on family business**. How this can happen, even St Teresa does not know.²⁶⁷ She knows, however, that it does happen. It is an action of God. Who can fathom God's action? This is among the most sublime notes. The sigh of Fr Bertoni: ***I live, though not I: but Christ lives in me!*** (Gal 2:20).

†

4th DECEMBER 1808

[82.] While going to bed: compunction and fear of God. During Mass: a lively sense of the presence of Jesus Christ which roused much confidence, though for a short while. The recollection, however, lasted also afterwards and the devotion for the whole day.

This date was the second Sunday of Advent. Fr Bertoni registered two distinct graces. The first caught him, suddenly, while getting ready for bed. This must have happened the evening before Saturday 4 Dec. The note which interests us is to be

²⁶⁷ St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*. Fourth Mansions, 2, 3.

referred to the dawning of the new day, i.e. Sunday, giving further proof of the biblical saying: ***the Spirit blows where He will...*** Fr. Bertoni prepared himself for this kind of supernatural gift by his daily usage of the book of the *Imitation of Christ*.

... If you want to make any progress, keep yourself in the fear of God. Exercise yourself in the compunction of the heart and you will find devotion. Compunction opens the way to much good which is quickly lost by distraction. Happy the one who can cast away all the impediments of distractions and recollect himself in the unifying action of holy *compunction*. It is our fault if we lack God's consolations because we do not look for the *compunction* the heart. When a person has perfect *compunction*, then the whole world will appear burdensome and distasteful. Pray therefore humbly to God that He may give you the spirit of *compunction*...²⁶⁸ Fr. Bertoni was persuaded that no one is worthy of heavenly consolation unless he was diligently exercised in holy compunction²⁶⁹. He was more concerned in experiencing compunction than in knowing how to define it. He prayed humbly to the extent that he was able – and finally, this gift from heaven was graciously bestowed.

The second grace he received during Mass of this 11nd Sunday of Advent. It is described in terms which are now easy for us to understand: one might reflect on his entry, ***after Mass*** of 11th July and the Mass of 23rd October. But with regard to the realities of the Spirit, we lack an adequate vocabulary. As we have said earlier, God does not like to repeat Himself. Also regarding the gift which followed his experience during Mass and which filled his whole day, the terms are not that different. Though Fr. Bertoni distinguished them, they are in fact very similar. ***Recollection, Devotion, Compunction***...they are all terms which we would like to experience rather than struggling in trying to explain them!

†

11th DECEMBER 1808

[84.] During the Canon of the Mass, at the *Te igitur*, a very lively, reverential and loving sense of the presence of the Father. A vivid confidence and love towards the Son. Again a sense of the priestly dignity during Consecration as I was acting in the person of Christ before His Father. Even more tenderness and deep humility immediately after Consecration when I was holding Christ tightly in my hands. There it was: the utmost Goodness joined to the utmost wickedness. The most pure to the most impure. The most holy to the most sinful. That sentiment lasted until after communion. The compunction until evening.

It was the Third Sunday of Advent. Judging from the notes of this *Journal*, it seems that God had favored Fr. Bertoni with his gifts often during Sunday Masses. What shall we say now? Perhaps what we said on the feast of the Maternity of Mary (which was his birthday). We need to fall on our knees and read the note again and again.

²⁶⁸ *Imitation of Christ*, Book 1, c. 21, *passim*.

²⁶⁹ *ib.*, c. 20.

This was another experience of the Presence of God, pondering anew the mystery of the Trinity (cf. above, the 24 Aug), reviewing the Persons of the Father and the Son. Therefore at the words of the Canon of the Mass, Fr. Bertoni felt **vivid confidence**. At the Consecration he felt the loftiness of his priestly dignity: **reverence, love, confidence, tenderness and deep humility**, and each of these sentiments immerse Fr. Bertoni into the abyss of **compunction**. His innate feeling of wretchedness and culpability in any contact of his joined to God's supreme goodness, Infinite Purity and Infinite Holiness! Those expressions can be judged by us, who are far from those lofty experiences, as excessive. St. Teresa of Avila had similar compunction for her faults, and ingratitude, due to those special *caresses* and favors which God so often poured out on her. She said that *When I see that I receive daily more and more graces, while I correspond so badly to the past ones, I feel a sort of terrible torture*.²⁷⁰ This Sunday in the life of St. Gaspar with all of its ministries, rendered him full until evening. Would that the Lord might grant also to us a similar gift of light!

