

SERVANTS OF CHARITY INSTITUTE

OPERA DON GUANELLA



REKINDLE THE FIRE OF MISSION

PASTORAL PLAN

2009-2010

SERVANTS OF CHARITY GENERAL COUNCIL

REKINDLE THE FIRE OF MISSION

The mission arises from the heart.

The mission always initiates from a heart transformed by the love of God.

(Benedict XVI)¹

INTRODUCTION

When publishing the Final Document of the 18th general chapter, our Superior General, Father Alfonso Crippa, SdC, reminded that, “the Pastoral Plan of the Servants of Charity Institute is only an instrument in our hands to continue reviewing, at all levels, our Guanellian life and mission. Through it, we find the opportunity to rekindle the resources hidden in our heart or in the plans entrusted to the communities, so that we may cooperate with the creative Spirit in making more vital and modern our charism”².

The Document lists some activities regarding Congregation, Provinces and Delegation that the Central Government has to carry out in the future six years by focusing on particular aspects of religious life and mission that the general chapter had already envisioned.

The Pastoral Plan, therefore, is not an alternative or something extraneous to the commitments and activities that Provinces and local communities have to carry out. In fact, “if we carefully read the Final Document – Father Alfonso continues – we will note that the general chapter entrusts the responsibility to implement motions and proposals to the different degrees of Superiors”³.

It is rather a set of reflections and activities we make use of to “launch” an annual theme on which we have the opportunity to build a unified mind and heart within the Congregation.

We, General Government, want to be faithful to that activity, until the end of our mandate. First of all because it is one of our duties: “to put into practice the decisions of the general chapter” (C 120d). Secondly, because we would like to avoid that communities and Provinces around the world may risk to live in a state of missionary “arrhythmia” (*irregular heart’s beating*) or choose initiatives and activities not properly Guanellian. Third, because we do not like them to be left alone or isolated, close “into the private-individualistic form of their own spirituality”, as Father General warns us.⁴

The Document aims to spur those who are weak, to raise hope, and to present a coherent and recognizable image of the Congregation.

As usual, the content of the Pastoral Plan is introduced by an “icon”, an image reminding the given guidelines. The “icon” of this year is taken from the back cover of the last year Plan. The picture of the Visitation is the logical continuation of the Annunciation “icon”, and brings with it the theme chosen for this year.

¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Angelus* 22 October 2006,

² FINAL DOCUMENT XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER p. 3

³ FINAL DOCUMENT XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER p. 5

⁴ FINAL DOCUMENT XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER p. 7

The 2009-2010 “icon” displays the scene of the Visitation of Mary to St. Elizabeth, and in particular their embrace that was preceded by the urgency of Mary to reach a city of Judah (Lk 1:39) as soon as possible.

Through this icon, the General Council invites each confrere and all communities in the world to rekindle the gift of our Guanellian mission, and the fire that should burn in our hearts when bringing Jesus, the incarnated charity, to those entrusted to us.

Like the Blessed Mother, the Guanellian religious too has to hastily reach the city of mankind and bring there Jesus, the incarnated charity.

When visiting Elizabeth, Mary was already carrying in the womb her Son Jesus. She did not visit her cousin because of a mere act of courtesy. Her visit had the connotation of being a salvific event. In the same way, the charity of a Guanellian religious has to become a salvific event, an act of grace, because he is carrying Jesus and the dynamism of his love.

Pope Benedict XVI, on June 1st, 2007 closed the Marian Month of May in front of the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens. In that occasion, his homily was a meditation on the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, a visit closely correlated to the previous event of the Annunciation.

“The Holy Spirit, who makes the Son of God present in Mary’s flesh, enlarged her heart to God’s dimensions and urged her along the way of charity. That same Spirit impelled her to “rise” and depart without hesitation in order to help her aged relative. Jesus had just begun to form himself in the womb of Mary, but his Spirit had already filled her heart so that the Mother was already beginning to follow her divine Son. It was Jesus himself who “urged” Mary on, instilling in her a generous desire to go to the aid of her neighbor in need, the courage not to put her own legitimate needs, difficulties, worries, the dangers to her own life first. It is Jesus who helped her to overcome everything, allowing her to be guided by faith that works through charity (Gal 5:6).”

The Holy Father continues saying that the heart of Mary is *“a perfectly human heart inserted into the dynamism of the Most Holy Trinity.. Her heart is visited by the grace of the Father, is permeated by the power of Spirit and interiorly compelled by the Son. This movement is charity, which is perfect in Mary and becomes the model of the Church’s charity, a manifestation of Trinitarian love.”*

His Holiness closes his homily inviting all to pray *“for all Christians, so that they may say with St. Paul: ‘the love of Christ urges us on’, and with the help of Mary may they be able to spread the dynamism of charity in the world”.*

The Pastoral Plan incorporates three major parts:

The first one – *“sword of fire in the holy ministry”* – recaptures meaning and purpose of the Guanellian mission. It develops them by short comments as the 18th general chapter motions require. Each paragraph is closed by some questions that communities, when gathered for moments of sharing, should consider.

The second one – *“men with no boundaries”* – sounds like a provocation, a strong exhortation to widen our horizons, a “sky” a little higher than the one we usually seek and see. We have to pursue the ideals of the Founder even though they seem too high to be reached.

The third part proposes some guidelines useful to our pastoral ministry that communities are invited to apply to their religious life and mission, with the help of their Provincial Superiors and Councils.

Characteristics of the Pastoral Plan:

The Word of God, the Magisterium of the Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the Founder (especially from his charismatic sources), and the 18th general chapter directives should be enough to qualify as “global” and “transversal” to all cultures the content of this third Pastoral Plan.

Yet, the Superiors of Provinces and Delegation, at their discretion, when translating the text, can enrich the Plan with the Magisterium of local Bishops.

FIRST PART

GUANELLIAN MISSION: SWORD OF FIRE IN THE HOLY MINISTRY

SWORD OF FIRE

We would like to characterize this first part of the Plan by using the expression “sword of fire”, a well known feature of our Guanellian imagery, that our Founder chose as his priestly program at his ordination. On the day of his Solemn First Mass (Prosto, 31 May 1866), Father Guanella expresses his priestly identity by making known his project of life: *“I want to be a sword of fire in the holy ministry”*.

“Sword of fire”: this powerful and inspiring image comes from the Bible when describing the Divine Word. “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). It properly summarizes the life of our Founder.

“Sword of fire” was his writing and preaching at a time when a violent anti-clericalism engulfed the Church in Italy.

