

Pastoral aid 2014

The bond of charity

Congregation of The Servants of Charity
Opera Don Guanella
Rome, december 2013

*Congregation of The Servants of Charity
Opera Don Guanella
Vicolo Clementi, 41 - 00148 Rome*

Presentation

I would like hereby to introduce the new aid for the pastoral year 2013-2014. Our last General Chapter through Motion # 3 called for an aid on the 'Bond of charity', which brings us back to the Founder, who regarded the "Bond of charity" as a specific feature of his new Congregation: "We are united with each other principally by 'the bond of charity' intended by the Founder to be the life of God poured forth into our hearts by the Spirit, and by the love of individuals who enjoy living and working together. This bond is the strength of the Institute and the source of its progress and perfection" (SC Constitutions, 12).

Our Constitutions also highlight fraternal communion as one of the most precious values of our vocation (C. 17). Fostering the right conditions for mutual edification and a dialogue that goes beyond differences of age and culture is therefore an important priority in our communities.

This aid, which draws abundantly from Fr. Guanella's own words, encourages us to set our sights high, to the point of making us feel that we could not live this important aspect of our charism if we looked only at our weaknesses and the difficult situations in our communities.

However, we must always have lofty ideals in life, as an incentive and invitation to walk without ever giving up. It is similar to the Kingdom of God, towards which we journeying our entire lifetime.

If the bond of charity is the strength and source of our consecration and mission, then giving ourselves to God and the brethren becomes necessary for a life of integrity, not just as a personal responsibility but as a duty of bearing witness and supporting one another.

We must also ask ourselves sincerely whether our relationships within and outside the community reflect God's charity in our hearts.

For example, how much difficulty do we still encounter in living the family spirit given us by our charism and which cannot be something merely sentimental or private, but should manifest itself in concrete gestures of friendship, acceptance and mutual help! Thorough our way of behaving we in fact clearly communicate to those around us the strength and the beauty of our being together in the Lord.

This pastoral Aid provides once again a favourable opportunity, to unite us in spirit as we strive towards a common goal. It will surely gain us the Lord's help for growing in that unity of intentions that the Founder regarded as the strength of our Institute.

I see this value as our Guanellian response to the expectations of the Church, which describes religious communities as schools of communion and training places for fraternity.

It is also a due contribution that we owe to families that experience relational difficulties but continue to attend our centres and parishes. A community capable of loving, forgiving and whose members are helping each other to give witness to a life of communion the best they can, certainly poses a challenge to those who experience the awkwardness of living together, often without commitment. Our fraternal love identifies us as a community of the Risen Jesus Christ, which, as at the time of the early Church, arouses wonder and becomes an example: "See how they love one another!"

I wish you all a good journey on the path of fraternity.

Fr. Alfonso Crippa

Rome, First Sunday of Advent 2013

PART I

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE FOUNDER

*The “bond of charity”
in the thought of St. Luigi Guanella
edited by Fr. Umberto Brugnoli, Vicar General*

The “bond of charity”

Anyone who reads the Regulations written by Fr. Luigi Guanella (1842-1915) for his Religious, will sooner or later come across a rather curious expression to which he seems to give a very particular meaning and which appears to refer to some very interesting theological and anthropological realities.

“Bond of charity”: a peculiar expression.

Exploring this peculiar topic of the bond of charity in the thought of Fr. Luigi Guanella means finding an answer to questions such as: “What is this bond?”, “what did the Founder mean by it?”, “what does it mean to us Guanellians today?”, “what aspects of it can we bring into our communities, families, and daily relationships?”

1. The importance of the bond of charity

We can start by quoting two confreres who bear witness to the very clear and strong intention of the Founder: Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi and Fr. Attilio Beria.

In the Founder’s biography, Fr. Mazzucchi writes: *«There was a moment, we do not know precisely when, he thought that he should closely unite the members of his Institute **with the sole bond of charity**, in imitation of some other religious society. What could have motivated him? The purpose of fleeing the dangers of fiscal and political persecutions or of avoiding the risk that papal approval, by stifling his initiative, might destroy the spirit and the direction of his Institute. But, above all, Father Guanella feared that his own spirit of trust and abandonment in Divine Providence, without depending excessively upon human prudence, might be destroyed,*

suffocating thus its development.» (Mazzucchi, Leonardo. *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Luigi Guanella*. Trans. Fr. Peter Di Tullio, S.C. Broomall, Pa.: Havertown Printing Co., 1980, p. 148).

In his Report on the “Spirit and Charism of the Founder”, during the 11th extraordinary General Chapter of the Servants of Charity in 1969, *Fr. Attilio Beria* was even more incisive: *«How clearly Fr. Guanella perceived his own spirit and jealously ensured that no-one interfered to make him change it, for whatever reason, even with the best of intentions, can be clearly (and seriously) seen from the episode that we have already related from Fr. Mazzucchi’s testimony. At a certain moment, he justifiably feared that Rome’s approval of the Constitutions of his two Institutes might be subject to the imposition of conditions “restricting his initiative and at odds with his own spirit and direction”. He was then even ready to abandon the idea of the two Institutes being juridically established as Congregations, and to find another formula through which he could channel his own spirit, rather than change it.»* (p. 45-46 ITA).

2. The ideas underlying the concept of the bond of charity

From an examination of Saint Luigi Guanella’s life, an idea can be gained of how deeply rooted the concept of the “bond of charity” was in his feelings and experiences.

In his youth he had experienced strong, intense and welcoming family ties, always open to the urgencies and needs of others. During the years of his formation he did nothing other than develop his capacity to establish relationships based on evangelical charity and firmly rooted in the practical reality of people and events. The same was true for his Salesian experience, his parish ministry and in his Institutes; he had to develop the concept of the relationship/bond of

charity in a particular way in Pianello and in Como, where, for example, he appreciated the precious presence of Sr. Chiara, Alessandrino Mazzucchi, Fr. Aurelio Bacciarini and all who collaborated there...

During his studies, his heart was inspired probably by certain images connected with the bond of charity, unity and fraternal communion. Thus, first as a priest, then as a religious and Founder, he was able to draw often from the heritage of the scriptures and Church Fathers, as well as from spiritual writers such as Teresa of Avila, Don Bosco and others.

The expression 'bond of charity' comes from the Bible: «I drew them with human cords, with bonds of love» (*Hos* 11,4); «And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection» (*Col* 3,14). However, the passages most dear to the Founder, are those he often quotes in his *Writings for the male Congregation*, for example:

«*Funiclus triplex difficile rumpitur*» (“A three-ply cord is not easily broken”) (*Eccl.* 4,12);

«*Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum!*» (“How good and how joyful it is for brothers to live in unity!”) (*Ps.* 132);

«*Qui pacit virgae, odit filium suum*» (“He who spares the rod hates his son”) (*Prov.* 13,24);

«*Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart*» (*Mt.* 11,29);

«*So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you*» (*Jn.* 17,21);

«*Cor unum et anima una*» (“One heart and mind”) (*Acts* 4,32);

He probably based his concept of “bond” also on some patristic texts, such as the following:

«As this broken bread was once scattered on the mountains and after it had been brought together became one, so may your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth»¹.

«As many grains, collected, and ground, and mixed together into one mass, make one bread, so in Christ, who is the heavenly bread, we may know that there is one body, with which our number is joined and united».

«Christ gave us peace, recommending that we live in harmony and unity of mind and heart: He asked us to keep the bonds of love and charity uncorrupted, and unbroken: no one can be a true witness (martyr) in his sight unless he lives and practices fraternal charity...

He who doesn't live in charity doesn't live in God... They cannot remain with God, who will not remain with one heart in God's Church»².

Likewise, Saint John Chrysostom also says: *«As the bread consisting of many grains is made one, to the point that the grains nowhere appear... so we too are joined both with each other and with Christ»³.*

«Charity is a pleasant and healthy bond of hearts»⁴.

The expression “bond of charity” was also used by several other Founders. For example, Fr. Luigi writes that *Teresa of Avila* already used it to indicate that Religious were united above all by charity, besides by their vows: *«Teresa was a true foundation stone, and was accompanied by three companions who never abandoned her in all her struggles... Their hearts*

¹ *Didaché*, in G. BOSIO ET ALII, *Introduzione ai padri della Chiesa. Secoli I e II* = Strumenti della Corona Patrum 1, Società Editrice Internazionale, Torino 1990, 47-48 (ITA).

² ST. CYPRIAN, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae unitate*, II, 14, in G. BOSIO ET ALII, *Introduzione ai padri della Chiesa. Secoli II e III* = Strumenti della Corona Patrum 2, Società Editrice Internazionale, Torino 1991, 204 (ITA).

³ ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *1 Cor. Hom. 24*, in PG 61, 200.

⁴ ST. AUGUSTINE, *Sermon 350, 3*, PL 39, 1534.

were united by the charity of Jesus Christ. They were built on solid foundations: the help of the Almighty and the love of Jesus Christ firmly joined them in an unshakable bond»⁵.

3. Different ways of talking about the bond of charity.

In his Writings for the male Congregation, when referring to how the confreres are united, Fr. Luigi often mentions the “bond”, which he considers to be as binding as any precept. He attributes specific meaning to it, such as connection, brotherhood, charity, unity and service.

Fr. Guanella uses various terms to express the concept of “bond”, and the term assumes different shades of meaning according to the context in which it is used. At times he uses it to refer to charity, other times to fraternal love, union, religion⁶ or unity of direction.

He therefore coins expressions such as “bond of charity”⁷ or “special bond of charity”⁸, “bond of brotherly love”⁹, “bond of religion”¹⁰, “bond of union and unity of direction”¹¹. He considers the bond of religion as a “sacred bond”¹².

a. ... of connection of soul

⁵ L. GUANELLA, *Autografo di appunti sulla vita e la dottrina di Santa Teresa d'Avila*, 1 (ITA).

⁶ With the term ‘religion’, Fr. Luigi, faithful to the mentality of that time, means the religious Institutes, in this case the Institute of the “Servants of Charity” (called ‘Sons of the Sacred Heart’ until 1905).

⁷ L. GUANELLA, *1899 Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 129; *Ibid*, 1899 *Internal Regulation of SSH*, 150; L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 124.

⁸ SpC 877, *Statuto FSC* 1896 (ITA).

⁹ L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1991), 77.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ L. GUANELLA, *1899 Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol.1, USA, 1991), 159.

¹² L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 77.

According to St. Luigi, through the bond of charity¹³ we join together in fraternal love in order to find the support and the strength to grow in virtue through mutual assistance¹⁴.

He clearly states that it is divine charity that connects souls¹⁵, *cor unum et anima una*¹⁶ (“one heart and mind”). «Such union of charity is possible because it is commanded and willed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ»¹⁷, and also because it is the “holy precept”¹⁸ in which «the start, progress and perfection of the Sons of the Sacred Heart consist»¹⁹.

The «obligation of charity by which the Sons of the Sacred Heart help one another and help others as well»²⁰ is a union fostered by the respect of the Rule²¹, which aims to unite the members of the Institute as brethren²², joined to one another with the gentle bond of the charity of the Divine Heart²³.

Fr. Guanella underlines the great importance of the fraternal binding among the members of the Institute. It is the source of the strength needed to carry out the mission entrusted to us by Christ, which otherwise would be very difficult, because of continuous evil attempts to oppose it²⁴.

¹³ SpC. 877, *Statuto FSC* 1896 (ITA); *Ibid*, 943 (ITA), L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol.1, USA, 1991), 129; *Ibid*, 1899 *Internal Regulation of SSH*, 151; L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 124.

¹⁴ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 77.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 124.

¹⁶ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 151.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁰ L. GUANELLA, 1898 *Statute of SSH* (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 105.

²¹ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 127.

²² L. GUANELLA, 1910 *CL*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 157; L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Internal Regulations of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 151.

²³ L. GUANELLA, 1898 *Statute of SSH* (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 94.

²⁴ L. GUANELLA, 1908 *CL*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 152.

Such fraternal communion «is not only useful but even necessary»²⁵, since in it the confreres can find the secret for growing in virtue²⁶, which is a help for personal sanctification as well as an effective means for the sanctification of the souls entrusted to them²⁷.

This “noble union”²⁸ makes us “brave captains and soldiers to fight the battles of the Lord”²⁹, constantly striving to eliminate all those defects and dangers that undermine brotherly unity³⁰. For this purpose, Fr. Luigi *believed* that we «*must conquer, above all, the defects of sympathy and antipathy*. We must guard against the spirit of criticism and never waste time and lose peace in gossip and useless chatting»³¹.

Using an even more striking expression, Fr. Luigi states that «many brothers united together constitute an impenetrable shield to their enemies» [to those who belong to] the world, the flesh and the devil»³² only «the union of many brothers is capable of building a tower which cannot be overcome by any attack of the enemy»³³.

If, on one hand, he encourages us to always live the “holy precept of charity and hence of fraternal communion”³⁴, on

²⁵ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 151.