†

25th DECEMBER 1808

[93.] During the three [Christmas] Masses: recollection and an experience of the great benefit of [my] vocation. What a great blessing it is to become oblivious and stripped of all created things. To seek only God. How much did God honor and love His humiliated Son. Oh, what a responsibility do we have to do for Him, partly at least, what He firstly did for us.

Christmas fell on Sunday that year. Fr. Bertoni was overwhelmed by the blessings he had received, which he shares through brief hints and interjections.

The benefit of his Vocation is to be understood as total Vocation: a vocation to the priesthood and a vocation to holiness. When he contemplated mystically the stripping and humiliation of God he felt he could justify his own ascetic work of self-denial which appeared no longer as a sacrifice but rather as a grace and a privilege. One feels that God was showing, there, much gratification.

What is left for us is perhaps to pick up quietly that spiritual surprise with which Fr Bertoni could contemplate: **how much did God honor and love His humiliated Son**. He made comparisons and concluded for himself and for us: **What a responsibility do we have to do for Him, partly at least, what He firstly did for us**. May Fr, Gaspar obtain for us the grace to be struck by awe at God's action.

²⁷⁰ Teresa of Avila, *Life*, c. 7. in: *Opere*. Ed. Roma 1949, n. 19.

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†

11th JANUARY 1809

[96.] During Mass, at the Consecration: a very lively sense of the presence of Christ as a friend who talks with another friend. I also felt the presence of the Father, while perceiving also, in some way, the distinction of these Divine Persons in only one nature. Great reverence and love! This recollection continued for half an hour afterwards, not the experience, though, which....

The note remains interrupted – the word *which...* indicates incompleteness. And yet here we have, laconically expressed, one of the most noteworthy graces recorded in the *Journal*. Christ as *friend*, reminds us of those outbursts and impulses of the heart towards God, like a person overwhelmed by the appearance of a great friend, as in the entry of 9 Oct. 1808.

With regard to the presence of the Father and the experience of, in some way, the distinction of these Divine Persons, let us hear what St Teresa of Avila said out of her personal experience:

... As regards the Three Divine Persons, I clearly perceive that they are distinct among themselves... it is, though, a strange certainty. As a matter of fact I do not hear and I do not see anything. Neither with the eyes of the body nor with the eyes of the soul. Yet it is felt when the Three Divine Persons disappear. However I do not know how does this happens. What I do know is that this is not my imagination. Sometimes, in fact, after receiving this grace, I made an effort to bring [the Three Persons] back again, by myself. But I never succeeded. I therefore do know this by experience...
271

†

1st FEBRUARY 1809

[102.] Frequent memory of the life of Christ: with a response of tender love.

This *frequent memory of the life of Christ* is not presented as a result of human effort. In that case it would not have been recorded in this *Journal*. It was a precious gift of Heaven. We can connect it with a statement expressed at the beginning of both outlines of the *panegyric* of St Francis:

... Perfection, which has its source and fulfillment in Charity... consists in harmonizing our life with that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since this divine Master began to do and to teach, His actions, though personal and of a perfection which is above our understanding, were intended generally to be imitated... 272

And since this Divine Master began to *do and to teach*, His actions, as His own personal and individual activities, are of and incomprehensible excellence. Yet, they can be imitated . This is nothing other than the imitation of Christ to which that *frequent memory of His life... tends.*

This ardor of imitation is that *tender love of correspondence* which accompanies him. This comes from that charity poured into hearts by the Holy Spirit.. This is indeed that perfection proper to the Saints, those Heroes, **Apostolic Men**²⁷³.

The gift of this day is the development of that sentiment already received and recorded after St. Gaspar's three Masses of Christmas: ***Oh, what a responsibility do we have to do for Him, partly at least, what He firstly did for us.***

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²⁷¹ St. Teresa of Avila, *Spiritual Testimonies*, 5, 21. Works translated in Italian. Rome 1949, p. 440.

²⁷² Introduction to the Panegyric honoring St. Francis – MssB ## 1795, ff.

²⁷³ ib. – Fr. Bertoni was much inspired by the Early Church, and the Apostles following Jesus – cf. CF ## 189; 226; 232 [Acts of the Apostles] 252; 259; 261; 272; 273;

[103.] During the Consecration of the Mass: very lively and affectionate sense of Christ's presence.

The Mass of this day is presented as the most proper mounting for the *jewel* of its mystical gift. In its most solemn moment, something happened to Fr Bertoni's spirit. It was similar to what happened during the Mass of the previous **11 January**: **a very lively sense of the presence of Christ as a friend...** We treat here of things which, by their nature, defy any definition. It still remains true that God does not repeat Himself. This brief and incomplete text offers us some indication that Fr. Bertoni was, at times, gratified by God with a spiritual knowledge, of an experiential order, about the presence of God. He was therefore granted a certain *mystical union* with Him.²⁷⁴

[104.] Readiness to accept ignominies for Christ's sake.