“Sword of fire” toward his neighbor whose hearts Father Guanella warmed up. It was a fire that melted the ice of distrust, and a glow that lighted up the mind of many.

We, children of Father Guanella, cannot journey through our apostolic mission and understand it properly if we do not discover first the origin of the fire that was burning into the heart of the Founder.

He is more than willing to reveal the secret of his passion. In fact, he points at the fountain, the source, the model: Jesus. To understand what impelled Father Guanella to do what he had done, we have to answer first a few questions regarding 1) the fundamental motivation that impelled Jesus to do what He had done; 2) the fire that was burning in his heart; 3) his identity; 4) and what had defined his mission, a mission that he himself entrusted to us (Jn 20:21).

The gospel of Luke records the statement describing the origin of Jesus’ message and the vital principal of his person: “I came to cast fire upon earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! (Lk 12:49)”

What is this fire that Jesus brought into the world and be kindled?

The heart of Jesus is a “fiery house”.

By coming among us, Jesus felt the need to immerse himself into the world. He was committed to “soil his hands”, not to stay at the curbs of the world, but to go at the center of human existence and to face its many problems.

Because he truly understood the fire that was burning in his Father's heart, his neighbor was his life and passion. Love, a burning love was the unifying center of his personality. "According to the common interpretation, Jesus is the 'savior'. According to the true interpretation, Jesus Christ is the 'fire'.⁵ As there is no other word, better than fire, that could help us to understand the "I" of Jesus, so there is no other word, better than fire, that helps us to understand the mystery of Father Guanella "I". Since the first day of his priestly ministry, he "appeared like a train engine able to pull far off heavy loads and great numbers of people. He possessed a strong will. He was straightforward. He was a born leader. He was full of physical and moral energy."⁶

MEANING OF MISSION

According to the business glossary, mission is described as the whole of those leading objectives that form the core values of a business, plus the desired attitudes useful to reach its goals. The Mission Statement of any business describes the ultimate and real purpose of its existence that makes it different from any other businesses.

According to the theological language⁷ the word mission can be used in two different ways.

In Dogmatic Theology, it regards the Blessed Trinity sending on earth the Son or the Holy Spirit to save humanity. We talk about the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit.

In Ecclesiology, it means Jesus sending the Apostles, the Apostles sending the disciples, the Church sending missionaries to spread the Gospel and establish the Kingdom of God among men⁸.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that "*the mission is the action by which the Blessed Trinity sends a divine person on earth so as to produce reasonable and defined effects in the creatures. (...). - He distinguishes two kinds of missions, a visible and an invisible one – Visible is the incarnation of the Word and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles under the form of tongues of fire. Invisible is the mission of the Word and of the Holy Spirit in human souls through the infusion of the sanctifying grace.*"⁹

Today, when talking about mission, we cannot catch the right meaning of the word anymore because of the distortions and misrepresentations of the word created by the business world. The major mistake is to identify mission mostly as action, things to do: a practical-social efficiency of mission. A. Cencini would say that, "It is not a wrong interpretation, but it is a partial and, at worst, a little ambiguous one. (...) Mission means something more than mere, though direct, experience of being in the battlefield or in contact with a dramatic reality. Mission is a burning fire. When a person says that he feels "the mission of" or does something as a "mission", he intends to convey that he is totally involved in a service into which he is throwing all his time and energy. From there passion is coming, from discovering that in that mission is hidden my "I", the true one, that I am "called to be". Where there is passion, then mission is carried out with intelligence, creativity and imagination, with full devotion and generosity, without human calculations, in every stage of life and different ways. Mission is life."¹⁰

⁵ G. VANNUCCI, *Il Passo di Dio, Meditazioni per l'Avvento*, Ed. Paoline 2005, pp. 72 - 74,

⁶ *Don Guanella inedito negli scritti di don Piero Pellegrini*, a cura di A. DIEGUEZ e Nino MINETTI, Ed. Nuove Frontiere 1993, p. 49

⁷ "Jesus introduced himself as the one that 'brings glad tidings to the poor' (Lk. 4:18). His mission comes from the Father (Jn 10:36) and is carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 4: 14; Jn 20: 21-23). It is this kind of mission that Jesus entrusts to the Church and in a special way to his apostles (Jn 17:18; 20:21).

⁸ B. MONDIN, *Dizionario enciclopedico di filosofia, teologia e morale*, alla voce "missione", Ed. Massimo Milano 1989, p. 482

⁹ B. MONDIN, *Dizionario Enciclopedico del pensiero di San Tommaso d'Aquino*, alla voce "missione", Ed. Studio Domenicano 2000, p. 446.

¹⁰ A. CENCINI, *Missionari o dimissionari!*, Ed. Paoline 2008, pp. 15-16

Verify and see if your local community is living its mission as inseparably bond to its vocation and charism of charity. Describe the signs if the community is on the right track or not.

MISSION AS EXPERIENCE OF GOD or EXPERIENCE OF GOD AS PRIMARY MISSION?

The 18th general chapter Final Document, when introducing the chapter “**Charism and Mission**”, gives a list of places, spheres and connections where our missionary concern may find a house. To make it easier to your reading, we quote the whole list.

“Confreres and local communities should pay more attention to, and should in a pre-eminent way look after:

- *Mission as experience of God,*
- *Community life as the place of our first mission,*
- *Young Confreres,*
- *New apostolic presences and new forms of ministry (nuove modalita’ di azione),*
- *Connection with the surrounding areas (territory) and local Church,*
- *Allowing the laity to assume leading roles in our mission.*

Each local community (1) should be open and welcome the riches brought forth by confreres coming from different countries; (2) should take good care to plan the activities of its own community life according to its different aspects and roles; (3) should give due importance on how their House carries out its ad intra and ad extra relations.”¹¹

The first place, that the Final Document locates, is “mission as experience of God”. It is the most obvious interpretation when, in doing missionary activities, we experience God’s presence. We should abandon, however, this obvious interpretation and turn over the axiom (*a statement universally accepted as true*). We should ask instead: “Mission as experience of God” or “Experience of God as primary mission”? We may find appropriate answers from our Constitutions and from John Paul II encyclical “Redemptoris Missio”. The Constitutions invite us to start afresh and reformulate our missionary activity from its original source, from God Himself.

Number 39, “**Consecrated by the Father**”, states:

“By a gesture of compassion the Father has chosen us and kept us entirely for himself, by destining us for an exalted mission and an intimate discourse, reserved only for his dearest friends.”

