

CHARITAS n. 223

RESERVED TO THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

YEAR LXXXVI - DECEMBER 2008

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LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

TOGETHER WE CAN ANSWER TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

Dear Confreres.

Soon, we are going to close the celebrations remembering the centennial of the public religious profession of the Founder and his first confreres. I believe that all of us have gained some new spiritual and apostolic boost out of it.

Though one hundred years apart, we too should be considered fruits of the Founder's heart that passed on to us his zeal for charity that he had received from the Spirit. We have to share the same gift of love with as many people as possible. We are charged to carry out that responsibility 1) by spreading the Guanellian charism and mission within Church and society and 2) by forming a strong Movement of people united around the common vocation to do some good in favor of those in need of "Bread and Paradise."

In Italy, many audiences were fascinated by the musical "Bread and Paradise" performed by artists enthusiastic and caught up by the incredible charitable intuition of Father Guanella. What they performed on the stage so well, should correspond to what we are, what we feel and do in our daily apostolic ministry. The best fruit coming from this centennial should be a renewed and more creative fidelity to Father Guanella, to his spirituality, mission and broad-mindedness.

The best fruit of the Jubilee celebration should be indeed our fidelity to Jesus Christ, made anew and more creative by our enthusiastic commitment in sharing the spirituality and mission of our Blessed Founder.

In the last few years we have expressed over and over our thanks to the Lord “for the joyful recognition that the number of lay people, called by the Spirit to embrace the Guanellian charism, is increasing together with other groups that take inspiration from the Founder.”

That joy, however, compels us to show a greater responsibility in their regard. Within the enlarging Guanellian family, we Servants and Daughters should be more and more the foundations, the heart for the vitality and propagation of the charism of Father Guanella. Our two Congregations have found one more occasion to express the riches of the Founder’s charism by opening it to the laity through the Association of the Guanellian Cooperators. Father Guanella loved to say that the three branches of the Guanellian family are like three thin strings. By themselves, they are not strong enough, but when braided together they are (“funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur”). The strength and the riches of our charism is our unity; the spirituality of communion, that we should be able to live and pass on, is the cement that builds a beautiful house. We religious are expected to be the first ones to cultivate that spirituality. The Church many times appeals to religious to be open to collaboration with the laity because each vocation, by being faithful to its identity, helps other vocations.

Pope John Paul II in 1897 wrote that, “lay persons cannot withdraw into themselves, into a spiritual isolation from the community, but they should hold a constant exchange with others. They should possess a strong sense of fraternity with each other, joyfully aware that they share the same human dignity and commitment to carry out the same immense inherited treasure.”

We are still in need of a mentality change on how to understand and be a Guanellian family. We should know already that, together with our Sisters, we are carrying the main responsibility in animating the Guanellian charism. What is this new mentality that we should perfect?

– First, we have to believe that the laity with which we are in contact or working with (collaborators or people drawn by the example and charitable works of Father Guanella) are they themselves the recipients of our mission. Because the Lord sends us to them, they are expecting from us an example of serious consecrated life and visible passion towards the poor. They expect to be inspired in their working and personal life.

– Secondly, in today’s world, we cannot cling any more to the illusion that we religious are still self-sufficient in carrying out our

*charitable works. On the contrary, we have to seek and rely on the collaboration and professional abilities of lay people in our apostolate. We have to enter into collaboration with other organisms and organizations (Church, civil society, local groups, etc.) because they are carrying out our same purpose: to build a better society sensitive to the poor. The Italian Bishops in a letter to the laity on Easter 2005 wrote that, “only through cooperation and a life of truth in love, our evangelization and Christian witness would be effective and credible. Only by uniting the complementary tasks of clergy, religious and laity, the Church will be able to make Jesus the heart of the world (CEI, *Fare di Cristo il cuore del mondo*, Pasqua 2005)”. Already in 1973, Pope Paul VI warned, “We should commit ourselves, Bishops, priests, and laity, to that unity so that, being a comforting fruit and sign of identification to the world, it may take roots, be strengthened and grow more and more”.*

– Finally, for years, the Congregation (general and provincial chapters) has been asking for and expecting a new presence of ours in the Houses and apostolate: individual religious as well as the community should be their “animating core.” The former superior general Fr. Nino Minetti was urging us to take that direction. We should recall his excellent intervention on the “community as animating core” later on published on Charitas 215 and 218. The difficulty revolves usually around “how” we apply those indications that demand wise discernment and a lot of courage.

At times, the concept itself of “animating” is not properly understood. It seems that religious are “animators” only when dealing with spiritual activities in the House.

On the contrary, “animating” concerns the charismatic, spiritual and educational patrimony that we need to make more visible in our Houses, especially in this present time when the reduced number of religious personnel could make us insignificant in regard to those aspects of our mission that are more essential.

If we want to be animators in our Houses, we have, first of all, to make our presence more visible and explicit among our residents. It is the responsibility of each community to make its presence felt and carried out by even non-traditional ways.

We have to invent these new ways, dear confreres. We have to pay more attention to the individual person and spend more time in listening to those who are living under our same roof, especially when they are asking for an answer to their innermost needs. We have to give them our

availability and our time, assured that in doing so we are procuring for them a better and happier life. We have to build more serene relationships with them.

Our presence as religious should give a clear message to residents, staff, families and volunteers that we are not representing the owners or managers of a business (not because the Servants are no more the owners of Houses; they still continue to own and run them), but because we prefer another approach: to be fathers and friends responsible for their good, and advocates of a House that looks more and more like a welcoming family.

However, that approach is still insufficient to describe at present the community as “animating core.” Though the number of collaborators in carrying out our mission has increased, not all of them are on the same tune as ours. It is imperative, therefore, on our part, to guarantee that our charism be carried out properly and faithfully. Years ago our Houses clearly showed their identity, for a large number of religious were directly involved in running the ministry. Today the religious community is so small in number that has become a minority among the lay staff with whom religious, more than often, feel uneasy to enter into dialogue and sharing the responsibility of their mission.

This should open new perspectives to our mission, and, at the same time, require much more care in making our specific presence and substantial contribution more effective. It is also true that some confreres, because of age, formation or for some other personal reasons, feel themselves estranged to the life and mission of the House and even of the Congregation itself. Unfortunately, the intolerance and prejudice of a single confrere may affect the life of his local community.

It becomes inevitable that all communities should study and define the kind of presence they want to carry out in the Houses called to “animate”, in order to safeguard a more visible and effective charism in them.

The contributions that a community may give to its mission have different aspects.

First of all, religious should live their religious vocation faithfully. They should openly show that they are truly brothers among each other, rich in sincerity, understanding and mutual forgiveness, through a well cultivated prayer/spiritual life, and even by willing to offer to the Lord their suffering for the good of all.

These are excellent ways we may use to “animate” our apostolate.

The more we take care of our spiritual life, the more we become true collaborators of God in our mission. If some confreres are directly involved to “sow and water the field” of the community’s apostolate, we should be convinced that God is the one that makes things grow and brings to maturity our projects and work. There are some confreres who are, by their role, directly involved in ministering to our residents. However, we should keep in mind that they need also the presence of their other confreres who, in a humble and hidden way, are precious in keeping things running smoothly.

We have to make some plans that should complete the “animation” of the religious community towards the educational team. The duty to form collaborators according to the Guanellian style comes first. We are asked to make more alive and dynamic the Guanellian Educational Project (GEP); to make better known, better assimilated, better put into practice its Guanellian pedagogical contents. After fourteen years of its publication, this fundamental text of our Educational Method should be, perhaps, presented again to and reviewed by our staff. From it we may derive (1) a larger possible participation of our staff in planning, making decisions, and verifying its goals, (2) a better relation among the staff itself, and (3) a better support to their motivations in carrying out, with us, their role according to the Guanellian style.

It is a challenge. However, we believe that the Spirit works in us as He worked at the time of the beginning of the Congregation. He is helping us to discover how modern and beautiful our charism is by instilling in us joy and courage to spread it around. Many people are waiting to see in us the same zeal that was burning the heart of Father Guanella. They ask from us to be patiently accompanied by our spiritual and priestly fatherhood.