This too is a gift from God: the logical fruit of the other gifts of this day. We think of the self-offering of Fr. Gaspar for suffering, humiliations, martyrdom and ignominies of **9 and 24 July, 25.27.28.29 Sept**; and also **22 Oct** when Fr Gaspar recorded: ***This attitude is the best gift, of which I feel utterly unworthy.***

†

16th MARCH 1809

[127.] Those whom He does not correct by scourging, he condemns for ever. (St Bernard)

The subject here is God. The original Latin text of Fr Bertoni, however, can have two different interpretations. The first: *Those people whom God, by His scourges, does not correct, will be condemned for ever by Him.* Namely, because they did not change their lives even under the scourges of God". This translation harmonizes well with the following note of Fr Gaspar about the three crosses. The preacher could make a good application and example in the lot of the wicked thief. But Fr. Gaspar wrote a dividing dash which separates the first line from the others, making two different texts.

A second possible translation: *Those whom God does not correct by the scourges, he will condemn for ever at the end.* Namely, because He has spared the rod with them. In this way the worst scourge here on earth, would be the exemption from the scourges of God. This is the explicit meaning of what is, according to us, the original text which Fr Bertoni intended to refer himself to, namely St Bernard's. He wrote: *God shows His wrath to (severs Himself from) that person whom He does not scourge while he is sinning. In fact [God will] damn for ever the person whom He does not correct by His scourges.*²⁷⁵ The meaning is clear: the future condemnation is one that lasts forever.

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²⁷⁴ Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, *Un Modello di S. Abbandono*, o.c., p. 185.

²⁷⁵ St. Bernard, *Most Pious Meditations*, c. 6, near the end.

[128.] Nobody can go through life without the cross. I present to you three crosses, and you choose. The first is the cross of Christ, the second is the cross of Saint Dismas, the good thief, the third is the cross of the wicked thief.

In the first one there is glorification: it belongs to innocent people because they are more similar to Christ.

In the second one there is consolation: it belongs to patient people because they do not lose resignation and peace.

He who does not pick up one of those two crosses, will naturally remain with the third one of the wicked thief, who had to suffer more and without profit. His cross helped him as a ladder to go down to the deepest part of Hell.

The premise of this sermon plan is found in the Gospel expression of ***Let each one take up his cross***. Everyone has his own cross.

The idea of the three crosses could easily have come spontaneously to Fr. Gaspar through his meditations. It must have been, however, clarified in the study of the ***Summa*** of St Thomas Aquinas. The saint - following the Holy Fathers Leo the Great, Augustine and Hilary - sees the Cross of Christ no longer as an instrument of torture but the Tribunal which becomes the symbol of the final Judgment of mankind. In the crosses of the two thieves he sees the symbols of the *right* and *left* of the Last day: i.e. the elect and the reprobate.²⁷⁶

Fr. Gaspar reviewed all this in the Meditations of Fr. Da Ponte where he pondered:

... the three crucified of Calvary as can be found among our people. Those crucified on Mount Calvary were three men. One was crucified because of his fault...and he bore impatiently his cross. The other one was also crucified because of his fault but he bore the cross with patience. The third one was crucified without having any fault and he bore his Cross with admirable patience. This is what happens also among human beings in this life.

There are some who are punished by God because of their sins but they bear with impatience their punishment. These will be condemned like the wicked thief. They will come down from the cross and go straight into Hell. There are others who are also punished because of their sins but they suffer the punishment with humility and patience, repeating those words of the prophet Micah ***I shall bear [willingly] the [punishment and] wrath of God because I have sinned against Him...*** (***Mi 7:9***) These people, like the good thief, will obtain pardon for their sin and will pass from the cross into Paradise.

There are others who, though not guilty, are tormented in order to be trained and to receive the prize. These bear the afflictions with great patience in imitation of

²⁷⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 46, a. 11, c.

Christ. These are the most fortunate because the most precious cross and torture is to suffer without guilt. ²⁷⁷

Beside these references, Fr Bertoni's version has some peculiar characteristics. He changes the order of Da Ponte's Meditation: first comes the Cross of Christ. Of this he says, following St Paul ²⁷⁸ and the commentary of St Augustine²⁷⁹, that it is a **glorification**. Secondly, there is presented the cross of the good thief. Of this he says ²⁸⁰ that it is a **consolation**. For the third cross, which is left of course for those who do not stretch their arms to catch one of the first two, the word does not pass from his lips. It would be: **damnation!**

[129.] During Benediction: a sentiment of deep tenderness and love and self-offering. I experienced how Christ attracts our hearts, just as He said: *I shall draw everything to myself...*and how any goodness, knowledge and pleasantness which is [found] in creatures, belong to Him. He is the only one who has to be praised and loved because of them.