²⁶ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 157.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 157.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 22.

²⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁰ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 218; L. GUANELLA, 1908 *CL*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 152.

³¹ L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 188.

³² L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 151.

³³ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 24.

³⁴ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 151.

the other hand, he similarly, explicitly exhorts us to a «bond of charity»³⁵ which creates the «*funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur*» (“A three-ply cord is not easily broken”) (*Eccl.* 4,12) mentioned by the Lord»³⁶.

b. ... of fraternity

Fr. Guanella writes that «*the members have joined to find support for one another in their way to perfection, a bond of brotherly love and a virtuous power of charity. They have united themselves not only to share the material bread but to be assured also of brotherly love clothed with true affection*»³⁷. The bond of unity we have mentioned is therefore also a fraternal bond, a relationship of fraternity based on Jesus Christ (charity is the fruit of faith!). This dual concept was also stressed by Pope Benedict during the Canonisation speech: Fr. Guanella succeeded in uniting contemplation and mission. He was charitable because he loved God! In his introduction to “*Spiritual writings and Prayers*” (p. 20), Fr. Attilio Beria describes Fr. Guanella in the following words: «No-one should imagine Fr. Guanella as a man of constant complaints, or of mere dreams; this would be a false image of such a pragmatic, active and very strong man. He would express his tenderness in prayer and meditation, i.e. when speaking to God, rather than when talking to people. His attitude and manner of speech were the outward expression of a fundamental conviction: God is our Father and we are His children. In our view, this conviction expresses the true core of **Fr. Guanella, as a man of God and a spiritual master**. If we were to describe his most

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 77.

characteristic feature in a single phrase, we could not find a better one than this».

In fact, his desire is that the confreres «live in harmony like true brothers in Jesus Christ»³⁸.

Such fraternity is created by sharing all of ourselves with our brethren as with «friends, who share every good of body and mind»³⁹. It is not merely a question of personal effort; we must ask the Lord for the gift of “tender charity towards our neighbours in general, and towards our confreres in particular”, because this kind of charity lived in fraternity will attract many other brethren, like a sweet perfume⁴⁰. Our charity begins at the altar, with the Eucharist.

Fr. Guanella was totally in tune with the psalmist, who sings of fraternity saying *Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum!* (“How good and how joyful it is for brothers to live in unity!”)⁴¹ (*Ps* 133). He knew that all available means must be used to foster fraternal communion, for example by writing letters and personally visiting each other, as true brothers do⁴².

Fr. Luigi believed that everyone is important in the bond of fraternal love and that all must collaborate for the good and the growth of community in order, «to rekindle and consolidate the family spirit and solidarity»⁴³. For this reason, he recommended that opportunities may be always provided for the brethren to express their own views, whether in writing or in person, avoiding any form of criticism, gossips,

³⁸ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *CL*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 158.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ Cf. L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 152.

⁴¹ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *CL*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 158.

⁴² L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 236.

⁴³ SpC. 893, *Reg. FSC*1897 (ITA).

judgement or suspicions that may also emerge due to human weakness⁴⁴. In fact, he stated even more explicitly that personal «defects are to be treated with kindness and firmness because by themselves they would be sufficient to destroy the serenity of fraternal charity»⁴⁵. In this regard, he was convinced of the need to lean towards understanding: «We should always encourage and foster compassionate understanding, a humble emulation of charity and patience; above all fraternal love should always be pursued»⁴⁶.

c. ... of charity

Fr. Luigi wanted the bond to be expressed through heartfelt and charitable relationships, focussed both on God and our brethren at the same time. He writes that «*fervent love of God produces a warming affection of charity toward the neighbour, because the love for God is not parted from the love for the neighbour*»⁴⁷.

Fr. Guanella did not consider love and charity to be mere human sentimental inclinations⁴⁸, since they originate from God, who draws us to Himself and at the same time guides us towards brotherly love⁴⁹. For this reason, he states that «it is never too much to remember the aim of divine Charity and the example of the Apostle of Charity, who when dying, kept repeating: «*Love one another, love one another, because this*

⁴⁴ SpC. 893, *Reg. FSC* 1897 (ITA).

⁴⁵ L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 241.

⁴⁶ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 156.

⁴⁷ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 131.

⁴⁸ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 80.

⁴⁹ L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 250.

is the precept of the Lord, and he who fulfils it is certainly saved»⁵⁰.

He was well aware that this relationship of loving affection is something truly precious, to the point of considering the prosperity of the Institute to be directly proportional to the good that is done and shared within it.

He expresses this clearly when he says that «*the religious institutes which have sprung up through the ages, prospered as much as they possessed the gift of loving one another in the Lord*»⁵¹.

However, he makes it clear that this divine and human love should reflect some particular qualities: it is a love that respects the steps and pace of others; it is a relationship that stimulates, to the point of calling for preventive fraternal correction; it is an amicable love; it is good and joyful love that encourages sacrifice and self-denial.

He desired that the confreres «*with fraternal love are reciprocally attentive so that their actions and words may conform to the will of God*»⁵². He therefore encouraged the practice of the preventive system, «*through which superiors surround their charges with paternal affection, and brothers surround their brothers with solicitude*»⁵³. He was convinced that those who love, care about correcting their brothers, sometimes even severely⁵⁴. Although he acknowledged that «*Qui pacit virgae, odit filium suum*» («He who spares the rod hates his son») (*Prov. 13,24*)⁵⁵, he urged them to never be

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 192.

⁵¹ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 151.

⁵² *Ibid*, 212.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 210.

⁵⁴ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 75.

⁵⁵ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 211.

lacking in mercy⁵⁶ and to live together fraternally, with an attitude of love and respect for each individual, and a spirit of friendship, understanding, prudence and familiarity⁵⁷.

Nonetheless, when considering the situation of the time, Fr. Guanella urged the confreres to practice “special acts of charity towards their neighbours”⁵⁸. In order to do a “**bit of good**” as he always encouraged his own, he indicated above all the example of the divine Heart, who teaches: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart (Mt 11,29)*, as well as St. Francis of Sales, St. Alphonse and other saints of that time, as examples and models for a just way of thinking and a sure way of acting, as fruits of the charity of the Heart of Jesus Christ⁵⁹.

Thus, to Fr. Guanella, the practice of charity is seen as a consequence of the charity of the Sacred Heart and must be modelled on divine meekness and humility. He wanted formators to inspire the young brethren towards this type of charity⁶⁰, since “uprightness of life has to be shown by charity in words and deeds”⁶¹.

He desired such acts to be practiced frequently and to be united with prayer. To the prefects of discipline for middle and high school students he wrote: «*Prefects, who have much to do with the education and screening of the candidates, must be mature in prudence and advanced in piety. They*

⁵⁶ *Ibid*; L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 20; *Ibid*, 99; *Ibid*, 127; *Ibid*, 140.

⁵⁷ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 160-161; L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 85.

⁵⁸ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol.1, USA, 1991), 129.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

⁶⁰ Cf. L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 162.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 213.

should therefore “be fully immersed in the spirit of prayer and the exercise of charity»⁶².

d. ... for a co-operative service

We have seen how Fr. Luigi stressed the communality of meaning of similar terms: connection of soul, fraternity, charity, unity... These values had a particular appeal to him, leading him to declare: «*How cherished is religious life by all those who understand its preciousness! How admirable is the bond of charity which unites the spirits!*»⁶³.

Fr. Luigi had indeed very clear ideas about this. Aware that some «members of the Institute where Priests and others Brothers» he says: «Priests and Brothers are true brethren in the Institute, because they are both called by God to assist one another and to serve in the Congregation»⁶⁴. He also saw that «besides being brothers, they are collaborating in working, and that all work is intended for the same glory of God and the salvation of souls»⁶⁵.

Therefore, the bond he wished to describe joins all the members in fraternity, charity and unity, without neglecting the aspect of service and work for the glory of God. Everyone is called by God to co-operate and serve⁶⁶ with shared responsibility. For each one to succeed in his own duty, he encouraged mutual assistance and patient endurance of each other's shortcomings⁶⁷. He writes: «*They should help one*

⁶² *Ibid*, 220.

⁶³ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 124.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 22.

⁶⁵ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 211.

⁶⁶ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 22.

⁶⁷ SpC. 1362, N 1915 (ITA).

another willingly, both through concrete daily services and instructions concerning personal duties»⁶⁸.

Fr. Luigi wanted «the confreres to show great charity and help one another in the discharge of their duties»⁶⁹. He was convinced that this kind of fraternal help was not merely something material or practical, but also, and above all, something spiritual. He therefore urged the members of the Institute to «help each other by praying for one another, giving mutual edification, tolerating one another patiently in the defects always present in any society of men, even when well organized»⁷⁰.

Fr. Luigi thus outlined a particular fraternal relationship, namely a bond that is divine in nature and through which he encouraged «everyone to carry his brother's burden, as well as to enjoy his brother's support»⁷¹.

4. Exhortations and wishes.

«I urge you to consider the great grace the Lord has granted us by bringing us together as a community, so that we may help one another, especially in these times when many are in urgent need of spiritual assistance»⁷².

St. Luigi's wish: *«Perfection and sanctity consist always in the love for God and neighbour. Fraternal charity is always a pledge of temporal and eternal happiness»⁷³.*

⁶⁸ SpC. 1362, N 1915 (ITA).

⁶⁹ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 215.

⁷⁰ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *CL*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 158.

⁷¹ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 212.

⁷² L. GUANELLA, 1910 *CL*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 157.

⁷³ L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 249.

Part II

REFLECTIONS

*Living the Guanellian charism
in a globalised world
through the bond of charity*

*Fr. Wladimiro Bogoni, parish priest of “San Giuseppe al
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*“Religious life is a rose, but has its thorns.
It is the Mount of Beatitudes where bread and fish are multiplied,
but it is at the same time Gethsemane and Calvary”*
(L. Guanella, 1905 Regulations of SC, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol.1, 190).

«We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians»

The famous phrase of Massimo d’Azeglio is normally understood as an exhortation to create an Italian national identity in the sense of gathering the “people”, who are aware of being spiritually united through their common language, history and religion, into a State created through the common will of individuals. This is certainly the principal meaning the Italian Government gave to this sentence in the decades following 1860.

However, is this what d’Azeglio really meant? No!

When d’Azeglio uttered this famous sentence, it was not intended as a call for the creation of an Italian national identity at all, but as an appeal to Italians to improve themselves as people. In his memories, d’Azeglio reiterates the need to create better people. For him, “making Italians” meant freeing them from vices such as indiscipline, irresponsibility, cowardice and dishonesty, and fostering “virile qualities” in them.

We are living in a globalised world. We must now make the citizens of this world.

D’Azeglio’s famous phrase, which still occasionally echoes in the chambers of Italian power, newspapers and the temples of culture and art, which are obliged, on the one hand, to acknowledge Italy’s creativity and, on the other, its disorder and indiscipline, is well suited to this present moment in the world’s history. We now live in a globalised world and there

is no need to produce sociological studies to prove this point. The whole world is a village, albeit one in which the laws and decisions of a globalised Economy and Finance often prevail over the cultural and religious norms of peoples and nations.

Alongside an extreme individualism, mainly influenced by Western society, original forms of communion have also been created through the Internet, a worldwide communications highway whose power to transform society and customs is feared by some countries. The world is changing its cultural, social and economic attire. Global dynamics of interrelatedness between nations, together with the specific historical, cultural and religious features of the local environment in which the individual lives, are changing the way peoples's lives are perceived, interpreted and experienced today. There is the sense that history is going through the pangs of giving birth to a new world, despite itself. The world is changing rapidly, and in this rush the citizens who have to live in the it are left to catch up; they are unprepared, they feel inadequate and almost always in state of emergency; they are unable to cope rationally with the numerous questions that arise, both in terms of ethics and on a technical-scientific level.

They live in this world but do not feel themselves fully citizens of this world. In short, we live in a globalised world; we must now make the citizens of this world.

«The whole world is your homeland» Fr. Guanella used to say; we must now prepare the religious to serve this 'world community' as community of persons without borders.

If, on the one hand, we now have to "make" the citizens of the global village that the world has become, on the other, the Church, and in our case the Congregation, has to prepare

religious for a world that must be served and loved as “our own homeland”.

Let us start with an unquestionable assertion, namely that although the Congregation is present in many parts of the world, this does mean that it automatically has a globalised charism. Our charism is not globalised simply because we are present in all parts of the world or because the General Council invests much of its time and resources reaching out to four continents, but will be so when each community and every confrere in our communities expand their vision to the universality of charity.