As Jesus is consecrated by the Father, to the Father, and for the mission of the Father, so we his disciples are fruit of the Father’s initiative who elects us, sanctifies us, reserves us to Himself, and makes us apostles for a mission. **How does the Father proceed?**

“**By a gesture of compassion**”. We encounter here the classical gesture that the Bible underlines when presenting the vocation of “God’s friends”: merciful love, election, friendship of communion, mission. Father Guanella writes, “It is from total mercy that the Lord chooses, among his people, souls spiritually able to understand the subtlety of his divine Love.” (Reg. 1911, Manuscript, 81) “The Lord has reserved for you an intimate discourse that is used only toward the most intimate hearts (Ibid, 10).” “Never forget your exalted mission, and give glory to God (Ibid, 10).”

¹¹ FINAL DOCUMENT XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER p. 29

“Kept us entirely for Himself”. The initiative is only and always coming from God. He is the one that first plans, calls, sets apart for Himself, takes possession, even when it seems that we are taking the initiative.

“By destining us for an exalted mission”. The Lord set us apart for himself “for” a mission. In God’s call, we feel that we are summoned to an apostolic service of charity. We are just like St. Paul who feels himself called and consecrated by God “for” the Gospel: *“When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.”* (Gal 1:15-16). There is an imperative force in the call he had received: *“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”* (1 Cor 9:16) Being an apostle was not something that was added to his dedication to God. On the contrary, it constitutes his direct and immediate reason of being, for God had consecrated Paul to himself for an apostolic service.

“For an intimate discourse”. These few words refer to another dimension, the one that sustains, explains, and gives life to everything else: it is the bond of love with God. The identity of our vocation contains something deeper than apostolate: it is feeling loved by God as no one else loves us. This awareness, coming from faith, burns our heart and makes us radiating zeal and charity. The awareness of the extraordinary value of the love that God bestows on us constitutes the most intimate and highest aspect of our religious life. Like in the aspect concerning apostolic mission, we may see in this one what we see already realized in Jesus Christ. Like him we are sent: *“As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.”* (Jn 20:21). *“As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world.”* (Jn 17:18). *“As the Father loves me, so I also love you.”* (Jn 15:9). *“As you, Father, are in me and I in you, they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.”* (Jn 17:21). In that constantly repeated “As” we may find all the inner truth of our apostolate. Jesus puts us there, at the center from which we may understand our life. The center is constituted by the love of the Father, the same love that was at the center of Jesus’ life.

The awareness of having been sent starts here. Mission was not born from an autonomous decision, fruit of a long process of meditation on one’s self. Mission “was born as a relationship: there is another who chooses and sends. To a believer, that another is God. (...) The awareness of having been sent by God is fundamental for a believer. Even mission cannot either be reduced to a mere pastoral or philanthropic operation, nor to a mere act of discipline and obedience. To the one who is sent, mission is first and foremost a great experience of God. He perceives that his missionary vocation is strictly united to a love, to an interest, to a concern toward the other that comes from above, from God himself.”¹²

By exhorting us to build our mission on the experience of God, the Constitutions offer to Guanellian religious the right conditions on which they have to care about their relationship to God, to have a deep experience of Him as a constant new love. They should keep in mind that God’s love is not human but a divine gift, nor it is the fruit of their efforts or the work of their virtuous life. **God’s mission is a passion for the world that the Lord possesses in his heart, a passion that is given to whom He calls and sends into the world.**

These assertions are abundantly approved and explained by the Magisterium of John Paul II in his Letter Encyclical “Redemptoris Missio”.

“Mission is an issue of faith, an accurate indicator of our faith in Christ and his love for us. The temptation today is to reduce Christianity to merely human wisdom, a pseudo-science of well-being. in our heavily secularized world a gradual secularization of salvation has taken place, so that

¹² A. CENCINI, *Missionari...*, op. cit., p. 19

people strive for the good of man, but man who is truncated, reduced to his merely horizontal dimension. We know, however, that Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person and all humanity, and opens up the wondrous prospect of divine filiation. Why mission? It is because to us, as to St. Paul, 'this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph 3:8).' (...) This is why the Church's mission derives not only from the Lord's mandate but also from the profound demands of God's life within us."¹³

"The entire missionary sense of John's Gospel is expressed in the priestly prayer: 'This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn 17:3). The ultimate purpose of mission is to enable people to share in the communion which exists between the Father and the Son. The disciples are to live in unity with one another, remaining in the Father and in the Son, so that the world may know and believe (Jn 17:21). This is a very important missionary text. It makes us understand that we are missionaries above all because of what we are as a Church whose innermost life is unity in love, even before we become missionaries in word or deed. The four Gospels therefore bear witness to a certain pluralism within the fundamental unity of the same mission, a pluralism which reflects different experiences and situations within the first Christian communities. It is also the result of the driving force of the Spirit himself; it encourages us to pay heed to the variety of missionary charisms and to the diversity of circumstances and peoples. Nevertheless, all the Evangelists stress that the mission of the disciples is to cooperate in the mission of Christ: 'Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Mt 28:20). Mission, then, is based not on human abilities but on the power of the risen Lord."¹⁴

COMMUNITY LIFE AS THE PLACE OF OUR FIRST MISSION

The place where we have to shower the graces received by the Lord is inevitably our religious community. The proof (the fruit) that what had happened between a religious (believer, Christian) and God is true and authentic, is his confreres and the poor.

A religious community is the sign, the place where we share the passion, that is, our being sent by God for the salvation of many. The purpose of a religious community is not only giving board and lodge to its members, or a well defined prayer schedule. Rather, it is the place where the apostles take their apostolic nourishment and training. It is the place where particular bonds are formed among people who have the same vision of things, the same mission, and share the same fire. Our relationships are heavy with mystery. They are relationships of mutual familiarity and love, not made by human efforts or build on superficiality. They possess divine splendor and transcendence: they were born inside a mysterious plan of grace to which each religious participates. "It was the constant desire of the Founder that his children form a family of brothers around the Lord, united in the evangelical love and in the service of the poor" (C 17b).

In our communities, a special place has the presence of the Father who gathers his children, purifies them, prepares them to a life of commitment, and gives unity to the religious family. Ours are then communities founded on the mystery of Jesus, the Life. Ours are not communities based on some psychological sort of classification or even apostolic work, but rather on faith. Ours are Christian and supernatural communities: communities of consecrated persons. Our communion is not an intimist one. Though possessing its own values and dynamics, our communion lives the intimate excitement for mission without which we would not exist as Guanellians in the Church. Fraternal communion and service to the poor, two dimensions of one reality, are continually connecting with each other,. Mission and community are inseparable. Inside the community we receive the gift and

¹³ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio* (Mission of the Redeemer, 1990), 11

¹⁴ Ivi, 23

the sharing of the Word, the echo of God's Word. Sharing our human and spiritual resources and being in solidarity with each other helps us to work better for the mission and to be in the mission.