While inviting the laity to feel at home and protagonists within the Guanellian Lay Movement, we religious are, however, still spending too much time and energies in understanding and defining it in its theoretical and organizational elements, and have forgotten the most important duty of ours: to stay close to them, and to help them by proposing more stimulating formative activities for their human and Guanellian growth.

While we should continue to organize the Guanellian lay world better, I invite you, confreres, to take a good care of the Guanellian group born around your community. You should be more courageous in presenting to interested persons a curriculum that could help them to better grow and live the Guanellian spirituality and mission.

I have in mind the Guanellian Cooperators that sometimes feel abandoned by us. We do not give them enough time and will in forming them as well as promoting their Association. We are not presenting strongly enough the Guanellian vocation that should become the natural channel on which many lay people should navigate after their adhesion to the Guanellian Youth Movement or other groups belonging to the Guanellian Family.

Allow me to recall the commitment that the 18th general chapter has left us for these six years regarding the Cooperators. Motion 39 asks our Superiors to “clarify the position of the Guanellian Cooperators, as third branch of the Guanellian Family, within the Lay Guanellian Movement”. Proposal 40 is addressed to us, Servants of Charity, inviting all of us to “explicitly propose to the laity the Guanellian Cooperator’s vocation with the commitment from our part to accompany them in their discernment and formation activities”.

Together with the laity, we should commit ourselves to study more and more our charism and the challenges that our Guanellian mission is facing in our cultural context today. We should offer to the laity some guidelines so that each group may carry them out according to their own capabilities.

From a renewed love for our vocation as people consecrated to God and to the poor, and from a renewed brightness of our apostolic spirituality and communion, may we bear and taste good fruits.

My best wishes to all.

Rome, 2 February 2009 - World Day for Consecrated Life.

Father ALFONSO CRIPPA, SdC
Superior General



MESSAGES OF THE POPE

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI FOR THE 43rd WORLD DAY OF COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

In anticipation of the forthcoming World Communications Day, I would like to address to you some reflections on the theme chosen for this year - *New Technologies, New Relationships: Promoting a culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship*. The new digital technologies are, indeed, bringing about fundamental shifts in patterns of communication and human relationships. These changes are particularly evident among those young people who have grown up with the new technologies and are at home in a digital world that often seems quite foreign to those of us who, as adults, have had to learn to understand and appreciate the opportunities it has to offer for communications. In this year's message, I am conscious of those who constitute the so-called *digital generation* and I would like to share with them, in particular, some ideas concerning the extraordinary potential of the new technologies, if they are used to promote human understanding and solidarity. These technologies are truly a gift to humanity and we must endeavor to ensure that the benefits they offer are put at the service of all human individuals and communities, especially those who are most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

The accessibility of mobile telephones and computers, combined with the global reach and penetration of the internet, has opened up a range of means of communication that permit the almost instantaneous communication of words and images across enormous distances and to some of the most isolated corners of the world; something that would have been unthinkable for previous generations. Young people, in particular, have grasped the enormous capacity of

the new media to foster connectedness, communication and understanding between individuals and communities, and they are turning to them as means of communicating with existing friends, of meeting new friends, of forming communities and networks, of seeking information and news, and of sharing their ideas and opinions. Many benefits flow from this new culture of communication: families are able to maintain contact across great distances; students and researchers have more immediate and easier access to documents, sources and scientific discoveries, hence they can work collaboratively from different locations; moreover, the interactive nature of many of the new media facilitates more dynamic forms of learning and communication, thereby contributing to social progress.

While the speed with which the new technologies have evolved in terms of their efficiency and reliability is rightly a source of wonder, their popularity with users should not surprise us, as they respond to a fundamental desire of people to communicate and to relate to each other. This desire for communication and friendship is rooted in our very nature as human beings and cannot be adequately understood as a response to technical innovations. In the light of the biblical message, it should be seen primarily as a reflection of our participation in the communicative and unifying Love of God, who desires to make of all humanity one family. When we find ourselves drawn towards other people, when we want to know more about them and make ourselves known to them, we are responding to God's call – a call that is imprinted in our nature as beings created in the image and likeness of God, the God of communication and communion.

The desire for connectedness and the instinct for communication that are so obvious in contemporary culture are best understood as modern manifestations of the basic and enduring propensity of humans to reach beyond themselves and to seek communion with others. In reality, when we open ourselves to others, we are fulfilling our deepest need and becoming more fully human. Loving is, in fact, what we are designed for by our Creator. Naturally, I am not talking about fleeting, shallow relationships, I am talking about the real love that is at the very heart of Jesus' moral teaching: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" and "You must love your neighbor as yourself" (cf. *Mk* 12:30-31). In this light, reflecting on the significance of the new technologies, it is important to focus not just on their undoubted capacity to foster contact between people, but on the quality of the content that is put into circulation using these means. I would encourage all people of good will who are active in the emerging environment of digital communication to commit themselves to promoting a culture of *respect*, *dialogue* and *friendship*.

Those who are active in the production and dissemination of new media content, therefore, should strive to *respect* the dignity and worth of the human person. If the new technologies are to serve the good of individuals and of

society, all users will avoid the sharing of words and images that are degrading of human beings that promote hatred and intolerance, that debase the goodness and intimacy of human sexuality or that exploit the weak and vulnerable.

The new technologies have also opened the way for *dialogue* between people from different countries, cultures and religions. The new digital arena, the so-called *cyberspace*, allows them to encounter and to know each other's traditions and values. Such encounters, if they are to be fruitful, require honest and appropriate forms of expression together with attentive and respectful listening. The dialogue must be rooted in a genuine and mutual searching for truth if it is to realize its potential to promote growth in understanding and tolerance. Life is not just a succession of events or experiences: it is a search for the true, the good and the beautiful. It is to this end that we make our choices; it is for this that we exercise our freedom; it is in this – in truth, in goodness, and in beauty – that we find happiness and joy. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by those who see us merely as consumers in a market of undifferentiated possibilities, where choice itself becomes the good, novelty usurps beauty, and subjective experience displaces truth.

The concept of *friendship* has enjoyed a renewed prominence in the vocabulary of the new digital social networks that have emerged in the last few years. The concept is one of the noblest achievements of human culture. It is in and through our friendships that we grow and develop as humans. For this reason, true friendship has always been seen as one of the greatest goods any human person can experience. We should be careful, therefore, never to trivialize the concept or the experience of friendship. It would be sad if our desire to sustain and develop *on-line* friendships were to be at the cost of our availability to engage with our families, our neighbors and those we meet in the daily reality of our places of work, education and recreation. If the desire for virtual connectedness becomes obsessive, it may in fact function to isolate individuals from real social interaction while also disrupting the patterns of rest, silence and reflection that are necessary for healthy human development.

Friendship is a great human good, but it would be emptied of its ultimate value if it were to be understood as an end in itself. Friends should support and encourage each other in developing their gifts and talents and in putting them at the service of the human community. In this context, it is gratifying to note the emergence of new digital networks that seek to promote human solidarity, peace and justice, human rights and respect for human life and the good of creation. These networks can facilitate forms of co-operation between people from different geographical and cultural contexts that enable them to deepen their common humanity and their sense of shared responsibility for the good of all. We must, therefore, strive to ensure that the digital world, where such networks can be established, is a world that is truly open to all. It would be a tragedy for the future of humanity if the new instruments of communication, which permit

the sharing of knowledge and information in a more rapid and effective manner, were not made accessible to those who are already economically and socially marginalized, or if it should contribute only to increasing the gap separating the poor from the new networks that are developing at the service of human socialization and information.

I would like to conclude this message by addressing myself, in particular, to young Catholic believers: to encourage them to bring the witness of their faith to the digital world. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I ask you to introduce into the culture of this new environment of communications and information technology the values on which you have built your lives. In the early life of the Church, the great Apostles and their disciples brought the Good News of Jesus to the Greek and Roman world. Just as, at that time, a fruitful evangelization required that careful attention be given to understanding the culture and customs of those pagan peoples so that the truth of the gospel would touch their hearts and minds, so also today, the proclamation of Christ in the world of new technologies requires a profound knowledge of this world if the technologies are to serve our mission adequately. It falls, in particular, to young people, who have an almost spontaneous affinity for the new means of communication, to take on the responsibility for the evangelization of this “digital continent”. Be sure to announce the Gospel to your contemporaries with enthusiasm. You know their fears and their hopes, their aspirations and their disappointments: the greatest gift you can give to them is to share with them the “Good News” of a God who became man, who suffered, died and rose again to save all people. Human hearts are yearning for a world where love endures, where gifts are shared, where unity is built, where freedom finds meaning in truth, and where identity is found in respectful communion. Our faith can respond to these expectations: may you become its heralds! The Pope accompanies you with his prayers and his blessing.