Everything must be seen, thought, desired and planned from the perspective of charity. This is the “perspective” from which we have to view our world. It is a perspective that must also become a way of “being in” this world of ours. When Fr. Guanella died, he left behind debts and poor people. He also entrusted to us the entire world as legacy and as mission field: **«You no longer have a homeland, because the whole world is your homeland. The homeland is wherever God is, and God is everywhere»**. This broad vision of our Founder must be spread as seeds that have to be sown in the soil of our time; it sounds as a clear invitation to enlarge not only our tent of charity, but also the horizon of our mind, of our “rationality”, as Pope Benedict XVI would say. Furthermore, in the light of the daily magisterial teaching of pope Francis and of his vision of a Church not self-referential but increasingly projected outward, our charism seems to shine more and more in its prophetic relevance and must therefore reach the borders of the whole humanity and the peripheral spaces of the human person. When the Founder died, many were amazed to see all those poor people, who have knocked at the door of Fr. Guanella and whom he welcomed with no question asked; neither a party membership card nor a

recommendations; the only requirement for being assisted was their experience of suffering. To be religious citizens in today's world, the Guanellians need to have an alert heart, imagination and creativity to channel the passion that God had given them to go beyond the many barriers between them and their brethren.

Each Guanellian community must cultivate within itself the virtues to welcome the whole world of the other, of the marginalized, the distant fellow man!

Each Guanellian community is as large as the world, not in the sense of geographical extension, obviously, but because it is composed of people who have, and must have, a heart as big as the world. The world is already becoming a single homeland.

What it lacking are citizens for this homeland, as well as religious who can live fully in this homeland, as salt that gives flavour, light that illuminates and a heart that welcomes with no "ifs" or "buts".

The Guanellian is God's borderless citizen, called to globalise the charism, and who will succeed in this if he goes, as the Holy Father exhorts, *«to the outskirts of humanity, not only the geographical ones but also the existential ones;...if he comes out of himself in order to go and meet others, especially those who are the most distant, those who are most in need of understanding, comfort help,... and joy»*. We need to become "new" religious, harbingers of a new revolution at the service of the global community.

How can we do this? By recovering and re-launching an intuition of our Founder that is more prophetic than ever, his initial idea: the bond of charity.

The initial idea: the bond of charity

The bond of charity, understood as the “initial idea”⁷⁴, “first and principal bond”⁷⁵ and “a sign and pledge of the love of God”⁷⁶, is undoubtedly the central theme of most of Fr. Guanella’s writings on community life. «In Fr. Guanella’s talks, this was the idea from which everything else developed. He would continuously return to it, almost daily, when speaking to the communities or small groups, and drew everything from it»⁷⁷.

The bond of charity is the subject that introduces and supports all other aspects of our life: consecration to God, the mission of charity, formation, governance and the administration of financial resources.

Everything flows from the community, which follows Christ in the consecrated life as a community of brothers, fulfils its mission entrusted to the brethren in unity, educates and forms its members with shared responsibility, acquires cohesion through its government, and administers the assets of Divine Providence in an orderly and careful manner. “*The principle bond of unity is the charity spoken of by Jesus Christ when he said that whoever loves God must also love his neighbour, who is a son of God as well; and the same charity in regard to which he prayed that his disciples would be of one mind and will, just as he was one with his heavenly Father*”⁷⁸.

⁷⁴ *Charitas* n. 72, p. 12 (ITA).

⁷⁵ L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 250.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ A. BERIA, *Spirito e carisma* - Relazione al Capitolo Speciale 1969-70, p. 46 (ITA).

⁷⁸ SpC, *Statuto FSMP* 1899 (ITA).

The concept of the bond of charity must once more “regenerate”⁷⁹ new communities, new community projects and new brotherhoods.

«*The Lord draws to himself souls with the virtues of poverty and purity but keeps them united in particular with the bond of christian charity... Charity is a chain that binds our hearts... Charity is a bond which makes hearts noble and great. It is as strong as martyrdom, as death itself. It perseveres because it is a consuming fire which catches whatever it touches*»⁸⁰.

The beauty and greatness of the bond of charity in the Lord Jesus is able to unite people of every race, nation and religion. It is able to maintain the dialogue of life at any latitude, with any culture or race.

«Today’s communities, especially those of Religious Men and Women, are sustained and bound together by the bond of charity. With this simple and noble bond of love they sanctify themselves and edify others»⁸¹.

Charity, which is the “weakest” charism in appearance, can become the winning one, since it is merciful and pastoral, and able to reach the heart of every person. Charity does not need “conferences” or “simultaneous translation”; it simply needs a place to lay its compassionate head.

⁷⁹ A. BERIA, *Spirito e carisma - Relazione al Capitolo Speciale 1969-70*, p. 46 (ITA).

⁸⁰ L. GUANELLA, 1888-89 *Maxims of spirit and Method of Action*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 47; *Ibid*, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, 130; *Ibid*, 1899 *Internal regulation of SSH*, 151.

⁸¹ Cf. L. GUANELLA, 1888-89 *Maxims of spirit and Method of Action*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 48.

What is the bond of charity for Fr. Guanella?

Fr. Guanella assures us that his fundamental intention was to unite his collaborators through the bond of charity. From the beginning... before the group of people that followed him took the form of a congregation, he kept it united through the bond of charity, through the conviction of being gathered in the name of Christ's Love; the conviction of the primacy of charity, as love for God and one's neighbour, in religious life and particularly in the life of his own followers. Indeed nothing but the bond of charity kept the first confreres together and build them into a family. The first companions saw Fr. Guanella as an inspiring example of a life totally based on this principle. At the time, Fr. Guanella's initial inspiration of uniting us solely through the bond of charity as a path toward holiness, in faithfulness to the Spirit, was undoubtedly a divine inspiration, which he soon had to abandon, however, in order to meet the institutional and organisational requirements of the Church and the religious Institutes of his time.

Our identity as Guanellians today can be revived by recapturing the Founder's prophetic primary intuition of the bond of charity.

The Institute draws its strength from this bond, which is the true path of holiness and precedes the legal and moral bond of the vows. Even when the Congregation was established with regular vows, that bond always remained the essential and fundamental strength that connected the members in their religious life, as well as in their mission work. Communion of life was meant to be an essential characteristic of the Servants of Charity and their mission that takes the path of the heart and is founded on a deep bond of charity.

Charity is therefore the virtue that shapes, moulds and fulfils our consecration, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit in our Congregation⁸².

The most accurate and precise formulation of the “*bond of charity*” is given in #12 of the *Constitutions of the Servants of Charity*, where we read that *«the bond of charity is intended by the Founder to be the life of God poured forth into our hearts by the Spirit, and as the love of individuals who enjoy living and working together»*.

THE BOND OF CHARITY IS THE FRUIT OF DIVINE LIFE POURED FORTH INTO OUR HEARTS

The stronger our union with God, the greater the charity will be, urging and enabling us to perceive the needs of the poor, especially those who are without voice, and to create ties both within and outside of our communities. Such ties are “quality” relationships.

“Qualities” of the bond of charity

The communities, as “new” fraternities:

- *grow through new relationships;*
- *are able to go beyond themselves;*
- *create a sense of mutual belonging among their members;*
- *consider the community confreres as their dearest members;*
- *cultivate a spirit of mutual acceptance;*
- *recognise faith as the only environment conducive to their growth.*

⁸² CONGREGAZIONE DEI SERVI DELLA CARITÀ, *Via di virtù e di santità. Commento alle Costituzioni*, Roma 2012, pp.69-70 (ITA).

The bond of charity makes us capable of establishing new relationships

Relationships in fraternal communion are filled with mystery. They possess radiance and divine transcendence and originate from a mysterious plan of grace which each member of the community shares.

«You have aspired to this spotless silver chain, which is the love of religious charity: you have seen that even hundreds of sisters, if gathered together and united by this tender bond, can live as if in a heavenly paradise... In this spiritual family, all possess a single heart and mind; all are for each one and each one is for all»⁸³. «In what does community life consist? It consists...above all in living together in faith and charity...»⁸⁴. «The union of hearts and minds with God unites the life of God with the heart and mind of the Christian»⁸⁵.

«The Servants of Charity must be in close touch with God...because where there are two or more gathered together in the name of God, Jesus is in their midst, directing and governing them»⁸⁶.

The bond of charity enables the fraternity to go beyond itself.

A mature community is not at all a closed circuit. The bond of charity doesn't lock up the community itself, but it opens it up in two directions, towards the Lord, with whom the community is continually called to grow in familiarity and toward the poor, whom Providence urges us to care for with fervent zeal and a heart full of love, willing to risk everything

⁸³ SpC 656, *Reg. FSMP* 1911 (ITA).

⁸⁴ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 127.

⁸⁵ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Internal Regulation of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 151.

⁸⁶ L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 193.

for their sake: «*What does it matter to be imprisoned for the poor, for the cause of the poor? One would become a martyr!*»⁸⁷.

Fraternal communion and service to the poor are constantly referred to as two poles or dimensions of a single reality.

The true bond of charity must lead us to belong to each other

United by bonds that are so deep, we belong to each other. The members of our community are our dearest treasures⁸⁸. We make the acceptance of each other the first expression of our fraternity,

by accepting and respecting each other, each with his own uniqueness and condition. In imitation of Jesus, we love each other⁸⁹ with a love that recognises, sustains and surrounds those whom the Lord has given to us as brothers.

Our religious community is founded on bonds that precede and go beyond mere human plans; it is not the result of human will but a covenant and communion received from God. Through these relationships the members of the community are united by bonds similar to family ties: from these arises a cohesive strength so “profound and sacred”, that it is rightly referred to as “fraternity” in the fullest sense of the term⁹⁰.

The biblical analogies of the Mystical Body, the family, the vine and the branches... the grains of wheat milled and kneaded into dough, are embodied in a new powerful way in

⁸⁷ L. GUANELLA, 1888-89 *Maxims of spirit and Method of Action*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 48.

⁸⁸ 1 *Cor* 8,11.

⁸⁹ *Jn* 13,34; 1 *Jn* 3,16.

⁹⁰ Cf. PC 15.

the life of the community, stressing its strong cohesive force. The parts of the body belong to one another; brothers in a family are given to each other; the branches of a single vine stock form a unity together. «*They must see that this spirit takes hold in the hearts of all the members of the family, so that all may become one in actions and affections, like grains of wheat, ground, mixed, and kneaded into one bread, which can later be offered at the community meal to revive the bodies as well as the hearts of all the table companions*»⁹¹.

By the love of God, the gift of the Holy Spirit, by our communion in Christ (*fili in Filio*) and our participation in the same Guanellian vocation, we are established as a “family of brothers”⁹², as different “members of one body”⁹³ and as “branches of a vine”⁹⁴. We can therefore understand the depth of the sense of belonging, which, as in a natural family, brothers and sisters feel “engraved” in their own being and almost in their own flesh! We then understand why the Founder asks us to love the Congregation very dearly. «It is necessary that...our love for the Congregation is such that for her we renounce all affections toward things and persons»⁹⁵.

This is why the members, animated by holy zeal, love their Congregation as the apple of their eye. This is why the fervent religious love their Institute more than themselves. They are ready in their spirit even «*to generously offer their budding lives for the prosperity of the Religious Family*»⁹⁶.

⁹¹ L. GUANELLA, 1888-89 *Maxims of spirit and Method of Action*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 47-48.

⁹² Cf. L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 191.

⁹³ Cf. L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 28; *Ibid*, 97.

⁹⁴ Cf. *Ibid*, 90.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 51.

⁹⁶ L. GUANELLA, 1911 *Internal Regulations of DSMP*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 311.

«The warmth of Christian charity is more alive and felt within the cenacle of the Congregation than within the natural family»⁹⁷.

May the «newly-professed members clearly see that the Community is their new home and religious family, dearer and fonder than their natural home and family»⁹⁸.

The dearest members are the community brethren

When from this perspective of faith, that is made possible by the grace of vocation, we come to discover that our religious brothers and sisters are deeply “inserted” in our life, we then come to spontaneously cherish in our hearts our community’s members. All this is not deducted from general principles regarding the dignity of the human person, the precious mystery of our humanity or the infinite value of our personality... although all these are valid aspects to which we have special sensibility as Guanellians, due to our particular charism and specific mission. In the community, however, things acquire a different nuance, consisting of affection, concrete experiences and familiar faces; precisely these specific people, each with their own name, are those who are dear, precious and worthy to me, by the very fact that they are my brethren and belong to me; and even if this confrere does not show extraordinary qualities nor exhibits high levels of knowledge, competence or spirituality... the important thing is that he is my brother, and thus the one I hold most dear.

⁹⁷ SpC 656, *Reg. FSMP*1911 (ITA).

⁹⁸ L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 247.

We cultivate a spirit of mutual acceptance...

Great attention must be given to the spirit of acceptance in the community. With every effort, through daily progress in charity, we must learn to accept each other exactly as we are, as in a family; when parents have a newly born baby, it is essential to learn to welcome him\her with a heart full of love and respect for what the child is: a gift from God and a gift of life. «Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God» (*Rom 15,7*).