“Proclamation, because it is made in union with the entire ecclesial community, is never a merely personal act. The missionary is present and carries out his work by virtue of a mandate he has received; even if he finds himself alone, he remains joined by invisible but profound bonds to the evangelizing activity of the whole Church. Sooner or later, his hearers come to recognize in him the community which sent him and which supports him”¹⁵

The number 75 of the Constitutions confirms what we are talking about.

“The Lord entrusts the mission to the entire family of the Institute, which carries it out concretely in the provincial communities and first of all in the local houses. The mission is therefore a grace and a vocation peculiar to the communities: they should keep themselves always aware of it by being active centers of evangelical charity. The confreres share a common mission and are jointly responsible, as Clerics or Brothers, according to the richness of the gift received. All should act in the name of the community, in an intimate solidarity among themselves, respecting the roles of each confrere. They should give the best of themselves, making themselves all things to all in order to win over as many as possible to charity.”

Our mission is entrusted to the community: the first paragraph sets down the principle that rules to the roots the matter of responsibility in mission.

An in the Church everyone acts in the name of the Church and because they are in the Church, so among us, each confrere acts in the name of the Congregation and because he is a member of the Congregation.

To the question, *“Who is called and has the mission to evangelize the poor in the wake of our Founder?”* the answer should be only one, *“The whole family of the Institute”*. Each member participates on behalf of the Congregation and exercises it in its name. It is true that the Congregation de facto exists and acts through the local communities, Delegation and Provinces. The *“mandatum”* is situated, lives and ends in the different fields of history, geography and cultures, that is, inside the local communities, the immediate conveyers of our Guanellian mission.

Mission, principle of identity. There is an intrinsic connection and bond between Congregation and mission, between mission and community. Like for Jesus (whose mission we participate to), for our communities too the carrying out of the Father's mandate is the reason of our existing in history. Mission is to the Congregation *“its grace and specific vocation”*; it determines its existence, nature and form. Carrying out a mission is an imperative that calls for urgency and unmistakable identity. We should be aware of it. We should increase our fervor.

Operational consequences affecting the individual confreres. Each confrere is co-responsible regarding the mission because he is a member of a Guanellian community. Being responsible is a fundamental and vital principle that should nourish a constant inter-relationship between community and individual, between receiving from the mission and giving our personal concrete contribution. That contribution is different from but complementary with the one that others give. It should be, therefore, given according to one's own vocation, together and in solidarity, and always through the interior fire of charity infused by the Spirit of God in each heart.

¹⁵ Ivi, 45

Do you think that your community is a place where apostles receive nourishment and training? Where do people form connections and bonds around the same mission and plans? Where do the confreres share the same fire? Or is your community just a place that offers only board and lodge, and a well defined prayer schedule?

COMPASSION: SOURCE AND CRITERION OF MISSION

Pope Benedict XVI, in his homily during his Mass celebrated on the St. Apollinaris Wharf in Brindisi (15 June 2008), commented the gospel of that Sunday finding in it some suggestions regarding the style of our mission today, that is, “*the style of compassion*”. “*The Evangelist Matthew highlights this by focusing attention on Christ looking at the crowd. He wrote: ‘When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd’ (Mt 9:36). Christian compassion has nothing to do with pietism or the culture of dependency. Rather, it is synonymous with solidarity and sharing and is enlivened by hope.*”

Is not the Guanellian charism a charism of charity, compassion and mercy?

Is not the mission “a voice coming from deep down inside” that calls and urges us to “get out of a pietistic vision of the world”¹⁶ and to go across the roads of life to seek the poor?

*“It is in fact the “works of charity” that reveal the soul of all missionary activity: love, which has been and remains the driving force of mission, and is also the sole criterion for judging what is to be done or not done, changed or not changed. It is the principle which must direct every action, and the end to which that action must be directed. When we act with a view to charity, or are inspired by charity, nothing is unseemly and everything is good.”*¹⁷

To us Guanellians, mission was born from mercy and compassion. The more compassion we have, the more missionary disposition we have. Like Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and like our Founder, a Guanellian is the person that listens to his “deep down inside” and not to some theory. Having compassion (in Greek “*splankizomai*”, Lk 7:13; 10:33; 15:20) is not equal to sentimentalism and emotivity. On the contrary, it means that we have to consign ourselves to the relationship that forces us to be neighbor to others, and to get out from selfishness.”¹⁸

Our Constitutions, number 21, “*Above all, we allow ourselves to be guided by compassion: ‘Your distinguishing sign,’ – the Founder says, – ‘must be a far-sighted spirit of great tolerance, inclined more toward compassion than justice’.*” The best description of our Founder’s charism is that of “heart of mercy”. It is a heart of tender love that consoles, forgives and creates everything anew (Is 49). It is in this perspective that we should adopt the John Paul II encyclical letter “*Dives in Misericordia*” (On the Mercy of God, 1980) as the “Magna Carta” of our Guanellian charism and spirit, because if we are sent to help those in distress, we need a large supply of mercy (St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, P L 41, 636): beginning among us in our communities.

There are a few verses in the Gospel of Matthew ((9:36-10:8) that offer **a good picture of the mission of Jesus and disciples**. In them we may find all the necessary elements regarding the mission of the Church according to the contents of Jesus’ teaching and lifestyle. The picture would be complete if we include the previous verse (Mt 9:35) that presents **Jesus as an itinerant missionary**: “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity.”

¹⁶ PIERO STEFANI, *La voce delle viscere*, Il Regno-Attualità 2/2009, pag.66

¹⁷ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 60

¹⁸ PIERO STEFANI, *La voce delle viscere*, Il Regno-Attualità 2/2009, pag.67

Jesus is the ideal, the primary source and model of every missionary. He is close to people, itinerant, teacher and preacher, healer, merciful, dedicated to God and to the proclamation of his Kingdom, in passion with the good of people especially those who are suffering.

Never Jesus passes by human suffering without suffering himself and giving help, a remedy, a solution. The crowds “were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd” and He “was moved with pity” (36). Pity, compassion, mercy are more than sentimentalism! The exact translation should be, “**He felt an intense emotion from deep down inside**”. The deep down inside emotion recalls the one that a mother experiences when giving birth to her child. Therefore, this passage of the Gospel brings us to discover the **maternal face of God**. Jesus’ mission and Church’s mission find their roots in the tenderness and mercy of God toward humanity: “**in the tender compassion of our God ...**” (Lk 1:78). Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, “The Heart of Jesus is the clear symbol and effective instrument of the merciful and missionary love, because it expresses in a simple and authentic way the ‘good news’ of love, compendium of the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption ... Every one of us when he pauses in silence, needs to feel not only his own heartbeat, but deeper still, the beating of a trustworthy presence, perceptible with faith’s senses and yet much more real: the presence of Christ, the heart of the world ... Therefore, I invite each one of you to renew his own devotion to the Heart of Jesus”¹⁹.