From the Vatican, 24 January 2009, Feast of Saint Francis de Sales.

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

COMMUNICATIONS

A) CONFRERES

a) MEMBERS AT THE END OF DECEMBER 2008

	Bishops	Priests	Seminarians	Brothers	Total
Perpetual Vows	1	321	6	34	362
Temporary Vows	—	—	128	8	136
Novices	—	—	—	—	21
Associates	—	1	—	1	2
Total	1	322	134	43	521

b) GEOGRAPHY OF THE CONGREGATION

Nation	Community	Perpetual professed				Temporary		Novices	Asso- ciates	Total
		Bishops	Priests	Seminar.	Brothers	Seminar.	Brothers			
Argentina	6	—	18	1	4	1	—	5	—	29
Brasile	11	1	33	—	5	1	1	—	—	41
Cile	3	—	9	—	5	—	1	—	—	15
Colombia	1	—	2	1	—	1	—	—	—	4
Filippine	2	—	8	2	—	—	—	—	—	10
Ghana	1	—	4	—	1	1	—	—	—	6
Guatemala	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
India	5	—	24	1	—	54	—	—	—	79
Israele	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	2
Italia (S. Cuore)	20	—	98	—	13	1	1	3	—	116
Italia (Romana)	12	—	62	—	1	1	—	—	2	66
Italia (Curia)	2	—	9	1	—	26	1	—	—	37
Messico	2	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	9
Nigeria	2	—	7	—	2	34	1	13	—	57
Paraguay	3	—	8	—	—	1	—	—	—	9
Polonia	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
R.D. Congo	2	—	6	—	—	7	3	—	—	16
Spagna	2	—	5	—	2	—	—	—	—	7
Svizzera	1	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
U.S.A.	2	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	9
Total	80	1	321	6	34	128	8	21	2	521

c) 2009 JOYFUL EVENTS

1. Ninety and beyond

		Age
Di Nicola don Emidio	13-12-1912	97
Romanò don Luigi	09-03-1916	93
Uglietti don Mario	07-03-1916	»
Bredice don Armando	22-08-1917	92
Guida don Salvatore	02-12-1919	90

2. Ultra-eighty

Cantoni don Giuseppe	16-07-1920	89
Nervi fratel Battista	29-06-1920	»
Piatti don Giovanni Battista	28-06-1920	»
Canosi don Emilio	09-04-1921	88
Maniero don Ernesto	26-11-1921	»
Credaro don Tito	11-02-1922	87
Filippi don Antonio	08-10-1922	»
Vaccari don Danilo	01-12-1922	»
Invernizzi don Antonio	06-12-1922	»
Altieri don Vincenzo	11-12-1922	»
Nesa don Nino	11-01-1923	86
Belotti don Francesco	06-02-1923	»
Di Ruscio don Romano	24-04-1923	»
Cogliati don Romolo	11-01-1924	85
Frangi don Luigi	30-03-1924	»
Barindelli don Carlo	05-04-1924	»
Fogliamanzillo fratel Salvatore	05-04-1924	»
Antonini don Alberto	12-05-1924	»
Pisnoli fratel Luigi	02-07-1924	»
Moroni don Angelo	25-09-1924	»
Altieri don Marcello	27-12-1924	»
Ottaviano don Antonio	27-12-1924	»
Rizziero don Giuliano	29-12-1924	»
Castelnuovo don Mario	23-08-1925	84
Matteazzi don Matteo	15-12-1925	»
Della Bella Fr. Arnaldo	27-02-1926	83
Maglia Don Carlo	21-07-1926	»
Liborio don Battista	05-09-1926	»
Della Morte don Loreto	26-01-1927	82
Maniero don Pietro	18-05-1927	»

Pasquali don Pietro	09-10-1927	82
Nastro don Antonio	17-11-1927	»
Baldan don Ruggero	20-12-1927	»
Gandossini don Anselmo	22-07-1928	81
Gridelli don Tonino	13-12-1928	»

3. Eighty

Duratti don Giovanni	10-06-1929
Scano don Pietro	15-06-1929
Bianchi Mordini don Maurizio	26-09-1929
Tamburini don Antonio	23-10-1929

4. Fifty

Maisano don Santino	02-02-1959
Villani don Irani José	21-03-1959
Costantino don Salvatore	16-05-1959
Onyema don Benedict Emeka	18-07-1959
Altuna Peña don Francisco Javier	20-09-1959
Molina fratel José Luis	27-09-1959
Olivares fratel Manuel	02-11-1959
Martinez Herguedas don José Alfonso	12-11-1959

5. Fiftieth of profession

Antonelli don Adelio	12/09/1959
Barlascini don Santo	12/09/1959
Carrera don Mario	12/09/1959
De Simoni don Giovanni Sandro	12/09/1959
Maffioli don Peppino	12/09/1959
Morandi fratel Serafino	12/09/1959
Poletto don Silvano	12/09/1959
Rinaldo don Giuseppe	12/09/1959
Turati don Fortunato Luigi	12/09/1959

6. Twenty-fifth of profession

De Costa don Edenilson	11-02-1984
Demoliner don Flavio	11-02-1984

Munoz fratel Ruben	01-03-1984
Urta Carvajal don Agustin	01-03-1984
Arija Garcia don Juan Manuel	08-09-1984
Riva don Marco	08-09-1984

7. Fiftieth of ordination

Mattiuzzo don Celio	28-06-1959
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8. Twenty-fifth of ordinazion

Martinez Herguedas don José Alfonso	01-09-1984
Riva don Fulvio Cesare	22-09-1984
Maldaner don Adelmo	15-12-1984
Danieli don Odair	22-12-1984

B) EVENTS OF CONSECRATION

a) NOVICES

1. Barza (Provincia Sacro Cuore)

Alamer Alfredo
Amico Giovanni
Jaroslaw Januszewski

2. Bangalore (Divine Providence Province)

1 (a Barza d'Ispra)

3. Lujan (Provincia Cruz del Sur)

Aguilera Gerardo Sebastian
Caceres Lescano Carlos Cesar
Caceres Quintero Gustavo
Muller Darlan José Lantana
Rivera Luis Geronimo

4. Nnebukwu

(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)

Abah Idioko Francis
Ebalasani Giscara
Ekoue Daniel
Emerite Chikwado Achillus
Gayila Eleuthere
Iwuchukwu Jerome
Kibwamusitu Bruno
Mgbechi Ukachukwu Pul Leonard
Moluanton Nenyimi Steve
Monsengo Beno Richard
Ntambo Enewa Gedeon
Oguejifor Chukwudi Vincent
Ozokoye Chijioke

b) FIRST PROFESSION

Antonydoss Arivalagan	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Bernard Vellington	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Gnnathickam Gabriel	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Lourdusamy Maria Julian Berna	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Aquino Gaston Gabriel	<i>Provincia Cruz del Sur</i>
Corso Diego Omar	<i>Provincia Cruz del Sur</i>
Corvalan Roberto Carlos	<i>Provincia Cruz del Sur</i>
Guerrero Barreto Felix	<i>Provincia Cruz del Sur</i>
Ortiz Candia Juan Manuel	<i>Provincia Cruz del Sur</i>
Soares Caldeira Diogo	<i>Provincia Santa Cruz</i>
Akamnonu Innocent	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Anyadiegwu Kingsley Sebastine	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Bukete Vanser Adelin Amedée	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Diala Nnadozie Eustace	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Dzungwe Agbe Simon Peter	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Ibrahimi Paul Rude	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Ingbian David Saaondo	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Kasongo Ntabala Oscar	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Mamona Mamona Marc	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Obilor Lawrence	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>
Okpon Unyine Udofia	<i>Delegazione N.S. della Speranza</i>