The talents and limitations of each one must be accepted and respected: «Not all the branches of a vine are equally vigorous... there are branches closer to the main vine and that are more capable to absorb its vigour»⁹⁹. «The Institute should accept with gratitude to the Lord and with satisfaction those individuals whom Divine Providence sends to us, although they are mediocre and lacking in talents. In the Church, one receives five talents, another two or even one talent»¹⁰⁰. Therefore they «...should beware of making any comparison. On the contrary, the Servants of Charity should seek to submit to and serve one another»¹⁰¹.

It is a matter of seeing the brethren with the eyes of God, who loves each one with a unique and unrepeatable love.

«Let them look with an eye of faith at the persons and things of the House, and remember that all persons belong to God... Therefore, all must be treated with great respect»¹⁰².

Though limited and frail, let us all use our best efforts to create an environment¹⁰³ suitable for fostering the

⁹⁹ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 90-91.

¹⁰⁰ ²⁷ *Ibid*, 43.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 44.

¹⁰² L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Internal Regulations of DSMP*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 124.

development of each person, in accordance with grace, the gifts of nature and the inner aspirations of their hearts.

Each one in turn should actively contribute to the growth of the community with the talents they have received¹⁰⁴, and strive to advance in holiness of life, without expecting to be carried by the other members.

In the attempt to match the needs and expectations of the individual with those of the community, we are sustained by the Lord and supported by the certitude that people find true fulfilment to the extent they are able to serve God and their neighbour with selfless love¹⁰⁵.

Let us make our contribution to the community exactly the way we are, with our limitations¹⁰⁶. Nevertheless, let us try to make good bread out of the poor flour that we are. «...Who is the man who could claim to be without defects? The Lord has taken men from the mud of the earth and has made them frail so that they may always be humble. The Lord, in His power and goodness, reserved to Himself the glory of raising these same men...»¹⁰⁷.

Community life needs an environment suitable for fostering its growth. It is born, grows and is renewed through faith.

All living beings need a suitable environment. This is a fundamental law of life. Each living being needs its proper *habitat* to develop. Fish need water and birds need air to live. The Founder really loved these comparisons: «Can fish live

¹⁰³ ET 33. 39.

¹⁰⁴ *Mt* 25,14; 1 *Pt* 4,10.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Lk* 9,24; *Josh* 38.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. ET 7.

¹⁰⁷ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 23-24.

out of water or birds away from the air?»¹⁰⁸. «As a bird soars in the air and as a fish swims in the water, likewise, Philothea, your soul must continuously live in God, breathe for God»¹⁰⁹. No one is exempt from this vital need: community life also needs its own environment. It is a life that requires its own suitable climate; the more demanding the call to become signs of evangelical charity, the more transparent and fervent the community environment must be. For us to «have the charity of the early Christians, whose fervour the pagans admiringly said: “*Videte quomodo se diligunt*» (See how they love one another)”¹¹⁰, we need to be rooted in a suitable *humus*.

It is indeed important to constantly care for a positive community environment so that the members may grow: «They have come into one family not only to share together material bread but to assure for one another brotherly love clothed with true affection»¹¹¹.

THE GUANELLIAN COMMUNITY IS A WORK OF LOVE THAT IS BORN AND RENEWED THROUGH FAITH

- *The community is fundamentally a work of love.*
- *It is open-minded.*
- *Being together is considered a gift, a feast and a joy.*
- *It is attentive to prevention.*
- *It allows itself to be guided by mercy.*
- *In daily self-giving...*
- *With words that reveal relationships of communion.*
- *With a heart open to friendship and dialogue...*

¹⁰⁸ SMC 269, *Vieni Meo* 1883 (ITA).

¹⁰⁹ L. GUANELLA, 1885 *The Foundation*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 389.

¹¹⁰ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Internal regulation of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 150.

¹¹¹ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 77.

The community is fundamentally a work of love

Fraternal unity is only achieved through free acceptance of the other, constant conciliation between different individuals, generosity and personal assumption of responsibility for the brethren's needs and the project entrusted to the community as its mission. All of this comes from a love that is abundant, mature, selfless and inspired by the Gospel, which only those who have reached maturity in Christ possess¹¹². «*The fervent love of God produces a warming affection of charity toward the neighbour, because the love of God is not parted from the love for the neighbour. A gentle and pleasant love for our neighbour is the most beautiful gift from God that one can have here on earth*»¹¹³. «*The confreres must dedicate themselves with such love, because the Lord loves him who gives himself entirely to him*»¹¹⁴. «*With charity everything is endured, with charity everything is overcome*»¹¹⁵.

All members of the community contribute to the development of each one, so that they may become the mature gospel-inspired individuals they are called to be.

«Is not the "new man" spoken of by St. Paul perhaps like the ecclesial fullness of Christ and at the same time the sharing by each Christian in this fullness? Such an aim will make of your religious families the vital environment which will develop the seed of divine life – the seed which was planted in each of you at Baptism and which your consecration, if lived to the full, will enable to bear its fruits in the greatest abundance»¹¹⁶.

¹¹² Cf. *Eph* 4,11.

¹¹³ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Constitutions of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 131.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ ET 38.

Open-minded

«Your distinctive mark, according to the Founder, must be a spirit of great tolerance, of open-mindedness. You must be inclined to mercy rather than to justice»¹¹⁷.

Being together considered a gift, a feast and a joy

Glad to live together, the biblical line «*o quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum*» (“How good and how joyful it is for brothers to live in unity”) should resound in our community life, perceived as a gift and thus to be lived as a feast. It is a joy that is not superficial, but deep, intelligent and creative. The key attitude of joyful hearts is to consider and treat everyone in the community as a person of value (or worth) and as useful to the House. Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi desired that: «each house be filled with the genuine spirit of Fr. Luigi and enlivened by joyful charity»¹¹⁸.

Fr. Luigi had already written: «*Let us cultivate a spirit of joy...*»¹¹⁹, and «obey with the joy of affectionate children»¹²⁰.

«*A characteristic that must distinguish you, martorelle, must be joy*»¹²¹. «*It is necessary that these sentiments of faith and charity animate the hearts of our Brothers..., so that the strength of virtue may increase and the joy of him who serves the Lord and works for peace and charity may be doubled*»¹²².

¹¹⁷ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 74.

¹¹⁸ *Charitas* n. 64, p. 10 (ITA).

¹¹⁹ L. GUANELLA, 1888-89 *Maxims of spirit and Method of Action*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 63-64.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 53.

¹²¹ L. MAZZUCCHI, *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Luigi Guanella*, (trans. Peter Di Tullio, S.C. Broomall, PA: Havertown Printing Co., 1980), 318.

¹²² 49 L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 24.

Attentive to prevention

More than an educational method, the preventive method should be considered a faith perspective, a path of spiritual life and, above all, a spirituality of community life.

«The preventive system of education is that method of charity, customs and expediencies through which superiors surround their charges with paternal affection. Brothers surround their brothers with solicitude so that no one, during the work of the day, may incur any kind of evil, and in the path of life all may reach a happy goal. This is the preventive system: surrounding the person in such a way that he may not fall. For this there is need for prayer and great charity»¹²³.

Allowing itself to be guided by mercy.

The description of our Founder's charism that comes closest to the truth is as a "heart of mercy". A heart full of penetrating and tender love, which gives consolation, forgives and becomes source of creativity¹²⁴.

«It is much better to abound in understanding and mercy rather than in rigor and justice...»¹²⁵.

«Priests have defects, but this very fact makes them use much more mercy and pardon toward sinners who beg mercy before the minister of God»¹²⁶.

«The character and the distinctive mark of the Servants of Charity in the spiritual and religious sphere must be a spirit which is most tolerant, open-minded and inclined to mercy rather than to justice»¹²⁷. In this perspective, we should adopt

¹²³ L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Internal regulation of SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 210; *Ibid*, 1888-89 *Maxims of spirit and Method of Action*, 60.

¹²⁴ See the magnificent chapter Isaiah 49.

¹²⁵ L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulations of SC*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993), 20.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 24.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 74.

Pope John Paul II's encyclical "*Dives in Misericordia*" as the "*Magna Charta*" of the Guanellian charism and spirit, because the more we are sent to relieve human miseries, the more we need to be merciful¹²⁸: beginning with our own community. Pope Francis underscores this attitude that Guanellians should acquire. During the Angelus on 15th September 2013, the Holy Father spoke once more about God's mercy, a topic particularly dear to him and one that should also be exceptionally dear to Guanellians.

The three parables from chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel, which were read during the Mass on Sunday 15th September, talk about the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son. «All three of these parables – the Pope said – speak of the joy of God. God is joyful. This is interesting: God is joyful! And what is the joy of God? The joy of God is forgiving, the joy of God is forgiving! The joy of a shepherd who finds his little lamb; the joy of a woman who finds her coin; it is the joy of a father welcoming home the son who was lost, who was as dead and has come back to life, who has come home. Here is the entire Gospel! Here! The whole Gospel, all of Christianity, is here!». « But make sure that it is not a mere sentiment, it is not being a "do-gooder"! On the contrary, mercy is the true force that can save man and the world from the "cancer" that is sin, moral evil, spiritual evil. Only love fills the void, the negative chasms that evil opens in hearts and in history».

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

¹²⁸ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *De Civitate Dei*, P L 41, 636.

Is not our mission that of “a call that arises from the depth of the heart”, an appeal to “live behind world mentality”¹²⁹ and walk along the pathways of life in search of the poor?

«Love has been and remains the driving force of mission, and is also “the sole criterion for judging what needs to be done or not done, be changed or not changed,» as John Paul II wrote in his Encyclical letter on the Church’s missionary mandate. «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»¹³⁰.

For us Guanellians, mission, community life, prayer and everything else must be inspired by mercy and compassion. The more compassion we have, the greater our capacity for missionary work will be. A Guanellian is «a person, like the Good Samaritan and our Founder, guided by gut feeling rather than by doctrine. Being moved with compassion (the verb used is *splanhizomai*, Lk 7,13; 10,33; 15,20) does not mean succumbing to feelings or emotions; on the contrary, it means giving ourselves in a relationship that urges us to become a neighbour, disregarding what characterises our identity»¹³¹.

As our Constitutions #21 remind us: «*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”*». Our Founder was a “heart of mercy”, in other words, a heart of penetrating and tender love, that comforted, forgave and made itself creative (the magnificent chapter 49 of Isaiah). In

¹²⁹ PIERO STEFANI, *La voce delle viscere*, Il Regno-Attualità 2/2009, 66 (ITA).

¹³⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 60

¹³¹ PIERO STEFANI, *La voce delle viscere*, Il Regno-Attualità 2/2009, 67 (ITA).

this perspective, we should adopt Pope John Paul II's encyclical "*Dives in Misericordia*" as the "*Magna Charta*" of the Guanellian charism and spirit, because the more we are sent to relieve human miseries, the more we need to be merciful (St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, PL 41, 636): beginning with our own community life.

In daily self-giving...

The best contribution to fraternity is the one offered through prayer and the toil of each day, in which the self-giving of each one for the common good is made manifest.

Community is communion of life. We participate in it with our own life and our own whole being. Roles, schedule and skills come later and are of secondary importance.

With words that reveal relationships of communion.

The book of Qohelet has a wonderful description of words and their use, in the past as well as today.

«*All speech is laboured; there is nothing man can say. The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor is the ear filled with hearing.*»(1,8).

«Today we are overwhelmed by constant, anonymous and mindless chatter, in which words, according to Ionesco, are "loud, meaningless shells"».

We now have an inflation of words, a speech that "says" nothing, a talking aloud when there is nothing to say and nobody listening.

Words are reduced to mere noisy shells»¹³².

«Never before have 'words faltered', misfired, limped and appeared to fade, as they do today. Our young people, bombarded by television images and computer icons, are no

¹³² L. POZZOLI, *op. cit.*, 165-166 (ITA).

longer able to speak or write. Their vocabulary is paltry, weak and poor. Communication is reduced to coarse screams and gestures, or barely comprehensible jargon»¹³³.

«Words are tired, weary and worn out. They no longer say anything... We should leave them to rest. However, we continue to use them excessively, and words that are worn out and exhausted become irritating and unbearable»¹³⁴.

Why have our words lost their power?

Because they no longer communicate truth and love.

Truth and love: these are the paths towards the rediscovery of the word.

«As St. Peter says, ‘Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God’ (1Pt 4,11), meaning to say, may you always speak with godly speech that reflects divine thoughts. Giving words, each word, its theological value is the highest and truest vocation of our speech...

Our words have to be “word of encouragement” (Heb 13,22), filled with the Spirit of God, words of consolation, comfort, exhortation, support and defence. The very Spirit of God should appear and be bestowed through our speech»¹³⁵.

Therefore, let us ask ourselves whether our speech allows the breath of the Spirit to flow or whether we simply produce “inconclusive” or, worse still, “unedifying chatter”.

Where and how could my tongue better express the language of love?

With words that are bare, poor and simple, but capable of bringing light and warmth into some heart, or even transforming a life.

Possessing *the grace of words*...