What should we do so that love, the only reason of our mission, may be also the only criterion according to which everything is done or not done, everything is changed or not changed in your community? Which suggestions are you giving to your community so that it may revitalize its devotion to the Sacred Heart so dear to the Founder and our tradition?

MISSION AND YOUNG CONFRERES

Provinces, rich in history and years, at the last general chapter made some requests that sound like invitations to Provinces, younger and rich in vocations and young confreres, to plan that some of their young confreres may move into European communities. The adoptive Provinces should (1) assist them in their cultural preparation; (2) give them their support for a smoothly cultural passage, and (3) the opportunity to acquire some professional qualification. Those young confreres should be a sign of the universality of our communities and of a cultural inclusion that is so widespread now in Europe. In a period of time, affected by a more or less conscious apprehension and crisis, what was born from merely “necessity” should be interpreted as a “sign of the times”, so that our communities may fully walk toward forming international communities, and feel the call to a universal solidarity. The young confreres should prepare themselves to that possibility and perceive in it an occasion to a better human and spiritual growth.

NEW APOSTOLIC PRESENCES AND FORMS OF MINISTRY, CONNECTION WITH THE SURROUNDING AREAS AND LOCAL CHURCH

Let us introduce this critical paragraph by quoting the Motion number 31 of the 18th general chapter: *Animating and Evangelizing Community*. It is the duty of every Guanellian religious community to be a prophetic sign in the surrounding areas (territory) where they are present and

¹⁹ BENEDICT XVI, *Angelus*, 1 June 2008

exercise their apostolate (Proposition 45 f, voted by the 17th general chapter and accepted by the 18th general chapter²⁰).

Guanellian Community in “network”

Number 45f invites “the Guanellian community to intensify its meaningful presence in the surrounding areas (territory) because of its apostolic nature and to bear witness to the primacy of God and its self-dedication to the evangelizing mission of charity”. The new presences and forms of ministry, the connection with the local areas and Church call to a “network” solution.

The local community should operate in a network way.

The word “Network” has become a familiar expression in the business world. It hides however some difficulties regarding its right interpretation. Charity has always found in the Catholic environment the right answers to new needs and emergencies. Today that even problems assume often an organized appearance, our answer should be organized too. It means that answers should not be left only on the shoulders of some lonely and generous pioneer that Divine Providence sends among us still today, but they should be a combined result of a patient and resolute work of many people. Religious life is like a group of climbers ascending a mountain. Because of dangers and difficulties, they rope themselves to each other, because they know that they can survive only when together. In religious life either we save ourselves together or we die together. The reason why we should pursue a greater collaboration is that common problems and challenges (that affect us all) demand cooperation among us and coordination of resources. It is an illusion to think that an individual is a “*deus ex machina*”, a person that has the power to change the course of events, a person that has all the time the right solution to everything under the sun.

In “network” with the local Church. Though our own Congregation has its own identity, it is still a member of the Church, a patrimony of the Church. Therefore, collaboration with the local Church has to be necessary if we want to show the beautiful face of the Church to which we belong. We have to enter into dialogue with the local pastoral organizations, knowing that sometimes it is not an easy task. Patiently, we have to foster receptivity (too often lacking in local Churches) regarding the presence and the specific ministry of religious.

In “network” with different organisms present in the area. The Holy Spirit has raised us up in and for the Church. We have received the gift of vocation and mission in and for the Church. Therefore, we feel ourselves bearers of a specific responsibility toward the Church. However, we feel also fully involved with the political-social context of the areas where we live, because in their midst we feel ourselves expression of the Church. Even the Pope invites us to enter into dialogue and collaboration with it when he writes in his Encyclical, “*Particular situations have led to the birth and growth of many forms of cooperation between State and Church agencies, which have borne fruit. Church agencies, with their transparent operation and faithfulness to the duty of*

²⁰ We fully endorse Proposition 45 of the 17th GC: “A religious community and each confrere, according to his role and function, should undertake the duty of animation as their primary task and direct responsibility. It should be carried out especially by:

- a) Bearing witness to the Guanellian spirit and making sure that it is significantly carried out among the poor;
- b) Animating the faith and spiritual life of the pastoral and educational staff;
- c) Making sure that the house management is carried out according to the Guanellian charism and style;
- d) Fostering an environment of unity and communion;
- e) Forming people to serve according to the Guanellian charism, mission and style.

witnessing to love, are able to give a Christian quality to the civil agencies too, favoring a mutual coordination that can only redound to the effectiveness of charitable service.”²¹

ALLOWING THE LAITY TO ASSUME LEADING ROLES IN OUR MISSION

A leading role of lay people in our mission is clearly expressed and commended by our Constitutions that describe them – for us religious – as “*gift of Providence*”, and – for the lay people – “*a grace of partaking in the Kingdom of charity*” (C 78).

There is no doubt that lay people were already present at the beginning of our Guanellian history as the life of the Founder may bear witness. All Houses were born within a choral action of solidarity and active cooperation of lay people. They were a fundamental element of his charitable works, necessary and vitally indispensable in his following God’s inspiration.

Number 78 of the Constitutions states, “*With those who take part directly in our activities because of employment, we do not limit ourselves to a rapport of justice and mutual respect, but we seek an effective understanding in pursuing the goals of the House according to the spirit of the Institute.*”

We should clear up once and for all a misunderstanding that too frequently affects the laity-religious collaboration: we are forced to hire lay people and to collaborate with them because there are no more enough religious and priestly vocations.

Instead we unite our forces and enter into collaboration with them for a more efficient and effective mission of the Church in the world. It is all coming from the new Ecclesiology of communion, and not – and we should keep that in mind once and for all – from the crisis of religious life that we experience in the decrease of religious, lack of vocations, and massive aging. It is true that collaboration with the laity was accelerated by necessity, the need to carry out our apostolic ministry. However, it is time to pursue collaboration because it is a value by itself, because we live more intensely the communion dimension of the Church, because we enrich each other, and because together we have a much greater apostolic success.