Alletto Salvatore
Cerutti Michele

Provincia Romana S. Giuseppe
Provincia Sacro Cuore

c) PERPETUAL PROFESSION

Masullo Giorgio	(Italia)	a Como	24-03-2008
Rossi Roberto	(Italia)	a Como	24-03-2008
Antony Samy Arockiasamy	(India)	a Cuddalore	19-06-2008
Antonymsamy Selvaraj	(India)	a Cuddalore	19-06-2008
Pitchai Paulraj	(India)	a Poonamallee	12-11-2008

d) PERPETUAL PROFESSION AND DIACONATE

Lourdusamy Mathias	(India)	a Poonamallee	14-01-2008	15-01-2008
Onyeka Stephen				
Chukwuma	(Africa)	a Nnebukwu	11-04-2008	12-04-2008
D'Aquim Kalam				
Kangila	(Africa)	a Kinshasa	11-04-2008	13-04-2008

e) DIACONATE

Rossi Roberto	(Italia)	a Roma	18-10-2008
Pitchai Paul Raj	(India)	a Poonamallee	08-12-2008

f) PRESBYTERATE

Gramajo Mauro	(Argentina)	a Santa Fe	02-02-2008
Lourdusamy Mathias	(India)	a Thennur	06-06-2008
Cano Gonzales Arturo	(Messico)	a Puebla de	
		Los Angeles	28-06-2008
Gonzalez Mauricio Alfaro	(Messico)	a Puebla de	
		Los Angeles	28-06-2008
Kangila Kalam D'Aquin	(R.D.Congo)	a Kinshasa	27/07/2008
Onyeka Chukwuma Stephen	(Nigeria)	a Nnebukwu	09/08/2008

C) IMPORTANT EVENTS

Introduction

The year 2008 has been a year of grace and great activities within the Congregation. We should give thanks to the Lord for the 23 newly professed who entered the Congregation, while only one confrere, Fr. Carlo Ferrario, has been called to heaven. No many priestly ordinations, only 6, this past year. Many more are planned in 2009.

It has been also the year in which four provincial chapters, plus the Assembly of the African Delegation, were celebrated. The provincial chapters are an occasion of grace and hard work for the provinces, because, by reviewing its journey, they bring a renewal of religious life and an increased fidelity to its mission. In fact, their motions and proposals show clearly that there is a deep desire among the confreres to follow the path and reach the goals given by the last general chapter, goals that are valid for the Congregation as a whole.

During this Centennial Year, we have seen an enthusiastic commitment all over the Guanellian world in making known Father Guanella and the Congregation, and in implementing our personal and community religious life as mandated by the 2008-09 Pastoral Plan. That was the primary purpose behind many meetings, pilgrimages to Lourdes and Holy Land, retreats and seminars. Wishes are that this fervor may last for a long time, and may culminate by the canonization of our Founder.

About the latter, we have to note that the process at the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints is meeting some difficulties from some medical experts. By the help of God, we hope that they would be overcome soon. We need to intensify our prayer. Instead, it brought great joy the decree of Venerability of Bishop Bacciarini whose process is proceeding well.

The life of the six provinces (the sixth being Our Lady of Guadalupe) goes on in fidelity to the charism and commitment to the mission. All over, formation is in the reserved line. Some provinces have to deal with aged confreres who are still in active ministry though over 80! In other parts of the world, where the majority of confreres are much younger, we have to face some difficulties proper of youthful enthusiasm. It is comforting to know that, according to the provincial superiors at the January meeting, the majority of confreres are faithful to their vows and obedience.

The economy instead does not show good health. The worldwide crisis does not spare us either. However, through the eyes of faith, even this moment of crisis should be seen as God's gift for a better purification of our religious life.

General Secretary
Don PIERO LIPPOLI

1. The Provincial Chapters Season

XIII provincial chapter - Sacred Heart Province (16-21 november 2008)

On Sunday evening, 16 November, forty-six confreres gathered in Barza for the 13th provincial chapter. They convened from the different countries where the Sacred Heart Province is present (Italy, Switzerland, Israel and Africa).

On Monday morning, the superior general presided at the solemn concelebration, and opened the chapter. Its theme was, "Making ourselves aware, giving new life, and reorganizing in order to go on and hold hope".

Father superior general in his homily invited all those present to "enliven" our charism of charity in our personal, communal and apostolic life.

At 9:00 AM, the working agenda was put into motion after a prayer to our Blessed Founder.

Fr. Remigio Oprandi, provincial superior, Fr. Alfonso Crippa, superior general, and Fr. Pino Venerito, provincial superior of the Roman Province, read their greetings.

We should mention also greetings and prayers from cooperators, Sisters, and Guanellian Lay Movement.

First formalities were the election of Moderators, Secretaries, and Scrutineers. List of the elected:

– *Moderators:*

- * Fr. Cesare Perego
- * Fr. Marco Riva

– *Secretaries:*

- * Fr. Domenico Scibetta
- * Bro. Franco Lain

– *Scrutineers:*

* Fr. Roberto Rossi

* Fr. Justin Onganga Ndjondjo

After a pause, Fr. Provincial read the first chapter of the Instrumentum Laboris regarding personal and community life (lights and shadows), followed by requests for further clarifications by some chapter-fathers.

At 3:00 PM we prayed Daytime Prayer followed by two reports: Bro. Mauro Cecchinato on our ministry of charity towards elderly, disabled and minors; Fr. Domenico Scibetta on our parishes, chaplaincies and vocation ministry. Later on, Fr. Alfredo Rossetti and Fr. Nando Giudici presented the financial report. Fr. Provincial took the occasion to publicly thank Fr. Rossetti for his good job done for many years as provincial treasurer. Fr. Giudici is the new provincial treasurer.

On Tuesday morning, Mass is presided by Fr. Venerito having at the side Fr. Giancarlo Schievano and Fr. Nico Rutigliano. After a prayer for the canonization of the Founder, at 9:00 am the chapter entered into its second day. A letter to be sent to the Misericordine Sisters in Lecco to express our solidarity and moral support (*Note: regarding the bitterly battled national case of a young lady in their care whose father is requesting her life termination*) is prepared on behalf of the chapter-fathers by Fr. Attilio Mazzola and read in the assembly.

Fr. Giancarlo Frigerio, superior of delegation, presented his report on the situation of the Our Lady of Hope Delegation, followed by requests for clarifications from some chapter-fathers.

An appeal was read by Fr. Francois Mpunga regarding the war going on in Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, asking for funds to be used in assisting thousands of people evacuated by the war and guests of the Don Bosco Center, Goma, Congo.

Fr. Marco Grega presented the chapter 4 of the Instrumentum Laboris. The moderator Fr. Marco Riva gave some indications on the composition of committees, and on the locations where they will hold their meetings.

3:00 pm daytime prayer and committee meetings till 5:00 pm.; afterwards the chapter-fathers went back to the assembly to report on and discuss their meetings. At 7:00 pm, Vespers and Benediction, presided by Fr. Marco Grega, closed the second day.

On Wednesday, November 19, the general councillor, Fr. Wladimiro Bogoni, presided at the mass in honor of St. Joseph, having at the side Fr. Marco Grega and Fr. Costantino Salvatore. At the homily he invited the chapter-fathers to “discern through the Word of God. From it a true conversion

comes. Changing is God's gift, and we have to request it through intense prayer and leaving back all fears." The chapter-fathers welcomed the appeal from the Congo confreres and planned to send a letter to the Holy Father and the President of Italy regarding the terrible situation that people of the Democratic Republic of Congo are facing. The text of the letter to the Holy Father follows.

Barza d'Ispra, 18 November 2008

Your Holiness.

We, Servants of Charity – Opera Don Guanella – belonging to the Sacred Heart Province, present in the Democratic Republic of Congo since September 23, 1996, and now celebrating the provincial chapter in Barza d'Ispra (VA), are making our own the cry of suffering coming from the people of East Congo still immersed in the pit of an armed conflict caused by many local and international political-economical interests. Being children of the Catholic Church, we cannot be indifferent in front of such cry. Our Founder, Blessed Louis Guanella, teaches: "A believing and sensitive Christian cannot pass by the indigence of the poor without coming to their aid (R. 1905, 78)".