This was a *gift of Prayer*. Sweetness in contemplation found in the tender affection for the Lord. Lived experience of the ***I shall draw everything to myself (Jn 12:32)*** and St Ignatius' ***Contemplation toward Love*** which Fr Gaspar would soon present to the Clergy in his Spiritual Exercises of 1810. ²⁸¹ He will develop this in the second point of the Meditation of *God in the creatures*. (The text here follows the presentation of Fr. Nepveu):

1. *God is present and acts in all creatures.*

...Consider that God, not being satisfied with having, in some way, given himself to you with so many blessings, continues to give Himself to you in all creatures which have received from Him existence, life and all the perfections which they have. Get accustomed, then, to see God in the creatures because he is really in them. Therefore, by giving his creatures to you, He is giving Himself to you He is in the creatures:

a) *By His existence, which is closer to their being than your soul to your body.*

b) *By his power. He not only gives them power of acting, but it is He who acts more than they themselves do. He is the principle cause. In such a way that it is God Who shines in the sun more than the sun itself. It is God Who warms you in the fire, more than the fire itself. It is God Who nourishes you in the food more than the food itself.*

c) *Finally by his goodness and providence. He governs these creatures. He puts them at your service. He directs all their activities towards you and for you. If He gives light to the sun it is for nothing else than to shine upon you. If He gives heat to*

²⁷⁷ Fr. DaPonte, Part 5, Meditation 46, Point 2, n. 3.

²⁷⁸ Ga 6:14: ... ***But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ***

²⁷⁹ St. Augustine, Sermon to the People 160, 7.

²⁸⁰ *Imitation of Christ*, Book 2, c. 12, *passim*.

²⁸¹ *Collectanea Stigmatina*, Vol. I, pp. 239, 240.

the fire it is for nothing else than to warm you. If He gives taste to the food it is for nothing else than to nourish you.

2. *How we ought to act in our use of creatures.*

From these three manners in which God dwells in His creatures it is easy to draw your conclusions:

a) *If God makes Himself present for you in all creatures, you should make an effort to make yourselves present to Him in all creatures. To look for Him in all creatures.*

b) *You should use these creatures uniquely for the glory of God and His service. Since God does not act in them except for your advantage you should not act in them except for His sake.*

c) *When you experience the benefit of these creatures - i.e. the beauty of light, the comfort of warmth, the taste of food - you should refer all this to God and not to the creatures. Be convinced that it is God who gives you well-being rather than the creatures.*

In this way you ought to feel grateful for the good received. Thank God often on your own account and also on the account of the many people who do not think of this at all. You ought to pay attention not to abuse the creatures by attaching yourselves to them or by using them as instrument of sin. This would be the worst ingratitude: i.e. to turn the blessings of God against God Himself. Finally, you ought sometimes to make a sacrifice of these same creatures by giving up the use of them for God's sake.

Let us therefore love God because God first has loved us (Jo 13:6 – or, 1 Jn 4:19?)²⁸².

†

24th JULY 1809

[142.] We must get ready for a great war with Hell.

1. We need humility to attract help from Heaven: *Put on the armor of God that you might be able to resist.*

2. We need detachment from all things; so that the Devil should not have anything to catch us by.

3. ...

This sounds like a development of the preceding entry of yesterday. Certainly ***we must get ready for a great war with hell because the Devil tries his utmost to divert the work of the Lord. He makes use of all our passions especially of the predominant one.*** This justifies the self-exhortations which follow and helps us to make an educated guess of even the missing third point.

Put on the armor of God that you might be able to resist. The quotation is from memory. The original text could have been even more explicit: ***Put on the armor of God that you might be able to stand up against the deceits of the Devil (Eph***

²⁸² **Web-Site Note:** Fr. Stofella may be mistaken here with this referenced: cf. **1 Jn 4:19.**

6:11). Then *you might be able to resist* came to Fr Gaspar from another text very dear to him, i.e. *God is faithful: He does not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it ... (1 Cor 10:13)*.²⁸³

1. **Do we need detachment to attract help from heaven?** Certainly. It is written: *God resists proud people, but He gives His grace to the humble. (Jas 4:6)*. To withstand the inevitable attacks of the Devil we need the armor of God, which is Jesus Christ. Which is the same as saying: **Put on Jesus Christ!** Put on His virtues.²⁸⁴