Among the different groups and people forming the Guanellian Lay Movement (GLM), the Cooperators hold a particular responsibility – together with the other Guanellian Catholic lay people – to live their Baptismal promises by following the evangelical inspiration of the Founder, and continuing his charitable works in the Church.

Being inserted in the Church, the Guanellian “Christifideles” (*Christ’s Faithful People*), have the crucial task to study and develop the Guanellian charism, spirituality and mission in a way that their witness and action should help interested, but unchristian, people and collaborators to discover the Christian faith, or to help those away from the Church to rediscover their faith. To all, the road of charity is a journey of evangelization and of full accomplishment of their human vocation.

New spring of the Laity

There is truly a need for a new springtime of the Laity! That new season will be ushered in if we religious share with the laity the necessity and desire to walk together and bring together the Risen Lord to the people who are living with and around us. Only when united we may activate a true dialogue of salvation between Church and society. We in Congregation have made a lot of progress on the road of promoting the presence of the laity in the life and mission of the Church.

²¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus caritas est*, n° 30 b.

Unfortunately, it seems that the Vatican II impulse is weakening now. We still have a long way to go. Our lay people are collaborators with us on our journeying to the Lord. Called to communion and mission, they should not be used as useful volunteers, or available reservist troops. No, they are our collaborators in a mission that was entrusted also to them.

Formation: leading principle

We have to foster the formation of the laity and guarantee them the access to the riches of the Guanellian charism by integrating it to the competence they already have, a competence we have to gratefully accept from them.

Another parallel formation regards forming Guanellian religious to learn how to collaborate with the laity, because there are still some of us who have to get rid of a misunderstood sense of superiority over lay people.

Finally, it should be desirable that lay people and religious may have the opportunity to gather together for shared formation activities. It will be an activity that should greatly encourage the ecclesial culture of collaboration.

The Instruction “Starting Afresh from Christ” states, “*Whereas in times past it was especially the task of religious men and women to create, spiritually nourish and direct aggregate forms of laity, today, thanks to an ever-increasing formation of the laity, there can be a mutual assistance that fosters an understanding of the specificity and beauty of each state of life. Communion and mutuality in the Church are never one-way streets. In this new climate of ecclesial communion, priests, religious and laity, far from ignoring each other or coming together only for a common activity, can once again find the just relationships of communion and a renewed experience of evangelical communion and mutual charismatic esteem resulting in a complementarity that respects the differences. This ecclesial dynamic will be helpful to the renewal and identity of consecrated life. As the understanding of the charism deepens, ever new ways of carrying it out will be discovered.*”²²

Formation on the Vatican II Documents and Church Magisterium

We should foster in the laity interest and love toward the riches expressed by the teaching of Vatican II. The many difficulties met during the past years, and the many still crucial issues of ecclesial life in general and of lay collaboration in particular, could be overcome if we go back to read and study the Documents of Vatican II and the intuitions of the Magisterium. We should mention in particular “*Christifideles Laici*”, “*Evangelization and Human Promotion*”, and “*Communion and Community*”. It is a formation that takes into consideration the Vatican II and the Social Teaching of the Church as well.

Guanellian Educational Project (GEP): Vademecum of the Guanellian Missionary

The GEP is the mission vademecum (handbook) of both religious and laity. Not only; it is also the sign of belonging to a unified family²³.

The merits and the originality of the GEP are not found only in having written down “the most extensive educational-pastoral vision that the Guanellians were able to outline until that moment”²⁴,

²² CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE, *Starting Afresh from Christ, a renewed commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium*, n. 31.

²³ B. OMODEI, *The Congregation of the Servants of Charity and its expectations on Cooperators*, Acts of the 5th National Meeting, *Il Cooperatore guanelliano nella società del 2000 con il Vangelo della carità*, Rome 23 - 24 April 1994, Vita Guanelliana 6, Nuove Frontiere Editrice Roma 1995, pp. 141-142.

but for having given the opportunity to all (even the unfamiliar ones), and to the secular world that works in our Houses, to work according to the Guanellian mission, side by side with religious. The GEP created the conditions that the Guanellian educational experience might be built on a religious experience (= “*The educational task of the GEP finds its deepest purpose in a call from God*”. DB, art. 1); that it might be the patrimony of all those who would like to mold their educational method on the Guanellian style.

The GEP has no intention to be a faithful “copy” of the religious experience of Father Guanellian and his religious for obvious reasons: first, because of the uniqueness of their experience, and second because we today have to pay attention to those who do not possess the Christian faith and are working with us. Yet, the values that the GEP expresses are universal; they could be shared by all, even by unbelievers. The GEP gives access to the charism of charity to all those who are interested, because it has been built on the anthropological, cultural, educational level.

We, disciples of Christ, should consider the unbelievers and help them to see in Jesus not only what He might be to us Christians, but also what He might be to those who do not believe, that is, Christ as culture. The cultural approach to Jesus is not less important than the one that is built on faith and Christian life. We can preach about Jesus even when teaching anthropology or making cultural activities. We may meet and know Jesus even outside catechism class. This is what the GEP made possible. Why?

Because the humanism brought by Jesus is the one that in every moment of human history can free humanity and put it on its feet.

“Whoever follows Christ the perfect man becomes himself more a man.” (Gaudium at Spes, 41).

We cannot deny that once the humanism that sleeps in Christianity wakes up, the world would be more habitable.

We cannot deny that the principles of peace, justice, and love of which our civilization is inspired have Christ as their starting point.

Christian humanism is so high that we have to constantly free it from the objection that it is an impracticable road. The GEP opened the doors of the “fortitude” of the charism of charity, that since recently was the privileged field of Guanellian religious. It has opened a path that was not practicable till a few years ago. “*It systematically expresses the educational values derived from the Guanellian charism. These values are meant to saturate interpersonal relationships, educational activities, rehabilitation, assistance, pastoral work, and plans for both goals and performance.*”²⁵

Besides the Guanellian Family (SdC, DSMP, Cooperators), the Document “*addresses every educating Guanellian community and its members, the recipients of our educational and pastoral service and their families, the employees and volunteers, and whoever, meaningfully, takes part in the activities of our centers. The Guanellian educational package constitutes a set of values to be accepted, respected and implemented by all according to their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the document intends to serve all those inspired by the way of life and education of the Guanellian charism. We include those connected with our mission of charity, such as our friends, alumni, volunteers and benefactors. Finally, the content of this work is proposed for those who, seeking an effective educational avenue, discover the ongoing validity of the Guanellian educational insights and methods.*”²⁶

The GEP “*since represents the Guanellian educational heritage, it has the value of a constitutional document for all activities carried out by the Institutes of Father Guanella*”²⁷.