¹³³ G. RAVASI, *Mattutino*, da “Avvenire”, 13 gennaio 2001 (ITA).

¹³⁴ A. PRONZATO, *Alla ricerca delle virtù perdute*, Gribaudi 2000, 22 (ITA).

¹³⁵ A. GENTILI, *op. cit.*, 60-62 (ITA).

Words that *help people to live...*

Words of encouragement (to encourage = to give heart) that reanimate those who are disheartened.

Community life is also built through words, which bind, convey thoughts and affections, communicate and reveal, and therefore establish and nourish relationships of communion. ‘Communicating’ is a crucial aspect of community life. It is impossible to truly participate, in fullness, in the life of our brethren without communicating, even while respecting the personal spaces and privacy to which each one is rightly entitled. Welcoming the word of a brother is to open a door and allow him to enter our lives; so our words should be appropriate, polite, and full of humanity and the Gospel. Fr. Guanella understood all this: for our words to have great value, they must be inspired by the source of every living word: «Speaking less with men and more with God serves to strengthen the bond of charity»¹³⁶.

«The following is a way of helping the souls of our neighbours: above all, we must fill our hearts as much as possible with the zeal and charity of Jesus Christ, with his divine help. When our hearts are thus filled, then from our lips will come forth words like fiery darts which will increase virtue in the hearts of others. The fewer our words and the warmer with pious affection they are, the greater will be their effect»¹³⁷. Just as “too much vivacity” is a defect of a “talkative” person, likewise it is a defect being “rude”, unsociable, excessively “taciturn”¹³⁸. In the words of the Founder: «Adjusting oneself to the needs of community and

¹³⁶ L. GUANELLA, 1888-89 *Maxims of spirit and Method of Action*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 48.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 48-49.

¹³⁸ Cf. *Ibid*, 57.

social life is very helpful and convenient and will result in pleasing our neighbour. Forms and expressions of withdrawing from social interaction and excessive taciturnity must be avoided. In everything and almost to the point of guilt, it is praiseworthy that a heart that wants to please and help his neighbour, be courteous, frank, condescending and rich with that freedom of spirit which is a true gift of heaven»¹³⁹.

With a heart open to friendship and dialogue...

Fraternal life requires a mind and heart open to dialogue, friendship and trust; to effectively build up community life, we need to have strong convictions in mind and heart. It calls for great maturity and respectful listening.

For this reason, the Founder said: «*The members of the House must have great charity in thinking*»¹⁴⁰. «*You must never lose your self-control..., but you must apply yourself to the task willingly and deliberately*»¹⁴¹. «The heart also must be controlled, because it is blind and needs the guidance of intelligence»¹⁴².

«*It is our duty to think well of our neighbour, unless we have evidence to the contrary*»¹⁴³. To dialogue «*means to express our own thoughts and opinions, and listen to those of others, in an exchange conducted with respect and sincerity, in order to arrive at consequences or practical decisions regarding the matters being discussed*»¹⁴⁴.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 52.

¹⁴⁰ L. GUANELLA, 1888-89 *Maxims of spirit and Method of Action*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991), 47.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 45.

¹⁴² *Ibid*.

¹⁴³ SpC 710, *Reg. FSMP*1911 (ITA).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 705 (ITA).

CONCLUSION

Let us raise our eyes and imitate our Founder, who had a “heart as good as a newly baked bread”.

To conclude these family reflections, we are invited to follow the footsteps of our Founder, who was a model of life and charity in action. There is a different Guanella for each important phase of his life, and we wish to describe to you that of his “mature years”, who had a “heart as good as a newly baked bread”¹⁴⁵. A heart of gold.

A priest with heart as good as a newly baked bread¹⁴⁶.

He was a true man of God and a genuine priest, who could put you on the path towards God without you even knowing it¹⁴⁷. He was a man of universal charity, open to everyone.

His charity was so strong that it made him welcome anyone who was rejected by all others¹⁴⁸.

He loved talking with everyone: in all kinds of situations, he would casually strike up a conversation with whoever was near him, to offer a kind word, a piece of advice or gesture of charity.

Fr. Guanella always showed fatherly kindness and attention to everyone he came across and who was suffering or in need¹⁴⁹.

His particular skills were a deep understanding of people and a clear intuition of their abilities, merits and goodness¹⁵⁰. One of the outstanding features of Fr. Guanella’s personality

¹⁴⁵ Cf. C. LAPUCCI, *Parole di un Samaritano*, Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 73; *Ibid*, 183 (ITA).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 183.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 181. Un capitano medico a don Filippo Bonacina dopo una visita di don Guanella all’ospedale militare di Milano (ITA).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 82(ITA).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 76; 141 (ITA).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 92 (ITA).

was the practical sense he showed when dealing with people, the warm way of immediately reading their needs and difficulties and the simplicity with which he solved problems¹⁵¹.

Although he had a strong and determined character, Fr. Guanella willingly accepted people's weaknesses when the correction of faults was not necessary. And so he would entrust burdensome tasks, softening them a little with kind attention and good-natured jokes. Fr. Guanella used to say that each person must be handled in the right way: some may need to be reprimanded, others may be convinced through sweetness, but no one should be ridiculed, let alone throttled, so that all in God's House could willingly do their share of good deeds¹⁵².

He spoke frankly and freely in front of his superiors¹⁵³ and to those who did not agree with him or criticised him in bad faith, he always replied with kindness and humour¹⁵⁴.

He loved simplicity and a practical approach, and he abhorred whatever was false, insincere, overblown, tainted with sentimentality or sugar-coated¹⁵⁵.

He had a charity capable of enlightening minds and hearts troubled by doubts¹⁵⁶.

If his words could instil trust and serenity¹⁵⁷, they could also sow a seed of uneasiness, making people realize that no one can be happy alone¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 88 (ITA).

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 128 (ITA).

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 36 (ITA).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 80; 115 (ITA).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 36 (ITA).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 46 (ITA).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 140 (ITA).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 29 (ITA).

«Even if he was kind, he was also stubborn. When he wanted something, he never gave up until he had obtained it. He was very strong and never tired. He also showed his own character traits and would not let anyone contradict him. He taught us to have faith and to love others... and that the most important thing is to respect a person's dignity. Once, two guards came to arrest him because of some debts. When asked «*What will happen?*» he replied, «*Nothing!*» «*They cannot take anything from me because I have nothing, and they won't put me in prison, or else who would take care of my sick people?*»

He was a man capable of making the intangible become tangible: of listening to the beatings of his own heart, of breathing the scent of the earth, of mighty winds and the fragrance of the flowers on his mountains, but above all, he could see the face of Christ in every person. What was the secret of this man's charity? «Whence did he draw such great inexhaustible charity?» – asked Blessed Card. Andrea Ferrari, during the funeral oration for Fr. Guanella – It is the secret of the saints and also the secret of Father Guanella. The world ignores this secret, the source from which the saint draws the fire of his ardour. Therefore, before the wonders of charity, the world is only capable of marvelling. **The secret is God**, in Whom the saint believes and hopes with fervent love»¹⁵⁹.

To conclude: «*As our comfort and support, while we persevere and work hard to perform our daily duty, we are greatly helped and gratified by the awareness of being the fortunate children of a Father who has never ceased to help us, the blessed heirs of His Spirit*»¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁹ L. MAZZUCCHI, *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Luigi Guanella*, (trans. Peter Di Tullio, S.C. Broomall, PA: Havertown Printing Co., 1980), op. cit., 342.

¹⁶⁰ GENERAL COUNCIL SC, *From the Circular Letter to SC*, Christmas 1922 (ITA).

Because «our dear Fr. Luigi has blessed us with a huge legacy of examples, of spirit and works, which we have the duty not to squander, but to cherish and propagate. (...) We must strive each day to model our lives more closely on his examples and to make his very spirit become our own»¹⁶¹.

¹⁶¹ L. MAZZUCCHI, *Charitas* 10/1925 (ITA).

Part III
Lectio Divina

St. Paul's "Hymn to charity" (1 Cor 13:1-7)

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INTRODUCTION TO LECTIO DIVINA

The 'lectio divina' is meant to be an encounter with God, who speaks to us. It is an encounter for ourselves and our lives, rather than a means for preparing a homily, although it can certainly help to enrich our preaching and make it more profound.

The following is a brief summary of the traditional steps of the 'lectio divina'.

There are certainly easier ways to do the 'lectio divina', but quiet reading of the Word of God is always recommended. It is a moment for deepening our understanding, for silence, and for listening to the Spirit and includes, above all, prayer of repentance, praise and thanksgiving.

1. LECTIO

a. Read the text carefully

Read the text carefully, respecting both what it does and does not say – this is the teaching that comes to us from the rabbinical tradition. Nothing may be added or subtracted from Sacred Scripture.

This means that the Lord speaks to us through and in those words, not outside those words. Therefore, the first concern we should have is to not stray from those words, to not claim to know better or to have no need of anything expressed in the Holy Scripture. Jesus said: «Not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished» (Mt 5,18).

The ancient fathers were fully aware that every expression of the Sacred Scripture holds a mystery, a message from God for men. St. Gregory the Great even developed a series of reflections on the conjunction 'et' found at the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy (*Ez* 1,1 etc.).

b. Study the Scripture faithfully and humbly

The second step is to study and scrutinise the Scripture. This was the true daily and ascetical task of many generations of monks. It is a spiritual commitment to humbly accept the need to learn the ABC in order to read and understand the meaning of a text: this is what it means to obey the Word of God. Accuracy in seeking the literal meaning of the Word of God is one of the necessary factors for a true 'lectio divina'. If we do not lay good foundations, our 'lectio' may become imaginary, compromising or spiritualistic. Instead of being the master of our life, the Word of God would be reduced to a servant of our momentary feelings.

This study of the meaning of God's Word has to be carried out in an atmosphere of attention, which is helped by a combination of fasting and vigils, which open the eyes of the mind by removing the burden of a disorderly life. This attention also requires purity of heart, as a guarantee to be able to encounter Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who has clearly affirmed that the pure of heart will see God. The ancient fathers also knew that a superficial reading was insufficient to grasp the meaning of the Scripture. In order to attain a deeper understanding of the text, monks would use particular techniques such as the grammatical, logical analysis of the passage, always seeking out the meaning hiding behind the form of a specific word or passage. Little by little, our 'lectio'

begins to bear fruit. It is not necessary to be an expert but only to have great humility and faith.

2. MEDITATIO

The text, respected in its literal sense, has an infinite variety of meanings. The Bible always remains an open text, and you may draw from it as much as you are capable of. Such “ability to draw” is also the basis for the ability to meditate.

According to the most ancient traditions, meditation is composed of three phases:

- a)* The first is the phase of gathering: while reflecting on a text, a word, through the above-mentioned techniques, other passages and figures from the Bible come to our mind. We have to gather the fruit there, where our mind comes to rest. This harvesting must be personal; we cannot rely upon the harvesting of others.
- b)* The second phase is the meditation itself. When the entire harvest has been taken in, it is time to lock oneself in a cell and then process it all. The Fathers had absolute faith in the Word. Jesus himself stated that the most important thing is to sow in a field prepared to receive the seed. Once the Word has been sown, the farmer may even go to sleep. The Word will take root, germinate and make the plant grow by itself.
- c)* The third phase is that of “confrontation”. It is a discernment, a reciprocal clarification of the words we have received, and of ourselves, who keep and observe them. While the words clarify each other, the light arising from them also cannot help but enter us, the

keeper of this Word. If there is something preventing the light from permeating everything, then the crisis begins.

This is the crisis that arises from the Word and shocks us. It may last just a moment, as a lightning bolt illuminating our personal entirety in an instant, but it may be also a more stable, constant light.

At this point «*meditatio*» can become “*oratio*”.

3. ORATIO

The brightness imparted by the “confrontation” “sheds light on the situation in which we find ourselves. The experience of “*oratio*” then begins.

a. Oratio compunctionis

“*Oratio*” assumes different forms according to the needs each one perceives within himself. Thus the Fathers described the “*oratio compunctionis*” as a piercing of the heart.

An example would be Isaiah in the temple. When he felt the impurity of his lips, he flung himself to the ground. This is the first manifestation of the “*lectio divina*”. The “*oratio compunctionis*” is of course personal, since everyone carries on his shoulders his life, betrayals and situation of.

b. Oratio petitionis

Jesus said: “Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock, and the door will be opened unto you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (*Lk* 11,9-10).

What is important is to ask for the newness of the Holy Spirit, and the answer will certainly come.

This is also the fruit of the confrontation with the Word of God. Though we must acknowledge our frequent indolence, and our lack of faith, let us try to save at least our confrontation with the Word of God. In this way, sooner or later, His Word will “force” us to change our life. Even if only this faithfulness to “lectio” remains, our entire life can be built upon it, for it is He himself who stands at the door and knocks. All fragments of our lives, even our infidelities, will become moments of salvation. Exile and sin are never the last word: that belongs to the Lord.