Being assured by Your paternal solicitude towards this population so long under terrible sufferings, we would like to ask Your Holiness to continue to defend peace in the Great Lakes Region of the African continent. It is the only solution for ending the tragedy of so much violence, directed especially toward the civil innocent population, and the exodus of hundreds of thousand refugees forced to escape situations of great danger.

Trusting fully in the intercession of Blessed Louis Guanella and in the assistance of Divine Providence toward those who are taking refuge in Her, with filial regards we ask for Your apostolic blessing.

The Chapter-Fathers

At 9:00 am, the Fathers gathered in the assembly-hall before starting their committee-meetings that will keep them busy till 3:30 pm. At the end of the assembly-work, the fathers were again participating to committee-meetings in order to gather together ideas and suggestions useful for motions and proposals to be voted at the last day.

Fr. Domenico Scibetta, provincial and chapter secretary, presided at Vespers and Benediction. We gave thanks to the Lord for the many fruits He is giving us and for those He will give us. Bl. Louis Guanella, pray for us.

Thursday begins with the celebration of Holy Mass in honor of B. Louis Guanella, presided by Fr. Uche Desmond, vicar of O.L. Hope Delegation. At his side are Fr. Kelechi Maduforo, superior of Ibadan community, and Fr. Guido Matarrese, superior of Lemba-Kinshasa community. From his homily: *“We should see in Jesus Christ the key to understand what we need in our life. The trials we meet should be overcome by a personal interior conversion through a spirit of true optimism and constant dialogue with Christ”*.

Fr. Nico Rutigliano leaves the chapter and goes back to Rome. Fr. Nino Massara takes his place, and with Fr. Pino Venerito, participates to the assembly.

9:00 am, general assembly and meetings of the five committees on “Lay collaboration” and “Reorganization”.

11:00 am, general assembly. The Presiding Board announces that in the afternoon motions and proposals have to be prepared.

2:30 pm, Daytime prayer; committee-meetings for the elaboration and preparation of motions and proposals as results of their discussions, indications, and stimuli.

5:00 pm, presentation of motions and proposals that will be discussed and reviewed the next day.

7:00 pm, Eucharistic Adoration, Vespers and Benediction; Fr. Nando Giudici presiding.

Friday, 21 November, last day. Holy Mass in memory of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, presided by Fr. Remigio Oprandi, provincial superior, having at his side Fr. Giancarlo Frigerio and Fr. Nando Giudici. Fr. Remigio in his homily takes inspiration from the last Synod of Bishops on the Word of God: “God’s Word is source of grace and life, and call to personal commitment and fidelity. Only humility of heart is able to recognize faults and to help us to go back to fidelity. These chapter days were days of research, verification and even uncertainty. May the Holy Spirit, coming from the Word, guide our journey of Hope.”

After having thanked Fr. Superior General and those who prepared and attended the 13th provincial chapter, the Assembly gets together to discuss and cast its vote on the Instrumentum Laboris and Financial Report. Both are approved. Some specific issues regarding the African Delegation are taken into consideration. Some of its confreres present their impressions. Morning ends by Fr. Crippa taking his leave from the chapter, and daytime Prayer.

After Lunch, 2:30 pm, the participants gather again for the last time: voting on Motions and Proposals. A final motion on behalf of all participants declares the 13th provincial chapter closed.

We give thanks to the Lord, and to Blesseds Guanella and Bosatta, kneeling in front of the Blessed Sacrament singing Vespers and receiving the Eucharistic Benediction. May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Providence and Hope, on this day dedicated to her, sustain the Guanellian Family in the world, so that by joy and enthusiasm it may be faithful to the Founder, hopefully soon among the Saints of the universal Church.

XIII Capítulo provincial Provincia Cruz del Sur (17-21 novembre 2008)

En el Seminario San Pío X de Tapiales, siendo las 7.15 horas, de lunes, 17 noviembre, los capitulares se reúnen en la capilla para concelebrar la Eucaristía presidida por el p. Sergio Rojas Franco, Superior provincial. Antes de finalizar la celebración llama a cada uno de los capitulares por su nombre y declara abierto el XIII Capítulo provincial de la Provincia Cruz del Sur.

Luego del desayuno, a las 9 horas puntualmente nos reunimos en la sala Capitular para los actos preliminares del Capítulo.

Al saludo y bienvenida del Padre provincial, se sucede el saludo del consejero general p. Carlos Blanchoud y el del p. Enrico Colafemina, Superior provincial de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

Luego se da lectura al saludo del MLG, y a otro, enviado por correo electrónico, del p. Giuseppe Pulcinelli, superior provincial emérito ausente por razones de salud.

Se procede luego a la elección de los oficiales del Capítulo, quedando definidos del siguiente modo:

- *Moderador*: p. Jorge Domínguez.
- *Secretarios*: p. Nelson Jerez y p. César Augusto Leiva.
- *Escrutadores*: p. Carlos Salcedo y Mauro Gramajo.

Acto seguido el moderador asume su lugar en la testera y se procede a revisar el horario que es aprobado por la asamblea capitular.

Siendo las 10,15 horas, luego del intervalo, el Superior provincial presenta su informe sobre la vida de la Provincia Cruz del Sur.

Concluido este en torno a las 11,20 horas se abre la plenaria para aclaraciones sobre la relación del Superior Provincial. Luego de un rico intercambio se termina la jornada de la mañana.

A las 15 horas, se reabre la sesión con el informe del ecónomo provincial, y tras un intervalo, a las 17 horas, se retoman los trabajos con el examen de los anexos de las auditorías realizadas por el ecónomo.

La jornada termina a las 18,40 dejando la posibilidad de los capitulares de pedir aclaraciones en las próximas sesiones.

Finalmente, siendo las 19 horas celebramos en conjunto el rezo de vísperas y se concluye así la primera jornada del Capítulo.

Segundo día: martes 18 de noviembre, a las 7,15 horas, los capitulares se reúnen en la Capilla del Seminario para celebrar la Eucaristía, presidida por el Provincial de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, p. Enrico Colafemina.

Luego del desayuno, a las 9 horas, los capitulares se reúnen en la Sala de Asamblea. El moderador convoca a la oración, se reza la Oración por la Canonización del Beato Luis Guanella.

Para iluminar esta jornada el padre Leonardo Capelutti SCJ da una conferencia con el título *“Los Votos Religiosos en relación con la conversión”*.

Luego de una pausa padre Leonardo prosigue con su exposición, y al concluir la misma, los capitulares tienen la posibilidad de preguntar, pedir aclaraciones o hacer algún aporte.

Siendo ya pasado el mediodía, se termina la sesión agradeciendo vivamente la iluminación del padre Capelutti.

La sesión de la tarde comienza dividiendo la asamblea en dos grupos de trabajo, para reflexionar sobre el Instrumentum Laboris elaborado por la comisión pre-capitular y sobre la iluminación de la mañana.

A las 17 horas y luego de una pausa los capitulares se reúnen en la Sala de Asamblea para exponer lo reflexionado en los grupos. Tras un rico intercambio, a las 18 hs. por propuesta de uno de los capitulares, se decide por unanimidad volver al trabajo grupal para elaborar Mociones y Propuestas para luego ser votadas en el momento indicado para tal fin.

Siendo las 18,45 horas, termina el trabajo en grupos y 15 minutos más tarde, se pasa al rezo de Vísperas por parte de los Capitulares, concluyendo así la segunda jornada de trabajo.

Tercer día. Siendo las 9 horas del 19 de noviembre de 2008, la asamblea reunida en la casa de Tapiales inicia la jornada con la oración para la canonización del Fundador.

Este día, participan los delegados laicos de que trabajan en los distintos sectores de nuestra misión, en los tres países que componen la provincia.

El R. P. Mario Iantorno, SdB, presenta su conferencia titulada *“La comunidad religiosa en relación con los laicos”*.

La interesante presentación es seguida por preguntas en plenario las que se extienden hasta el mediodía. Por la tarde, se pasa al trabajo por grupos, conformados por religiosos y laicos, para poner en plenario las conclusiones alrededor de las 17 horas.