The GEP does not present only the Guanellian philosophy or its “mission”. It is not only an educational method, but also a system of life (interpersonal relationships), a “specific” system of life marked by its own community style.

²⁴ N. MINETTI, *Presentazione*, in AA VV, *Documento Base per Progetti Educativi Guanelliani*, Editrice Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1994, p. 5

²⁵ AA.VV. *Basic Document For The Guanellian Mission (GEP)*, Nuove Frontiere, Rome 1995, p. 21

²⁶ Ivi, p. 25

²⁷ Ivi, p. 22

We may infer from this that the Guanellian mission is not just a “job”. Rather, it is participation to the charismatic mission of the Founder and to the building of the Kingdom of God to which both religious and laity are called. GEP 72 says about it, *“It was the will of the Founder that all our centers not only strive to live in charity, but also to radiate it to the surrounding community, so as to contribute to the renewal of the world.”*

The main principles that the GEP underlines are: 1) centrality and integral promotion of the “*person*”, underlining values and potentialities rather than limitations; 2) the idea of “*poor*” not as recipients of some assistance, but as persons who are able to give and receive; 3) the idea that every single person can be the *subject of education*. It is the educational optimism: everyone can improve and help others to mature more and more; 4) the “*crescendo*” idea of looking after those in need, taking good care of them, and finally safeguarding them; 5) the aim of being with the poor does not only contemplate the “*caring*”, but also the idea of “*making family*”, a family where each one gives his own contribution according to his role.

SECOND PART

MEN WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

This central section of our Pastoral Plan should be interpreted as a “prospective” from which we should look at our world; a prospective that should become a way to “live” in this world. Perhaps, the Founder would forcefully invite us today to look at the whole world, not at our feet (*the small world of our limited horizons*)!

The second part of this document takes inspiration from the booklet written by the Founder in 1913, *“Vieni Meco for the missionary Sisters in America for the use of the Congregation of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence in Como”*. The heart of the booklet describes the missionary life and the qualities necessary to those who embrace such life.²⁸

One of the best images, that Father Guanella offers us, deals with how a Guanellian religious should plan the “*geography of soul*” for a fruitful mission. We encounter that image right at the introduction of the booklet when the Founder recalls countess Lapeyriere²⁹, *“the missionary daughter of Divine Providence House must know how to embroider on her mind, heart and whole being, the embroidered beauties of the four parts of the world. This is so, because she can be sent to any part of it, or at least she can be assigned to work with persons from every and any part of the world. Put forth your effort of mind, soul and body to succeed.”*

At the time of his death, Father Guanella left back many debts and poor. He left also to his disciples the whole world as the place for their mission, **“You do not have any homeland, because the whole world is your homeland. Your homeland is where God is, and God is everywhere.”**

To those who were knocking at his door, he never asked anything except being in a suffering situation. He never asked them to produce the membership card of a given political party or letters of recommendation from the powerful. Their suffering was enough reason to accept them into his Houses.

We continue to repeat over and over (ad nauseam) the mantra, “The whole world is your homeland”. We should also ask: who are the citizens of this world to which we are sent? Do Guanellians today have an open heart, enough imagination and creativity to lead the passion that the

²⁸ *Dall'introduzione dell'operetta*, L. GUANELLA, *Scritti per le Congregazioni*, Opere IV, Centro Studi Guanelliani, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Roma 1988, p. 762

²⁹ Countess Lady Kufestein Lapeyriere bound her name to the Institute of Father Guanella by donating four very large silk embroidered pieces of art portraying the four parts of the world. She spent twelve years of hard needle work to complete them. Today, they are on display at Don Guanella Museum in Como.

Lord put in their heart to overcome the boundaries arising between them and their brothers and sisters in humanity?

The words - so universal in their appeal – that the Founder uses, are seeds that should grow in the field of our time. They invite us to enlarge the tent of charity but also the tent of “rationality”, as Pope Benedict XVI urges.

The geographical co-ordinates of our charism – as some motions of the last general chapter mention – reach out to the whole world. It is a world not only “geographically” understood but also the cultural and psychological world of my neighbor present in my continent, country, parish, community.

“Loving Church and men as Jesus did. The missionary is a person of charity. In order to proclaim to all his brothers and sisters that they are loved by God and are capable of loving, he must show love toward all, giving his life for his neighbor.”³⁰

«**In haste**».

*“Mary set out and traveled to visit Elizabeth in haste. She is not motivated by anxiety or doubt, but by joy and concern. She is not visiting Elizabeth out of curiosity or because she want to check if the angel says the truth. She believes in what the angel told her about her cousin. She goes to her because of friendship.”*³¹ Mary proceeds in haste to visit Elizabeth.

«**Running ... running**»

The Founder too adopts the Marian “in haste” (running) that becomes the legendary mark of his mission of charity, because “*we can never stop as long as there are poor to be assisted*”. Father Guanella never stopped. His life could be defined as a constant “running ...running”. The flying of our Founder on the wings of charity was mystifying only those who did not know the reason why he was always on the run, why he was constantly planning, loving and suffering.

Father Guanella was often saying, “*Difficulties make us running.*”³²

To his Sisters said, “*When God calls, quicken your pace, rather put on wings. Hurry to do good.*”³³

“When Divine Providence opens a door, do not waste your time. Make haste and go forth.”

*“It is necessary to have the moral certainty that we are doing God’s will, and that should be enough to make us confident and unafraid.”*³⁴

The “running, running” of Father Guanella should not be mistaken with wild frenzy or mere human efficiency. It is actually true fire of an inner passion that burns his whole being.

It is not “running” after something we do not possess, or achieve what we are not. Rather, it is enriching ourselves for the benefit of the common good, and putting the gifts of grace and nature to good use at the service of God’s plans.

Mary said, “Yes”.

The Guanellian religious too should say over and over, “Yes! Here I am!”

*“In her – Mary – and in her kindness and solicitude in charity, we find a model for our lives and our industrious service to the poor.”*³⁵

³⁰ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 89

³¹ S. FAUSTI., *Una comunità legge il Vangelo di Luca*, EDB 2001, p.36

³² L. MAZZUCCHI, *La vita, lo spirito e le opere di Don Luigi Guanella*, Scuola tipografica Casa Divina Provvidenza, Como 1920, p. 136

³³ Ivi, p. 161

³⁴ Ivi, p.77

Today, each one of us should be “in haste” not because we are oppressed by anxiety, doubts or worries, but because the passion toward Christ and the poor is burning our hearts.

Here, I am! Send me! There is a new urgency toward mission!