2. **Detachment from all things...** Evident reference to St, Gregory the Great as reported in Rodriguez: "*We have come into this world to combat the Devil. He is naked and possesses nothing. We have also to become dispossessed of all these things to fight with him. The reason is that if one who is clothed fights with a naked person, he will soon be beaten, because he has what he can be taken hold of and be thrown to the ground. Do you like to engage in a powerful fight with the devil? Take off all your earthly things so that the Devil will not have anything on which to grasp you and make you fall.*"²⁸⁵

After this, we can guess the message of the suspended No 3. In the same Homily of St Gregory where he comments on the **Unless one gives up everything which he possesses** and **Let him renounce himself**. He wrote: *...In the first sentence it is said that we should give up our things, and in the second that we should give up ourselves. Perhaps a person can more easily give up one's own things... but much and much more difficult it is to give up oneself. For us, in fact, it is of less effort to give up what we have rather than what we are.*²⁸⁶

Therefore, we think that the third point should read as follows: **3. We need detachment from ourselves...** In one of his Homilies on the Gospel, St Gregory went on to say:

*...Yes, let Jesus Christ say it! ...let him renounce himself... because if one does not manage definitely to get detached from himself, neither will he be able to approach Him who is above. Nor will he be able to reach and grasp what lies beyond himself, without having first made a complete sacrifice of what he is." The aim is directed towards what St Paul had already reached: **I live, yet not I: it is rather Christ who lives in me. (Gal 2:20)**...*

The whole *Journal* seems to resound with this: especially the "universal mortification" of 8 May and the radical resolutions of 14, 15 and 16 July with what will follow.

²⁸³ St. Gaspar's reflections on St. Gregory's Exposition on *Primum Regum - Meditation 12* [## 5240-5295] - 1 Reg 2:18-25

²⁸⁴ Rodriguez, Part 2, Tract 7, c. 1, 9.

²⁸⁵ Rodriguez, Part 3, c. 1, 4. cf. Roman Breviary. Common of One Martyr. Illrd Nocturn.

²⁸⁶ St. Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian 1990, p. 259 Homily 32.

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[143.] Mass: union with Jesus Christ. The recollection lasted until lunch.

Short words but full of meaning. At the same time they both reveal and hide the *secret of the King*. It was a cherished *gift of Prayer* and *union* with Jesus Christ, right within His Sacrifice.

†

30th JULY 1809

[146.] During the Meditation on the journey of Jesus to the Jordan: I experienced great inner sentiment. [I understood] that we have to show, in ourselves, to the Divine Father, a portrait of His Divine Son.

This note is very similar to the one on 26 February.

Fr. Gaspar is referring, here, to that Meditation from Fr. DaPonte, from which he took extensive notes. Fr. Bertoni was much moved by the prayer found there, addressed to both the Father and to the Son. This prayer has as its basis the well known saying of the heavenly voice: ***This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased...!*** This prayer goes as follows:

... Eternal Father, I thank You for the honor You gave Your Son when He humiliated himself so much for our sake. I rejoice because of the love and great pleasure You find in Him. I beseech You to help me, that I may imitate Him in doing always what You like, so that You may find pleasure in me.

My dear Savior, I congratulate You on the honor that Your Divine Father and the holy Spirit give You today. In doing this they give You authority to become our Teacher and our Redeemer. O Lord, make me pleasing to Your heavenly Father that I may be worthy to be adopted as His son...²⁸⁷

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[147.] During the High Mass, in which I was celebrating as Deacon: sentiment of reverence. At the Creed: love for the Incarnation. Much faith and spirit of prayer. The recollection continued also afterwards.

Indeed, here we have to accept what Fr. Gaspar confided to himself alone, in his own terms: God's secret. That sentiment of reverence, however, which ran through that experience as it permeated through his liturgical service as Deacon on that Sunday, makes us recollect one extract taken by Fr. Gaspar from the ***Life of St Ignatius*** (by Fr. Mariani, SJ). It talks of the behavior of the Saint in relation to God: "

...In dealing with God he used to maintain a sense of the greatest external dignity and reverence. He was convinced that he had to seek after this much more than the

²⁸⁷ Fr.DaPonte, **Points of Meditation from the 2nd and 3rd Parts of his Book. The 3rd Meditation on the Baptism of Christ the lord, divided into five points.**

heavenly consolations. In his prayer he often asked God: 'Lord, grant me humility and loving reverence'...

His sense of recollection here, as well as that noted elsewhere, is itself a recommendation of the gift received from God.

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