The last word is the victory over sin that He obtains for us when we do not succeed in achieving it by ourselves.

c. Oratio eucharistica

As we become aware of this, our prayer becomes a “eucharistic oratio” – that is, an “oratio”, a prayer of thanksgiving, because, filled with wonder, we realise that our life has been guided by someone who followed us with the provident, affectionate and attentive concern of a father. Whenever we have fallen, He has turned our weakness into an opportunity for growth. We have become stronger, wiser, and perhaps also better aware of the gift to offer the Lord.

d. Oratio laudativa

Finally there is an ecstasy, typical of childhood, that we experience again when the Word of God simply fills us with joy, so that we can say nothing more than “it is beautiful”!

It is a taste that we have all certainly savoured during our childhood, similarly it is the taste of the Word of God that we savour again when we find ourselves in particular moments of gratuitous spontaneity, creativity and awareness of beauty and goodness. It is a kind of experience that we do not usually discuss with others. It is the moment when prayer becomes a “*oratio laudativa*” (praising prayer): it is a song of praise that is thanksgiving, request, compunction and everything, or simply praise which remains with us always. Wherever we are, we are aware of being in the light of the Lord.

4. CONTEMPLATIO

The next step of the “*lectio*” is traditionally defined as the stage of contemplation. Each commentator tries to include what seems most important to him on this step, so we have different definitions, or ways, of viewing “contemplation”. Some people believe that the word is composed of two words: “*cum*”, and the noun, “*templum*”. Now we all know that ‘*cum*’ means ‘with’ and that “*templum*” can be translated as temple.

This leads us to say that contemplation is to reach the most perfect merging of heaven and earth, of the divine and the human, of vertical and horizontal dimensions. Whoever could achieve a synthesis of these two realities would be a true contemplative. Others, instead, believe that a person with the gift of contemplation is one who views the mystery of Christ crucified as the backbone of history, as the Word that all history has revealed and continues to reveal. In this case, the contemplative would be someone who looks at everything from this vision of the crucified Christ, a person who sees every fold of human and world history as a proclamation and

manifestation of Christ crucified. Even in this case, we see that the contemplative is not outside of history and does not refer to things external to history: on the contrary, he is the one who is in the very heart of things and events. At the root of contemplation, in all these forms, there is, ultimately, the transfiguration of man, determined by his conformity with the Word of God.

When the Word of God has chiselled us enough to make us perfectly similar to it, we witness the birth – as we well know – of the new man who lets himself be guided by the Spirit. The root of contemplation is the birth of the new man.

5. ACTIO

Fr. Guanella, in his concreteness fruit of contemplation, wrote that «Christ must be loved with an intimate, clear and strong feeling» and that «to study Jesus Christ, fully God and Man, means to conform ourselves to his example».

The “lectio” attains its full purpose when it leads us to act concretely in order to establish the Kingdom of the Father. Jesus in his Gospel clearly states that it is not enough to say, “Lord, Lord” to be admitted to His kingdom, but it is necessary to perform actions worthy of the benevolence of God. We can once again draw on the wealth of our spirituality, and listen to the words Fr. Guanella wrote to encourage his spiritual daughters to act: «Do what Jesus Christ himself has done. Jesus Christ, who is the fire of charity itself, came to bring the world the fire of charity from his divine heart. And now what does he desire, except that this same fire burns in the hearts of his creatures? You must be aflame and burning with zeal to do good to your poor neighbour. May you be fire and ablaze in your heart, eyes,

tongue and entire being, and then you will become like burning firebrands. Nothing can resist fire. Fire melts the hardest boulders and reduces to liquid the most resistant metals» (SpC 430, 1911 ITA).

THE “HYMN TO CHARITY”

1 Corinthians 13 is one of the best known and most inspiring pages of the entire New Testament. It is St. Paul’s Hymn to Charity, which he exalts as the highest of all charisms and divine gifts.

The context

Concerning the background to this passage, we can say that the young community of Corinth had experienced the gifts of the Holy Spirit: the gifts of prophecy, tongues, working miracles and administration. All these charisms are visible signs of the presence of the Spirit. However, there are two risks: on the one hand, the community only appreciates the more spectacular gifts and uses them in a disorderly atmosphere, imitating certain pagan ceremonies; on the other, the risk of not using these gifts for the good of the community, but for personal pride, thus creating rivalries and divisions.

With the hymn to charity, Paul emphasises that the gifts of the Spirit are for service to others. For this reason, charity surpasses them all.

Structure

The passage, as a whole, is composed of three parts:

- vv. 1-3: the superiority of charity;
- vv. 4-7: its works (in what it consists);
- vv. 8-13: its enduring nature.

Thus, the main focus is on charity, love.

A linguistic clarification should be made at this point.

Three words are used in Greek for love:

- *Eros*: this indicates passionate, selfish love. It is a love characterised by possessive passion, seeking one's own satisfaction, and sexual desire. It is the love with which we love other people because they attract us and we expect something in return, a gratifying response.

- *Philia*: this is human friendship, with all its generosity and affection.

- *Agápe*: this indicates gratuitous love, with no interests, free from any concern about being reciprocated or rewarded. It is a generous love that desires the good of others. Its source is in God, who loved us first: it is the love with which God loves humanity. *Agápe* is the term used by Paul in our passage. He is speaking about fraternal love, but wants to emphasise that this love has its source in God and has the characteristics of God's own love. *Agápe* describes the very nature of God (Trinitarian Love), it is the love with which God has loved us (cf. *Jn* 3,16), calling humanity to conversion, and it is also the new commandment, the proof of our love for God.

Let us return to our text to gain a clearer understanding of what *agápe* is and what it involves.

Lectio

In the first three verses, we see Paul speaking in the first person: «If I speak ... if I have... if I understand...» He does this intentionally: Paul wants to relate this to each one of us; the subject is not abstract, but personal.

Paul speaks of extraordinary gifts.

The gift of tongues was certainly the highest gift in the Corinthians' scale of values. It was the gift that seemed the most spiritual, i.e. the most divine manifestation of the Spirit.

It was a form of speech that no-one could understand, a new form of talking, without rational coherence, i.e. talking under the influence of the Spirit.

Then there was the gift of prophecy, another gift that was highly appreciated in Corinth. This included the prediction of future events, but consisted above all in the ability to utter inspired words, with comprehensible speech.

The gift of understanding mysteries, knowledge: this is the gift of understanding, of knowing.

The gift of faith: faith is required by Jesus («If you had faith, you could move a mountain»).

Paul adds noble gestures to these gifts: to «give away all I have» is a great act of mercy (cf. Jesus' reply to the rich young man); to «deliver my body to be burned» is the sacrifice of one's personal freedom in a heroic gesture.

Paul directly challenges the value of all these gifts that were so highly appreciated, saying that without love, they are all worthless:

- The gift of tongues without love is worth nothing, like a clanging cymbal (the gong of the pagan mystery rites) that only makes noise;

- If we have the gift of prophecy, knowledge or faith, but without love, we are nothing, i.e., without consistency;

- The highest act of generosity, without charity, is of no help to us and brings us no benefit, joy or happiness. It is merely self-glorification.

So what is charity?

We then find a description of charity as generous, patient, selfless, meek and humble.

An interesting detail is that charity is defined by a series of fifteen verbs, i.e. it is not described in an abstract way, but through the action it arouses. The fact that all the verbs are in

present tense also indicates that love is a habitual attitude, rather than something occasional or temporary. Paul is therefore saying that this is how we should love at all times, not only when we feel good or we are in the mood of being generous, but always, in every instance.

Here are some of the characteristics of charity.

Love is patient and kind (cf. v. 4).

Kindness is a gift of the Spirit (cf. *Gal* 5,22). Patience and kindness are qualities of God himself, who is “slow to anger” and endures with “great patience”, giving sinners time to repent (cf. *Rom* 2,4; 9,22). *Agápe* makes a Christian someone who is patient, generous, tolerant and open to all (cf. 1 *Thess* 5,14). *Agápe* does not repay a harm received with another harm, but by renouncing its right.

Love is kind (cf. v. 4).

This kindness, like patience, is a gift of the Spirit (cf. *Gal* 5,22). It is characteristic of God, who is kind towards all people (cf. *Rom* 2,4), pagans (cf. *Rom* 11,22), as well as believers (cf. *Eph* 2,7). *Agápe* impels Christians to be clothed with “feelings of compassion and generosity” (cf. *Col* 3,12) and to be “benevolent to one another” (cf. *Eph* 4,32). It displays external features of gentleness and affability. It is the attitude of those who help with a smile, and those who foresee other people’s needs, but with tact and discretion. Its opposite is severity and harshness. Kindness «is always accompanied by the oil of meekness». According to some, the Greek word used by the apostle could be translated as “submissive”. The disciple of Christ is someone we can make use of.

Charity is not envious (cf. v. 4).

Agápe is not expressed through jealousy, rivalry or envy. Jealousy is meanness, charity is kindness; jealousy is division, charity is communion. The Greek word translated with “not jealous” is “zeal”, understood as a vice, as a work of “the flesh” (*Gal* 5,20). It expresses the idea of fanaticism, namely, the conviction that one’s own cause is that of God and that God’s own cause absolutely needs the benefit of my contribution. Charity never becomes fanaticism and «the more passionate you feel... the less you should ... flare up and be driven by passion».

Charity does not boast (cf. v. 4);

It is modest and hides its own merits. Charity has a sense of proportion. It does not assume attitudes of superiority towards others, considering them weak and incapable. Those who live in love have a clear perception of their own limits and value.

Charity is not arrogant (cf. v. 4).

Arrogance is the attitude of those who seek to build themselves up and aim at filling life with their own presumed perfection, without realising that this is empty and sterile. They are full of themselves and make others feel the weight of “their own ego”, often ephemeral and overbearing. On the contrary, «those who love, present themselves as they are». They do not have the time or opportunity to do otherwise, nor are their eyes constantly fixed on themselves. Theirs is the attitude of those who move on fast and forget themselves along the way.

Charity is not rude (cf. v. 5).

Charity respects the dignity of others. Paul also uses this verb in 7,36 referring to the sphere of sexuality. In this regard, love respects decency. Love is acquainted with chastity, as well as with discipline and measure, but also with elegance and grace. It has a wonderful splendour. In modesty, order and the observance of good manners, even social conventions, there is a reflection of self-forgetfulness. This self-forgetfulness is expressed also through discretion, a fundamental trait of love. Our behaviour is often ill-timed. Being incapable of waiting and remaining silent, we bypass our brother. *Agápe* is attentive to the sensitivity of others.

Charity does not seek its own advantage (cf. v. 5).

Perhaps the real beauty of charity lies here. This attitude is based on the love of God, which is purely gratuitous and selfless, and is expressed by Christ, who «did not please himself» (cf. *Rom* 15,3), but took upon himself all our injustices. Thus the disciple, “should not think of his own interests, but those of others” (cf. 1 *Cor* 10,24, *Phil* 2,4), in order not to disdain the way of the Crucified Lord. A free, gratuitous and selfless love is a universal love that makes no distinction between people. The preferences of Christians, if any, are towards the humble (cf. *Rom* 12,16) and those from whom they cannot hope for anything in return.

Charity does fall into anger (see verse. 5).

Agápe is neither harsh nor angry, does not lose its self-control and does not become irritated. It always bears within itself the power of God, which is revealed in weakness. Paul repeatedly warns the faithful to eradicate anger from community relations (cf. *Eph* 4,26.31; *Colossians* 3,8; 1 *Tim* 2,8).

Charity is not resentful (cf. v. 5).

Love does not keep a record of the harm received. In his letter to the Romans, Paul says: «Resist evil and conquer it with good» (*Rom* 12,21; cf. 1 *Thess* 5,15). Charity bears the offence upon itself and thereby overcomes it. Love has no desire to perpetuate evil; on the contrary, it erases all memory of it. It is the attitude of God himself, who «causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as on the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike».(*Mt* 5:45). It is the love of Jesus, who prayed for his executioners from the cross (cf. *Lk* 23,34).

Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth (v. 6).

Agápe suffers when injustice is done and rejoices where truth is upheld. Love joyfully embraces the truth it recognises in others, seeking it, becoming intimate with it, and giving itself to it gladly. Charity is not present in sectarian spirit, but applauds whatever is good and true; it does not rejoice in injustice but delights in the truth: it lies as foundation for building up the Church and the world.

All of these attitudes practical ways of acting are nothing else than expressions of the commandment of love of one's neighbour.

-Another characteristic feature of charity is *its totality (radicality)*: it knows no compromise or half-measures. The last four verbs (cf. v. 7) describing *agápe* are accompanied by "all things". Love is an immensity that covers "all things" and embraces "all things" with courage.