El trabajo enfatizó, entre otros temas, el descubrimiento del laicado como

vocación, las dificultades emergentes de la relación entre laicos y consagrados y la necesidad de una adecuada formación.

Una fructífera jornada, cuyos trabajos concluyen con el rezo de Vísperas a las 19 hs.

En el cuarto día, tras la Eucaristía celebrada en la capilla del seminario y presidida por el p. Gustavo De Bonis, se invita a los laicos participantes de la jornada anterior a realizar un trabajo extra asamblea.

Más tarde, el Moderador entrega a los Capitulares un bosquejo del “Estatuto y Reglamento de los Asociados a los Siervos de la Caridad, laicos y clérigos”; un borrador del “Vademécum para los Siervos de la Caridad”, una copia de las propuestas de Moción que llegaron al Consejo provincial de parte de las comunidades para ser tratadas en el Capítulo y un instructivo acerca de cómo se puede votar las Mociones y las Propuestas.

Luego se pasa a trabajar en comisiones con el borrador del Vademécum, durante el resto de la mañana.

Ya en horas de la tarde se realiza una sesión plenaria en la Sala Capitular sobre las conclusiones de los trabajos realizados por la mañana.

Más tarde, y para culminar la jornada, se pone a consideración de la Asamblea las propuestas y las mociones llegadas al Capítulo.

Finalmente y con el rezo de Vísperas se da término al trabajo del día.

Quinto y último día, viernes 21 de noviembre: siendo las 7 hs. los Capitulares se reúnen en la Capilla del Seminario para la Adoración Eucarística.

Más tarde, a las 9.10 hs., se da inicio a la Sesión en la Sala Capitular con la Oración por la Canonización del Beato Luis Guanella y se procede a revisar las propuestas de moción que quedaron pendientes de revisar en el día de ayer.

Tras una pausa se retoman los trabajos, que concluyen llegada la hora del almuerzo. Por la tarde, apenas pasadas las 15.00 hs., se inicia la sesión en la Sala Capitular invocando la Intercesión de la Virgen María. Se procede a la votación de las Mociones y Propuestas.

Concluidas las votaciones y antes de proceder a la votación para la Clausura del Capítulo Provincial el Superior provincial da algunos avisos de orden práctico y agradecen a la Asamblea:

- El padre Carlos Blanchoud, consejero general.
- El padre Enrico Colafemina, Superior provincial de la Provincia “Ntra. Sra. De Guadalupe”.
- El padre Sergio Rojas, Superior provincial de la Provincia “Cruz del Sur”.
- El padre Jorge Domínguez, Moderador del Capítulo.

Siendo las 17.15 hs, por votación unánime de la Asamblea se da por concluido el XIII Capítulo provincial de la Provincia Cruz del Sur, «*La conversión, para una mejor vivencia de nuestra consagración religiosa*».

A las 19 hs. tiene lugar la Santa Misa de Clausura con la participación de los Laicos invitados y los novicios del Noviciado “Nuestra Señora de Luján”. Preside la Concelebración el p. Carlos Blanchoud, consejero general.

XIII Capitolo provinciale della Provincia Romana S. Giuseppe (23-28 novembre 2008)

6:00 pm, 23 November, Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe: 26 confreres, besides the Superior general and the general councillor Fr. Wladimiro Bogoni, gather together at the Divine Master House in Ariccia (Rome), where, after dinner, they take the first steps to officially open the 13th provincial chapter of the St. Joseph Roman Province. Fr. Aldo Mosca, the prayer leader, introduces the confreres to the logo of the chapter, the icon of the Twelve Apostles. The Veni Creator concludes the introductory prayer.

Right after, the elections are held: moderators (Fr. Fabio Lorenzetti and Fr. Nino Massara), scruteneers (Fr. Aldo Mosca and Fr. John Bosco), and two secretaries (Fr. Lillo Di Rosa and Fr. Tommaso Gigliola).

First Day, Monday, 24 November: Morning Prayer presided by Fr. Beppe Frugis.

Fr. Wladimiro Bogoni presents the figure of Fr. Antonio Ronchi, Guanellian missionary in Chile, who in his religious and priestly life has given shining witness of the Guanellian charism among the most disadvantaged people.

9:00 am: Fr. Tommaso Gigliola presents the biblical icon “The Call of the Twelve” (Mk 3:13-19). The reading of different greeting messages follows. Fr. R. Oprandi, superior of Sacred Heart Province, brings greetings from his province and gives his best wishes to the chapter.

9:30 am: Father Provincial, Fr. Pino Venerito, presents his Report “May the Present have a Future: What kind of Guanellian religious and priestly life?” From the example of some Apostles, he recalls Guanellian religious and priestly values.

Afternoon: Daytime prayer presided by Fr. Romano Argenta. The provincial treasurer, Fr. Cosimo Schiavone, presents the financial-administrative report of the province.

6:45 pm: Eucharistic celebration presided by the superior general, Fr. Alfonso Crippa.

After dinner the confreres had a community recreational time led by Fr. Fabio Lorenzetti, Fr. Aldo Mosca, and the Magician Arcanus (alias Fr. Arcangelo Biondo).

Second Day: The Polish confrere, Fr. Wieslaw Baniak leads Morning Prayer. At meditation time, Fr. Wladimiro Bogoni presents the figure of Fr. Piero Pellegrini, underlining his high cultural and prophetic relevance in the Congregation. 9:15 am: Biblical presentation by Fr. Tommaso Gigliola on the icon of “The lost sheep and fraternal correction” (Mt 18:10-17).

Discussions held in the assembly take the whole morning. 3:30 pm: Eucharistic Adoration presided by Fr. Mario Cogliati and daytime prayer.

5:00 pm: committee-meetings on specific questions released by the Presiding Board:

- 1) How can we give new life to the confreres in relating to each other within a community and the province?
- 2) Which aspects should we reinforce regarding our life-style and ministry in order to clearly express the charism for a better vocation ministry and lay collaboration?
- 3) According to the human and financial resources of the province, which priorities should we pursue regarding our mission and the difficult challenge of re-qualification?

6:45 pm: Fr. Wladimiro Bogoni presides at the Eucharistic Concelebration.

After dinner, Fr. Wieslaw makes a comprehensive review of the history of our presence in Poland and gives news on the new Mother of Divine Providence House in Skawina, under construction.

Third Day: Morning Prayer presided by Fr. Santino Maisano; meditation of Fr. Wladimiro Bogoni on Fr. Giovanni Di Tullio, his apostolic and highly charismatic character in his life and pastoral service.

Biblical presentation on “The First Christian Community” (Acts 2:42-47) by Fr. Tommaso Gigliola.

Fr. Nico Rutigliano briefs the assembly on the Meetings of the Guanellian Lay Movement held in different areas of the province. Committee-meetings on some operative proposals.

11:30 am: general assembly in the chapter hall to prepare the committees working schedule.

During lunch a heartfelt “Happy Birthday” to the seminarian Antonio De Masi.

3:30 pm: Fr. Vittorio Mosca leads daytime prayer in chapel.

Round table led by Fr. Nico Rutigliano: Fr. Roberto Colameo, Salesian, and Fr. Giuseppe Soriani, Don Orione Congregation, present their experience of community life.

Committee-meetings, followed by the celebration of the Eucharist, in honor of the Founder, presided by Fr. Remigio Oprandi.

The day closes by an appreciated outing to a local Pizzeria.

Thursday, 27 November, Morning Prayer presided by Fr. Pietro Scano.

A meditation on the figure of Fr. Domenico Frantellizzi from Fr. Wladimiro Bogoni, further enriches the assembly.

9:00 am: presentation led by Fr. Tommaso Gigliola on John 15: 1-11 “The Vine and the Branches”.

Morning dedicated to committee-meetings for the preparation of motions and proposals to bring to the assembly. After daytime prayer, led by Fr. Donato Lioi, the assembly goes through all the Motions and Proposals.

5:00 pm: Fr. Remigio Oprandi, Fr. Cesare Perego, and Fr. Wladimiro Bogoni depart from the chapter and thank the confreres for their welcome and precious experience shared with them.