“Indeed, more than in external works, the mission consists in making Christ present to the world through personal witness. This is the challenge, this is the primary task of the consecrated life! The more consecrated persons allow themselves to be conformed to Christ, the more Christ is made present and active in the world for the salvation of all.”³⁶

The Servant of Charity should imitate the Founder, who, “finding himself between the Father and his neighbor, first built by faith a strong relationship with God, and secondly turned with urgency his attention to the neighbor.”³⁷

In so doing, the Servant of Charity today has to show to the world that he possesses a solid personality able to quickly pass from intimacy with the Lord to the “dirty” job of serving his neighbor most in need.

The true missionary is a saint, and a saintly community

The call to holiness has already been expressed by the Final Document of the 16th general chapter and by John Paul II in his *Redemptoris Missio*. *“Our primary role is to be men of God, to welcome the Gospel in our life and be Gospel to others. The witness of our life is the first and foremost form of evangelization. The true missionary is the saint that evangelizes through his deep experience of God. He is bearing witness to a Church called to holiness, and by his life he expresses the evangelical beatitudes. It is well known that today’s world is much eager to listen to witnesses rather than teachers. If it listens to teachers, it is because those teachers are witnesses. The world demands evangelizers eager to speak about a God so close and familiar to people as if they see the Invisible. It’s the reason why the world needs saints. In our world situation today, so complex and so open to perspectives both of good and evil, a saint is not enough, however. Today, more than ever, we need religious communities that seek holiness.”³⁸*

Pope John Paul II reminds us in his “*Redemptoris Missio*”, *“The missionary must be a ‘contemplative in action’. He finds answers to problems in the light of God’s word and in personal and community prayer. (...) Unless the missionary is a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way. He is a witness to the experience of God, and must be able to say with the apostles: ‘that which we have looked upon ... concerning the word of life ... we proclaim also to you’ (Jn 1:1-3). (...) The characteristic of every authentic missionary life is the inner joy that comes from faith. In a world tormented and oppressed by so many problems, a world tempted to pessimism, the one who proclaims the ‘Good News’ must be a person who has found true hope in Christ.”³⁹*

Conclusion

³⁵ CONSTITUTIONS AND REGULATIONS SDC, n° 35

³⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, n. 72

³⁷ *Don Guanella inedito negli scritti di don Pierino Pellegrini*, op. cit., pp. 335-336

³⁸ FINAL DOCUMENT XVI GENERAL CHAPTER, Acts Vol. 2, p. 167

³⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 91

The following story, taken from the “Sayings of the Desert Fathers” (Benedicta Ward, Cistercian Publications, 1975) may summarize well what we have talked about till now. More than a closing story, it should be a story that pushes us to go on!

“Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, ‘Abba, as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?’ Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, ‘If you will, you can become all flame.’”

Still today, religious should not be overly content of how little they are or of what little they do. Rather, they should become fire. They should allow charity to be free. Without love, man is dead. Without love, consecrated life is dead!

THIRD PART

SUGGESTIONS AND PRACTICAL GUIDELINES TO PROVINCES AND DELEGATION

Superiors of Provinces and Delegation should 1) welcome what the 18th general chapter entrusted to the Congregation regarding mission; 2) stimulate their communities to be open to the riches of having among them confreres coming from different countries; 3) make plans for community life in its different aspects; 4) give due importance to cultivate the way of living a right relationship ad intra and ad extra of their communities⁴⁰. The above goals can be easily reached if the Major Superior of a Province, helped by his council, will carry out the suggestions present in this Plan.

- **Paulin Pilgrimage.** The General Council, in collaboration with the Provinces, should organize a pilgrimage “On the footsteps of St. Paul”, first and greatest missionary of the Church.
- **Formation to the Charism.** Provinces and Delegation, in collaboration with the Sisters DSMP and Guanellian Cooperators, should organize during the next three years the “Training on the Charism” reserved to all lay people of our Houses (cooperators, volunteers, families, friends...).
- **Formation of international communities and mission of the young confreres.** In a dialogue with the general council, Provinces, in the next three years, should collaborate for the creation of international communities, visible sign of the universality of our Guanellian communities in line with the cultural inclusion that is so widespread now in Europe. What was born from merely a “sign of necessity” should be interpreted now as a “sign of the times”, so that our communities may fully walk toward forming international communities, and feel the call to a universal solidarity. The young confreres should prepare themselves to that possibility, and perceive in it an occasion for a better human and spiritual growth.
- **Recognition of the originality of the Guanellian Cooperator vocation and excellence of the Association.** Superiors of Provinces and Delegation should invite the Confreres of the every local religious community (1) to explicitly propose to the lay people associated to their Houses, the vocation of being a Guanellian Cooperator, and (2) to commit themselves to help them in their discernment and formation.

⁴⁰ FINAL DOCUMENT XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER, p. 29

- **Provincial Guanellian Lay Movement (GLM).** Superiors of Provinces and Delegation, within a year, should begin the GLM in their Provinces or Delegation. The Movement should receive from Superiors a concrete impulse and the necessary care due to a gift received from God. Superiors should give their support and help in defining identity, mission and organization, even though the lay people itself are the protagonists in defining the Movement's identity.
- **Toward the World Youth Day, Madrid (Spain), 16-21 August 2011.** Recently, the Holy Father defined the World Youth Day, celebrated in Sydney (Australia) in 2008, as "a great celebration of faith"⁴¹. Provinces and Delegation should put into action the organisms in charge of Youth Ministry so that they may take care in advance of the spiritual and material activities of young people who are preparing for the 26th WYD. They should follow the suggested calendar. 1) *During the first two years*, Provinces and Delegation should participate to their Diocesan Youth Day either during Palm Sunday or another time. 2) *In 2011*, year of the WYD, Provinces and Delegation should send to Spain their groups that would be entrusted to the Guanellian Communities present in Spain. 3) *Formation Themes: 2009*, "We have set our hope on the living God" (1 Tm 4:10). **2010**, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mc 10:17). **2011**, "Rooted and built in Christ and established in the faith" (Col 2:7).
- **Samaritan Parish and Integrated Mission.** Next year, all Provincial Superiors and their Councils should verify if each Guanellian parish is practicing what the 17th general chapter Proposition 43, "Samaritan Parish", had said. Where a religious community is directly involved in both parish and Guanellian work, a unified Guanellian plan should be devised, beginning from an annual common planning (18th GC, Motions 34).
- **Missionary Micro-realizations.** Where Providence shows the opportunity, each Province may open new presences of charity without the burden of physical structures.

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⁴¹ LA CIVILTÀ CATTOLICA, 7 FEBBRAIO 2009, PAG. 282-283