Therefore, **it bears all things**. Charity does not magnify the fault of a brother, but accepts him kind-heartedly, forgiving with discretion and covering it with silence. Some authors

understand the phrase “charity bears all things” as meaning: “Love sustains the world.” In this “bears all things” there is the echo of an old Jewish saying by a certain Simeon the Just: «The world rests on three pillars: study of the Law, prayer and worship, and works of mercy».

Charity believes all things.

Agápe never loses confidence; it is always willing to give great credit to a brother, even without evidence that he deserves it. It simply trusts others.

Charity is always ready to hope.

Agápe hopes unceasingly. Even when faced with evil, it waits. Love is always turned towards the invisible and always hastens to face whatever may come. It is the manner and sign of the Christian’s pilgrimage. It hopes, in spite of the past and the present, in spite of everything visible, possible and conceivable: and this hope is placed in God.

Belief and hope thus occupy the central part of the verse: both are verbs that refer directly to God, to emphasise that love gives faith and hope their respective fullness. It is only by loving God with our entire selves that we can fully believe in Him and await the fulfilment of his promises with unshakable trust. Ultimately, this beautiful passage from Paul helps us to see love as the “agent” of God’s work in our lives, the prime and irreplaceable condition of life lived according to the gospel.

Love endures all things.

agápe accepts all weakness, hatred and failure. Enduring all things, it also overcomes them, but through suffering and death. This is also the experience of Paul the prisoner: «I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen» (cf. 2

Tim 2,10). It is endurance, however, that abhors complaint, which tends to make the brethren responsible for what has been done. When hopes are disappointed, charity does not complain about cold treatment, but bears it, knowing that «sufferings bring patience, patience brings perseverance and perseverance brings hope. And this hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us» (*Rom* 5,3-5).

To the Apostle, love is truly everything in life because it “bears all things”, i.e., it can stand up to all adversities and is able to bear the heavy burden of difficulties, without being crushed by fate nor capitulating when faced with challenges.

Meditatio

Paul thus describes this “figure” of charity, almost personifying it. He makes it the subject of the verbs, all of which are active and express relationship; in fact, they do not indicate what to do or to whom, but what stance to adopt towards others. In this way, the reader is given a clear picture of a Christian animated by *agápe*. A person of *agápe* is like someone lost in love. The love of Christ himself is made present in him: «*Caritas Christi urget nos*. The love of Christ overwhelms us when we consider that if one man died for all, then all have died. His purpose in dying for all humanity was that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life» (2 *Cor* 5,14-15). Kenosis and exaltation are at work in the Christian pervaded by charity, who does not remain entrenched in his own “ego” but is open to the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus (cf. *Rom* 5,5 ; 8,39). Through this abyssal step, the foolish and paradoxical wisdom of the Crucified Christ is made present in the heart of the believer.

Charity is always something new, because it comes from God. It is God living and acting within us. It is Jesus himself who loves through us. Charity is allowing the Lord to carry out his work: it knows no limit and is always surprising. «To love with God's own love»: this is the grace we must ask for. How many times have we said: «I am not capable of loving»? So this is the prayer we should say: «Lord, teach me to love». What kind of charity is seen in our lives? Is its origin divine (c.f. the qualities described by Paul) or human?

Charity is the central matter in life: it is the criterion by which we will be judged; it is the key for understanding our being and our presence in the world. We live because someone loves us and we also want to love him. Perhaps at times we are dissatisfied with life, because we do not feel loved, because we are incapable of loving, or because we do not realise that God loves us.

Charity reveals to us the true dignity of every person; it does not consist in extraordinary talents, but in a love that is lived. Charity is what makes us great.

All evil in the world and in us is due to a lack of love, and there can be no other medicine for this except charity. Charity is able to restore meaning to what we do. Charity is able to unify our life. Our most serious sicknesses, in ultimate analysis, are lacks of charity.

Closely linked to the Founder

«The Lord, who is charity by essence, draws hearts to himself. We must let ourselves be drawn by the charity of our Saviour Jesus. The Lord draws to himself souls with the virtues of poverty and purity but keeps them united in particular with the bond of Christian charity... The members of the House must have great charity in thinking and willing only what they know to be pleasing to God» (L. GUANELLA,

1888-89, *Maxims of Spirit...*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol 1, 47).

«The charity of Jesus Christ is the first and principal bond of the Servants of Charity» (L. GUANELLA, 1905 *Internal regulation SSH*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol 1, 250). «The bond of charity is the strength of the Institute, and the source of its progress and perfection» (L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Internal regulation SSH*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol 1, 151). «The members must support one another through the gentle bond of charity, so that the love of Jesus Christ may make them selfless and caring only for God's glory; and that it may render them kind and patient with their neighbour» (L. GUANELLA, 1898 *Statute of SSH*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol 1, 95).

PART IV

FRATERNAL CORRECTION

SOME THOUGHTS ON “FRATERNAL CORRECTION”

by A. Pronzato

Each one must answer for his brother; each one is his brother’s guardian. Fraternal correction is a typical expression of this responsibility. A few fundamental clarifications may be helpful in this regard.

1. Being a guardian does not mean acting like a spy or a policeman towards others.

2. «If your brother sins against you...» First and foremost, you must verify if a fault really happened and what kind of fault has been committed. Your brother does not sin against you by failing to agree with your ideas, share your likes or dislikes, or embrace your causes. A brother is not to be rebuked for the fault of not being in your image and likeness, or for going around with “his own” face, which does not match yours.

Be careful, therefore, not to confuse sin with the “other”, who is different from us. We must not define as “evil” what simply does not suit our tastes and ideas. Be careful, above all, not to continuously intervene over trifles or things that are totally marginal. Some religious people seem to possess the art of “stifling” rather than liberating, helping and encouraging.

3. The procedure described by Matthew (*Mt* 18,15-20) should not be confused with a trial. It is rather a case of a hand outstretched with persistence and extreme gentleness, to someone who risks drifting away and leaving. It is not strictly necessary to take only those three steps; many more

other ways could be followed, as suggested by a heart that never gives up, despite repeated failures.

4. Before making a brother understand that he has done something wrong, he needs to be shown and convinced that he is loved, in spite of everything. Charity, patience, compassion and sensitivity are the necessary light by which the brother who has gone astray can discover the error of his ways. Rather than reprimanding him, he should be encouraged to allow himself to be loved.

5. Fraternal correction implies humility as well as charity: a humility that requires abandoning any attitude of superiority. The sinner must understand that the person warning him is as much and more of a sinner than himself, and someone who shares his own weakness and poverty. We should not say: «Look what you have done!» but rather: «Look what we are capable of doing...»

6. The most effective method for helping someone to understand their error is not through words and theoretical explanations, or by citing rules, but by practical and personal example of the forgotten virtue, the neglected value or the trampled ideal. “Announcing” is always better than “denouncing”. This is also because denouncing can be suspect due to the fact that it doesn’t cost us anything. We often talk and shout excessively, because our own behaviour is not sufficiently eloquent. We are relentless preachers and unbearable moralists because the holiness of our lives is inadequate to provide a silent condemnation of certain defects and deviations. Effective teaching can also be given silently, assuming that our own life is speaking for itself.

7. The roles are never defined, but are interchangeable. Therefore you cannot claim to be duty bound to criticise others if you do not also grant them the right to criticise your own inappropriate behaviour.

8. Rather than punitive measures, excommunication and exclusion should be opportunities for reflection and incentives for conversion. They should have a pedagogical rather than a vindictive function. The exclusion is imposed not so much by the community but by the brother himself, as an obstinate sinner who automatically and stubbornly places himself in a state of separation, out of communion. It is he who excommunicates himself, and the community does nothing other than regretfully acknowledge this fact. It is a question, therefore, of «helping the brother to become aware of his state of separation, so that, as a consequence, he may repent. The aim is to arouse a sense of discomfort in the sinner, because it is precisely in a situation of discomfort that God often intervenes and urges people to return» (B. Maggioni). The “parable of the prodigal son” is enlightening in this respect. However, the community must never raise the drawbridge, but must always keep the door open and the light on. A community is truly Christian when it does not resign itself to the permanent loss of a member, but is always ready to welcome, forgive and reconcile, and goes to all possible lengths so that the longed-for return may occur. Moreover, there should always be an atmosphere of celebration, with no long faces, when the straying brother reappears on the horizon. We keep the music ready and the table prepared, rather than reproaches or accusations.

We are all safe only when no one is left outside.

... Even when the other has left the community and excluded himself, this does not mean that your task is completed. You then “owe” him even more love.

PART V

COMMUNITY PRAYER MEETING

Loving each other from the heart

A COMMUNITY PRAYER MEETING

LOVING EACH OTHER FROM THE HEART

Hymn for the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament:

G.: *«To the reverend confreres Servants of Charity, From this holy city I remind you that through Divine Providence the harvest increases continually in the field entrusted to us to cultivate. The workers are not enough for such task. Since we are few in number, let us seek to grow in intensity of virtue. In this regard, I urge you to consider the great grace the Lord has granted us by bringing us together as a community, so that we can help one another, especially in these times which are so appropriate for helping also many souls. (...)*
The poorer we are in talents and the more we lack in numbers, the more we should grow in virtue. For this purpose, I repeat, we must appreciate the grace of being united as brothers in order to aim at our own sanctification and that of others. Let us study how to understand deeply the grace and the virtue of the religious vows by which we are in a special way consecrated to the divine service. (...)
It is written: 'Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum!' (How good and how joyful it is for brothers to live in unity!). To enjoy such a great good, it is necessary that the Servants of Charity live in harmony like true brothers in Jesus Christ and like his worthy co-operators in the ministry of our salvation and the

salvation of souls. In the administration of temporal things let us put all necessary efforts in words and deeds to make our little Congregation grow. Let each one share his gifts of virtue, of study and experience with a joyful spirit, as among friends, who share every good of body and mind. 'Circulus et calamus fecerunt me doctum' (The company of others and personal study made me learned), says St. Augustine. The Servants of Charity will become healthier, wiser, and above all better in heart if they live as true brothers and communicate their own ideas with simplicity and affection. (...)

In the spiritual order, the confreres may help each other by praying for one another, giving mutual edification, tolerating one another patiently in the defects always present in any society of men, even when well organized».

(L. GUANELLA, 1910 CL, trans. Peter Di Tullio, S.C., vol 1, 342-344)

PSALM 133

Ant. The Lord's love unites us in joy.

- How good and pleasant it is,
 - * when brothers dwell in unity!
- It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron,
 - * running down on the collar of his robes.
- It is like the dew of Hermon,
 - * which falls on the mountains of Zion.
- For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,
 - * life forevermore.
- Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...

Ant. The Lord's love unites us in joy.

C. Let us pray

Father, send down upon us the dew of your Spirit, so that we may walk in a manner worthy of our religious vocation and, inspired by the example of St. Luigi Guanella, may offer the world a witness to the truth of the Gospel and work for all believers by promoting the bond of charity. Through Christ our Lord.

A. Amen.

INTERCESSIONS

In this moment of prayer, let us ask for growth in mutual charity and fraternal communion; let us pray for the grace to love one another with gentle feelings and attitudes.

L. «Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart. You have been born anew, not of a perishable seed but of an imperishable one, through the living and abiding word of God» (1 Peter 1, 22-23).

A. O Jesus, Eucharist of love, you show me your body like a book printed in words of blood, with messages of truth and of love. I can contemplate it entirely wounded by deep wounds of love: «They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.»

Yes, Jesus, I want to contemplate you, so that the love that radiates from you may overflow in my heart and make it capable of loving as you have loved. With confidence in your infinite tenderness, grant that I may remain faithfully at the

foot of your tabernacle with my mind, heart and hands empty, waiting trustfully for your Spirit, the source of all holiness.

G. *Let us invoke the Holy Spirit, so that in openness to his action, we may fulfil the evangelical project of unity among us and find in his grace the strength of mutual acceptance, fraternal support and apostolic zeal in charity.*

Hymn: To the Holy Spirit

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD AND OF THE FOUNDER

G. *We have become one people in Christ, and one single body. We must love our diversity: but only in humility a true encounter takes place.*

L. From the letter of St. Paul to the Romans 12, 9-21

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer, contribute to the needs of the saints, and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who

persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This is the word of the Lord

SEQUENCE

(PRAISE, O SION, PRAISE THY SAVIOR)

(in alternating choirs)

- *Praise, O Sion, praise thy Saviour,
Shepherd, Prince, with glad behaviour,
Praise in hymn and canticle:
Sing His glory without measure,
For the merit of your Treasure
Never shall your praises fill.*
- *Wondrous theme of mortal singing,
Living Bread and Bread life-bringing.
Sing we on this joyful day:
At the Lord’s own table given
To the twelve as Bread from Heaven,
Doubting not we firmly say.*

- *Sing His praise with voice sonorous;
Every heart shall hear the chorus
Swell in melody sublime:
For this day the Shepherd gave us
Flesh and blood to feed and save us,
Lasting to the end of time.*
 - At the new King's sacred table,
The new Law's new Pasch is able
To succeed the ancient Rite:
Old to new its place hath given,
Truth has far the shadows driven,
Darkness flees before the Light.
- *And as He hath done and planned it
"Do this" hear His love command it,
"For a memory of me."
Learned, Lord in Thy own science,
Bread and wine, in sweet compliance,
As a Host we offer Thee.*
- Thus in faith the Christian heareth:
That Christ's Flesh as bread appeareth,
And as wine His Precious Blood:
Though we feel it not nor see it,
Living Faith that doth decree it
All defects of sense makes good.
 - *Lo! beneath the species dual
(Signs not things), is hid a jewel
Far beyond creation's reach!
Though His Flesh as food abideth,
And His Blood as drink—He hideth
Undivided under each.*
 - Whoso eateth It can never
Break the Body, rend or sever;
Christ entire our hearts doth fill:
Thousands eat the Bread of Heaven,
Yet as much to one is given:
Christ, though eaten, bideth still.