7:00 pm: Eucharist presided by Fr. Fabio Lorenzetti, provincial vicar. Fr. Superior General thanks the confreres and returns to Rome.

After dinner, the confreres convene to discuss motions and proposals.

Last Day of the Chapter: Eucharistic Celebration presided by Fr. Pino Venerito, provincial superior.

Fr. Tommaso Gigliola offers his meditation on *Mt* 5: 1-11, “The Beatitudes”.

The assembly takes care of discussing and rephrasing the Motions that are later on approved by the confreres.

The “Te Deum” and the thanks of the provincial superior and his council close the 13th chapter of the Roman Province.

XIII Capítulo provincial da Província Santa Cruz

(Canela, 24 a 28 de novembro de 2008)

Às 18 horas, de dia 24 de novembro, deu-se início ao Capítulo com a celebração da Santa Missa, na Capela da antiga Casa São José, atual Hotel Fazenda Pampas da Serra, presidida pelo Pe. Ciro Attanasio, Provincial da Província Santa Cruz. Estavam presentes o Pe. Carlos Blanchoud, conselheiro geral e o Pe.

Sergio Rojas Franco, Provincial da Província Cruz del Sur e os Padres e Irmãos Capitulares, num total de 18.

O Pe. Ciro, na homilia da Celebração votiva ao Espírito Santo, destacou que é preciso alegrar-nos como dizia o Apóstolo São Paulo, para com empenho procurarmos reavivar o dom de Deus que está em nós. Que devemos cultivar um forte desejo de Santidade deixando-nos conduzir pelo Espírito Santo de Deus. Capítulo é uma oportunidade de olharmos par dentro de os mesmos com simplicidade, transparência e autenticidade guanellianas.

Num segundo momento refletiremos sobre o Documento de Aparecida que nos exorta a sermos discípulos missionários de Jesus Cristo Caminho, Verdade e Vida com o Evangelho da Vida e da Caridade.

Às 20:15 iniciou-se com um canto de invocação ao Espírito Santo. O Pe. Ciro dá as boas vindas e dirige algumas coordenadas práticas sobre o conteúdo da pasta de cada um. Chama, então, os dois coirmãos mais novos para lerem a carta de convocação dos Capitulares, para fazer a chamada dos presentes. Exceto o Pe. Adenir Fumagalli, todos estão presentes. Após o que o Pe. Ciro declara aberto o XIII Capítulo provincial.

Foram eleitos:

- *Moderadores*: Pe. Gelsi Fiorentin e Pe. Alcides José Vergütz.
- *Secretários*: Pe. Mauro Vogt e Ir. Arilson Bordignon.
- *Escrutinadores*: Pe. Celio Mattiuzzo e Pe. Valdemar Alves Pereira.

Começamos o nosso dia, 25 del novembro, com a Oração de Laudes e meditação, na Capela.

Às 8:30 h o moderador, Pe. Gelsi Fiorentin, faz uma breve reflexão sobre o não termos medo de buscar o melhor para o nosso crescimento. Pede, então, para fazermos uma oração juntos sobre a Sabedoria.

O Provincial começa a apresentação do seu Relatório onde destaca as três dimensões fundamentais da Vida Religiosa: Consagração, Vida Fraterna e Missão sob o prisma da Vida Fraterna em Comunidade.

14:30 h - Oração da Hora Média na Capela.

14:45 h - Trabalhos em grupo sobre o Relatório do Provincial.

Às 15 horas os coirmãos partiram para os trabalhos em grupo que foi até por volta das 17 horas.

Plenário: Após uma saudação de boas-vindas ao Pe. Adenir José Fumagalli que chegou pelo após o meio dia. Passamos para o Plenário.

O Pe. Provincial fez, as seguintes perguntas sobre o seu Relatório, para ser respondidas em três grupos, conforme síntese que segue:

1. Parecer global sobre o que foi apresentado

Apresentação com clareza da realidade da Província. Extenso e exortativo. Visão ampla.

Relatório Completo (os três grupos foram unânimes em dizer que é bem completo) e bem fundamentado na Palavra de Deus, da Igreja, da Congregação e da Realidade.

2. O que nos alegra?

Foram apresentados muitos pontos positivos que nos alegram referentes à vivência concreta da nossa vida de Consagrados, que estarão integralmente relatados nos Atos do Capítulo.

Aqui relatamos somente quatro:

- Caminhada de conjunto com as Irmãs e os leigos.
- Paróquias guanellianas samaritanas.
- Atenção para a animação vocacional, formação seminarística e permanente. Prioridade no campo vocacional.
- Testemunho dos coirmãos que vivem a união, o esforço e atenção recíproca. Espírito de doação.

3. O que nos desafia?

a. *Na vida do Espírito.* Apresentamos também somente quatro.

- Priorizar a Lectio Divina.
- Realizar o projeto pessoal para contribuir mais com o projeto comunitário.
- Abertura aos novos tipos de pobreza na realidade em que atuamos.
- Maior assiduidade aos momentos de oração pessoal, meditação e confissão mais freqüente.

b. *Na vida Comunitária.* Apresentamos aqui, somente três:

- Não Julgar, não condenar os coirmãos. Procurar crescer juntos como coirmãos.
- Momentos fortes de vida e de convivência fraterna: oração, retiros, lazer.
- Correção fraterna porque existe individualismo, egoísmo.

c. *Na Missão.* Apresentamos três:

- Planejar, organizar e avaliar juntos a missão conforme o carisma.
- Formar-se mais em vista da missão seja, pastoral, assistencial, administrativa.
- Incrementar a pastoral da juventude com ações concretas para envolver os jovens.

4. Urgências e propostas...

Cinco propostas:

- Formar comunidades de pelo menos três coirmãos.
- Definir melhor o que é MLG.
- Continuar a Prioridade da Pastoral Vocacional.
- Investir mais na formação dos leigos.
- Novos meios para a prática da caridade segundo a legislação vigente.

O dia 26 de novembro iniciou com a oração das laudes, rezada na capela às 7 horas da manhã, sob a coordenação dos coirmãos do regional dois.

Após o café, os Capitulares iniciaram os trabalhos propostos para o dia ouvindo a apresentação do relatório econômico da Província, produzido e apresentado pelo Pe. Edenilso de Costa, ecônomo provincial, em parceria com o Pe. Deoclésio Danielli, ecônomo emérito.

Em seu relatório, Pe. Edenilso apresentou de maneira completa e objetiva a situação econômica de cada Instituição guanelliana presente em terras brasileiras. No período vespertino, os Capitulares se reuniram em três grupos para analisar os dados e informações contidos no relatório econômico, emitindo um parecer global. Em seguida, ainda reunidos em grupo, os Capitulares prepararam as moções e propostas para o Capítulo.

Após o coffe-break da tarde, houve a apresentação de um CD multimídia sobre a vida do Pe. Luís Guanella, por meio de animação em 2D (duas dimensões), feita pela empresa Prisma e OZ Multimídia, de Porto Alegre/RS. A idéia é que a Província elabore um projeto infantil sobre a vida do Pe. Guanella destinado às escolas (educação infantil) e às paróquias (para a catequese de primeira eucaristia), incluindo também a animação vocacional.

Logo em seguida, Ir. Arilson Bordignon apresentou aos Capitulares o projeto e o site da Província Santa Cruz, que está em fase de conclusão.

Às 18h15min houve a celebração eucarística presidida pelo Pe. Edenilso, e concelebrada pelos padres Sérgio Rojas e Adelmo Luiz Maldaner. Em seguida a janta foi servida, num clima de fraternidade e descontração, e a noite os Capitulares não tiveram atividades, ou seja, ficaram livres para confraternizar, conversar e conviver.

Às 7 horas da manhã de dia 27 de novembro com a presença dos leigos, foi celebrada a Santa Missa, no dia Nacional de Ação de Graças, presidida pelo Pe. Mauro Vogt. A homilia foi sobre o dar continuamente graças a Deus, pelos inúmeros benefícios que Deus nos concede.