- *God and bad, they come to greet Him:
Unto life the former eat Him,
And the latter unto death;
These find death and those find heaven;
See, from the same life-seed given,
How the harvest differeth!*
 - When at last the Bread is broken,
Doubt not what the Lord hath spoken:
In each part the same love token,
The same Christ, our hearts adore:
For no power the Thing divideth—
'Tis the symbols He provideth,
While the Saviour still abideth
Undimished as before.
 - *Hail, angelic Bread of Heaven,
Now the pilgrim's hoping-leaven,
Yea, the Bread to children given
That to dogs must not be thrown:
In the figures contemplated,
'Twas with Issac immolated,
By the Lamb 'twas antedated,
In the Manna it was known.*
 - Good Shepherd, still confessing
Love, in spite of our transgressing,
Here Thy blessed Food possessing,
Make us share Thine every blessing
In the land of life and love:
Thou, whose power hath all completed
And Thy Flesh as Food hath meted,
Make us, at Thy table seated,
By Thy Saints, as friends be greeted,
In Thy paradise above.

A. Lo! The angel's food is given to the pilgrim who has striven; see the children's bread from heaven, which on dogs may not be spent. Truth the ancient types fulfilling, Isaac

bound, a victim willing, Paschal lamb, its lifeblood spilling,
manna to the fathers sent. Very bread, good shepherd, tend
us, Jesu, of your love befriend us, you refresh us, you defend
us, your eternal goodness send us In the land of life to see.
You who all things can and know, who on earth such food
bestow, grant us with your saints, though lowest, where the
heav'nly feast you show, Fellow heirs and guests to be.

Silent pause.

*G. To obey the new evangelical law of love is to discover that
the event of Christ, true God and true man, crucified and
risen to new life for us, is a presence forever placed between
myself and the other as the key to a new understanding of
every human relationship. Between me and the other there is
always the Other, the God-man, the Saviour cursed for our
sakes and by whose wounds we have been healed.*

CANTICLE: 1 Pt 2,21-24 *(multiple soloists)*

- * Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that
you should follow in his steps:
- * He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips;
- * When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when
he suffered, he did not threaten;
- * but he trusted to him who judges justly.

A. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree of the
cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By
his wounds we have been healed.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy
Spirit...

G. Our holy Founder invited us to live by the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth and to see the Trinity as the supreme model and source of true fraternal communion. What are the characteristic virtues of a community modelled on the Holy Family? How can we love each other, so that it may be said that we love one another just as they did? Our Founder offers us his teaching, rich in evangelical insight. Let us listen.

L. From Fr. Luigi Guanella's writings: «Maxims of spirit and method of action»

«The members of the Little House live together, resembling the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They heartily love one another and treat each other with much kindness. The one who commands, should command with kindness and love. Those who obey, rather than to obey with the fear of a servant, should obey with the joy of affectionate children. All must reflect upon that model of gentleness, our Divine Saviour, who said: 'Learn from me who am meek and humble of heart'. To be meek we need to possess abundantly holy Christian patience. To be humble of heart we must have a great love for sanctity. Every member of the family must improve himself as much as possible and act in everything with a simple natural and happy bearing, so that everyone may be edified, rejoice and do likewise».

(L. Guanella, 1888-89 *Maxims of spirit*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol 1, 52-53)

Space for personal meditation

Song: **All I ask of you** (*or another*)

THE WORD BECOMES PRAYER AND MISSION

(Soloist and assembly)

Refrain: Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus

S. *Glory to you, Lord, who said:
“I was hungry and you gave me to eat”.*

A. We pray to you for priests: may they always be able to abundantly break the bread of your Word and generously offer the life-giving food of your Body. Grant that our young people may feel drawn towards this ministry that unites them with your redemptive mission.

S. *Glory to you, Lord, who said:
“I was thirsty and you gave me to drink”.*

A. We pray for those you have called to quench the thirst of the world with their life of prayer and offering in the cloister. Grant that the Church and the world feel the importance of this service of divine charity.

S. *Glory to you, Lord, who said:
“I was a stranger and you made me welcome”.*

A. We pray for deacons: may they be faithful servants of charity and hospitality in the Church, so that no-one in your family feels excluded, marginalised, poor or alone.

S. *Glory to you, Lord, who said:
“I was naked and you clothed me”.*

A. We pray for religious men and women: may they be the sign of your love that clothes the naked, and covers all poverty with the cloak of charity; may they be courageous and faithful in their service, and untiring in generosity. May their testimony and sacrifice become a leaven of increasingly abundant vocations among our young people.

S. *Glory to you, Lord, who said:
"I was sick and you visited me".*

A. We ask you to open the eyes and hearts of many Christians: may they not content themselves by merely placing their hands in their wallets, but offer their lives and their time more generously, so that no-one who suffers may feel alone or abandoned, and that at the foot of your cross there may always be a disciple, a mother and holy women who participate in the pain of the world.

S. *Glory to you, Lord, who said:
"I was in prison and you came to see me".*

A. We pray that the cries of our brothers locked behind the bars of justice and injustice, of poverty and hunger, of ignorance and hatred, and of guilt and sin do not remain unheard. Source of charity, send to your Church, men and women who can visit these brethren, bringing them the sign of your presence, which heals every wound and frees from all bondage.

S. *Glory to you, Lord, who said:
"Whatever you did for the least of these brethren of mine, you did for me".*

A. We pray for those who have discovered your presence in the smallest and poorest of our brethren: may they not be content to merely give a day or a year of their lives, but open themselves with generosity to the total gift of themselves in the service of charity.

OUR FATHER (SUNG)

THE TEACHINGS OF FR. GUANELLA

1 «The Lord continues to show you the treasures of his mercy. Thus far he has shown you Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gethsemane and the Calvary of Jesus, his only begotten Son. He showed you the cross sprinkled with blood, and he showed you the open wounds of Jesus. Finally, not knowing what more to do, he showed you Jesus' own heart of flesh. The heart is the seat of love. The heart is the centre of life... Jesus opens his side for you so that by entering his heart you may live by his life and learn to save yourself and others» (SSA1 1154, *Nel mese del fervore...* 1884 ITA).

2 «You observe in that most Sacred Heart. Oh Jesus, how I love you! In an excess of love he created you, in an excess of love he redeemed you, in an excess of love he continues to stay near you in the Blessed Sacrament. Thus, from the Lord, who loves you with such immense love, you can certainly expect every possible help, because in the end you will obtain it» (992 SSA1, *In the month of flowers* (SSA1 992, *Nel mese dei fiori...* 1884 ITA).

3 «May the most heartfelt thanks be given to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the signs of his help and blessings, which he has bestowed and continues to bestow on our dear

institute. Our Works have flowed from the most sovereign Heart of God, which has made them fruitful and sustains them, and there is no better way for us to make them prosper and light the fire of charity in us than to unite ourselves with the Heart of Jesus Christ, and to acquire virtue and draw favours from it» (SpC 1397, *Lettera Circolare*, XIV, 1912 ITA).

4 «The Lord is such a generous father that he gives his heart to those creatures, who although poor, willingly give their hearts to him. In this lies the strength of the beginning and the progress of the Works in the House of Divine Providence» (L. GUANELLA, 1899 *Internal regulation*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol 1, 147). «The patron, guardian, master and Lord of the House is, from its very beginning in 187, the Divine Heart of Jesus Christ.» (*Ibid.* 206).

Short pause for silence.

G. *If we are able to love like this, through us will be fulfilled the promise of the Gospel and the desire of our Founder, which we now welcome with our hearts open to hope and a greater capacity for love:*

«There will be the good Servants of Charity who with faith have helped the poor daily for many years. There will be those good Servants of Charity who during their life never said, “That’s it! It is enough!”, in their works of charity and self-sacrifice. Those good Servants of Charity will ascend with Jesus Christ on high, and will possess the Kingdom which the Lord in his infinite goodness has prepared for them since the beginning of creation. What reward! What a triumph!» (L. GUANELLA, 1910 *Regulation of SC*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol.2, 10).

Eucharistic Benediction

HEARTFELT WISHES FROM ST. LUIGI GUANELLA

«Be consumed with great affection for the heart of Jesus and promise him that, until the end, you too will be a host, that is, a victim that offers itself willingly to suffer for God» (SSA1 1234, Nel mese del fervore... 1884 ITA).

«This blessed life begins here on this earth. He who approaches the table of the Lord receives the gift of the fruit of charity. With charity, God lives in the heart of man and the Christian lives in the heart of Jesus. What a great consolation it is to be able to say: My feelings are similar to those of Jesus and my spirit resembles the spirit of Jesus, my Saviour! This joy gives your heart the greatest peace» (Ibid. 1219 ITA)

«When a son imitates the virtues of his father, the two of them become one in thinking and willing. When they converse, they do so in a very cordial intimacy, because they know that they are united in love». (L. GUANELLA, *Let us go to the Father*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 3, 16).

Final Hymn:

Hymn to St. Luigi Guanella

PART VI

THE SECOND YEAR OF PREPARATION
FOR THE CENTENARY
OF OUR FOUNDER'S
BIRTH INTO HEAVEN

**I. 2nd Seminar “Teachers for knowing the Founder”:
*Rome, 26-28 September 2014.***

- The lives and testimonies of Fr. *Leonardo Mazzucchi* (50 years since his death) and Sr. *Marcellina Bosatta* (80 years since her death) will be presented.

II. Two courses of Spiritual Exercises for the whole Guanellian Family:

a. Casa Santa Rosa, Rome 21-26 April 2014

(Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II will be canonised on 27 April).

b. Casa Don Guanella, Barza d’Ispra (VA) 3-8 August 2014.

- The two courses will be preached and organised by the SC and DSMP General Councils.
- The participation fee is € 35 per day. Registration will be made directly at the two Generalate houses.
- It is hoped that each Province will organise a course of Spiritual Exercises open to the participation of the entire Guanellian Family.

**III. Month of International Formation on the Charism:
*Rome 18 August to 21 September 2014***

- The experience will include a pilgrimage to St. Guanella’s places.
- Registration will be done by contacting the Vicar-General no later than May 2014.

IV. Other proposals:

Each community is strongly encouraged to include in its schedule the following suggested activities:

- ***Lectio Divina*** celebrated in preparation for Christmas;

- An evangelical experience of “*fraternal correction*” in preparation for Easter;
- A **Prayer Meeting** on the theme of “*Loving each other from the heart*” in preparation for our Holy Founder’s feast in October.

GIVE US A HEART ABLE TO LOVE

Come, O Holy Spirit,
and give us a new heart,
that may revive in us all
the gifts we have received from you
with the joy of being Christians,
a new heart
always young and joyful.

Come, O Holy Spirit,
and give us a pure heart,
trained to love God,
a pure heart,
with no knowledge of evil
other than to define it,
to fight it and to flee it;
a pure heart,
like that of a child,
capable of enthusiasm
and trepidation.

Come, O Holy Spirit,
and give us a generous heart,
open to your silent
and powerful inspiring word,
and closed to all miserable ambition,
a generous, strong heart to love everyone,
to serve everyone and to suffer with everyone,
a generous, strong heart,
whose only joy is to beat with God's own heart.

(Paul VI)

Contents

Presentation 3

PART I FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE FOUNDER

The “bond of Charity” in the thought of St. Luigi Guanella 7

PART II REFLECTIONS

*Living the Guanellian charism in a globalised world
through the bond of charity* 23

PART III LECTIO DIVINA

St. Paul’s “Hymn to charity” (1 Cor 13, 1-7)..... 53

PART IV FRATERNAL CORRECTION

Some thoughts on “Fraternal Correction” 75

PART V COMMUNITY PRAYER MEETING

Loving each other from the heart 81

PART VI THE SECOND YEAR OF PREPARATION FOR THE CENTENARY OF OUR FOUNDER’S BIRTH INTO HEAVEN INITIATIVES AND PROPOSALS

Initiatives and Proposals: for the Congregation of the Servants of Charity 97