Após breves exortações do Pe. Gelsi Fiorentin, Moderador do, dia iniciou-se, às 8:45 h, na Sala Capitular as atividades do dia com uma oração de invoca-

ção ao Divino Espírito Santo. Participam conosco representantes leigos de todas as nossas Paróquias, obras e Cooperadores, num total de 25.

O tema: Discípulos Missionários de Jesus Cristo, Caminho, Verdade e Vida com o Evangelho da Vida e da Caridade.

A conferencista é a Irmã Maria Alcídia Guareschi, das irmãs de Notre Dame. Já foi presidente da Conferência Regional dos Religiosos (as) do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul.

O Pe. Ciro diz que o Carisma foi dado para todos nós para se colocado a serviço da Igreja inteira. As nossas paróquias devem ser tornar sempre mais Samaritanas, assim como nossas escolas e entidades assistenciais. Em sintonia com A CELAM queremos nos reconhecer como discípulos enviados por Jesus. Pe. Ciro exorta para caminhar com a Igreja toda com o carisma específico. O Evangelho da Vida e da Caridade.

A Ir. Alcídia apresenta uma síntese do Documento *Deus Charitas est* e fala que o Papa coloca uma pérola nas mãos dos cristãos e que somos chamados a corresponder, quando nos dá tal documento. Ela diz que o Carisma da Caridade não é reservado somente para os padres, irmãos e irmãs religiosos, mas também para os leigos para levarmos esta mensagem e proposta de Deus para o mundo de hoje.

Os Capitulares, com os leigos, se integram em 6 grupos de reflexão sobre o documento DC.

À tarde a Ir. Alcídia apresenta umas partes do documento *Evangelium Vitae*. No que concerne à promoção da vida, o cuidado da vida.

De novo foram feitos trabalhos em grupo e à noite foram partilhados em plenário.

Dia 28 de novembro:

7:00 h - Oração de Laudes com os Leigos na Capela Grande.

8:15 h - Assembléia Capitular no auditório com a presença dos mesmos 25 leigos e duas Irmãs Guanellianas, começa as atividades do último dia de Capítulo.

Pe. Gelsi lê a mensagem da Ir. Neli Bordignon, Provincial das Irmãs Filhas de Santa Maria da Providência. A Provincial exorta a viver o vínculo da caridade que provém do nosso carisma comum e a estarmos abertos para os caminhos que a Divina Providência nos indica.

Ir. Alcídia começa a tratar do tema principal «*Discípulos Missionários de Jesus Cristo com o Evangelho da Vida e da Caridade*», a partir do Documento de Aparecida.

Tema específico: «*Discípulos Missionários a Serviço do Reino da Vida*».

O olhar de Aparecida se coloca sobre toda a humanidade.

Vamos ao mundo anunciando a Boa Nova de Deus.

Não podemos cruzar os braços diante de uma realidade tão desafiadora.

Discípulos Missionários a Serviço do Reino da Vida.

Discípulo é aquele que dobra os joelhos diante de Deus.

Quem se enche de Deus não pode ficar parado. Ele vai com toda a unção e comunhão, com a intimidade com Deus para levá-lo ao mundo.

Quem reza e cala diante das injustiças ainda reza muito pouco. Estar com Deus, com o Senhor da misericórdia faz nascer o desejo de levar a vida de Deus ao mundo.

O tema Discípulos Missionários perpassa o DA como um fundo de sustentação e de apoio a toda a ação da Igreja, como um fio de esperança.

Hoje a missão nos desafia “a passar para o outro lado da margem”, “a avançar para águas mais profundas” (Lc 5, 1ss) para anunciar a Boa Nova do Reino:

- onde a vida é maltratada;
- onde a dignidade humana não é reconhecida;
- onde a injustiça continua criando diferenças e separações;
- onde falta solidariedade;
- onde se produzem excluídos, descartáveis... (Da 65).

Na parte da tarde somente os Capitulares continuam os trabalhos.

Alguns coirmãos apresentam a realidade dos nossos seminários e dizem que em Carazinho temos 6 seminaristas menores, em São Paulo temos 4 e em Porto Alegre, na etapa da Filosofia são 12.

Após um momento de oração passou-se para a aprovação das moções e propostas, que ocupou toda a parte da tarde.

Às 18:15 horas celebrou-se a Santa Missa conclusiva do Capítulo presidida pelo Pe. Carlos Blanchoud que falou da importância de vivermos sempre com muita simplicidade e gratidão o dom de Deus, o Carisma, mas com grande criatividade inventiva, com a fantasia da Caridade.

O Superior provincial agradece a todos os Capitulares e declara concluído o Capítulo.

2. The new Our Lady of Guadalupe Province

By a decree issued on 2 February 2008, prot. 937/02-08, Father Superior General established the newly canonically formed Our Lady of Guadalupe Province that includes Spain, Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala.

Its headquarters are located in Calle Pino y Arrayan – Colonia S. Miguel Teotongo - 09510 Mexico City D.F.

During the 22 April 2008 general council meeting, he officially approved the election of *Fr. Enrico Colafemina*, provincial superior, *Fr. Alfonso Martinez*, vicar and first councillor, *Fr. Cosme Pedagna* and *Fr. Carlos Staper* as councillors.



The provincial council is thus composed:

- P. Enrico Colafemina, *provincial superior*
- P. Alfonso Martinez, *I Councillor and provincial vicar*
- P. Cosme Pedagna, *II Councillor*
- P. Carlos Staper, *III Councillor*

The provincial council appointed as its secretary *Fr. Carlos Staper* and as its treasurer *Fr. José Angel*.

3. Meeting between the SdC and DSMP general councils

The meeting was held at St. Pancrazio House in Rome, on 17 July 2008.

Many issues were taken into consideration. At first, we exchanged impressions on some experiences held together or still in the calendar: Holy Land pilgrimage, Lourdes pilgrimage, Historical seminars on the Centennial, Guanellian Museums, Guanellian exhibition at the Rimini Meeting, Printed material in preparation, Integrated Communications Center.

We touched also some other issues in need of more clarification and mutual dialogue: Centro Studi in Rome, GLM, some of our missionary presences in need of more attention, Preparation of the San Paolo (Brazil) meeting of the SdC and DSMP Latin-American provinces all together (February 2009), ideas on the contents of the 2nd letter of communion to the Congregations.

As usual, the atmosphere was cordial and productive. We had the opportunity to pray together on the feast-day of Sr. Marcellina Bosatta, and to offer to the Lord the expectations and hopes we hold in our heart.

4. 1908-2008 Centennial Celebrations

On Easter Monday, 24 March 2008, the Centennial of the First Profession of our Founder was inaugurated in the Sacred Heart Shrine in Como by another religious profession. Fr. Alfonso Crippa, superior general, presided at the solemn concelebration surrounded by 75 confreres from Italy and abroad, by many Sisters led by Mother General, cooperators, members of GLM and M2G, and many residents of our Houses.

The atmosphere was one that usually marks the most important and solemn events of our religious life. Everyone present was aware that a great event was unfolding under their eye, an event that one hundred years ago gave life and recognition to our Congregation. Our minds were crossed by the words that Fr. Mazzucchi wrote in his biography on the Founder, *“It was for us gathered there an occasion of some fear but at the same time a most impressive and solemn importance. Before the world and God, who was present and accepted our aspirations and resolutions expressed in those sacred vows, we were the little flock, the infirma mundi (the weak things of the world), the despised instruments which God, generous with comforts and promises, was calling into the public field of the Church and society for the providential beginning of an everlasting and glorious undertaking. This undertaking would succeed if we would be faithful to the divine designs and intentions for the restoration of the world, brought back to Christ with works of charity. At that late hour, while the*

mysterious silence of the night made our hearts beat with unusual strength, and the Angels of heaven certainly hastened into the sanctuary praying and rejoicing, Father Guanella spoke humble, good and simple words. But he spoke not only with his mouth, but with his great heart, his holy soul uttering accents of rare sublimity of thought and affection. Father Louis, the martyr of many labors and many past and future sufferings for our good, the father always so generous and compassionate, inestimable in his exquisite and most tender love for us who were guilty of reluctance and grave spiritual indolence to his burning desires, was deeply moved in thanking us for having given him the way, by accepting his invitation and putting ourselves in his following, of binding ourselves before God with those blessed bonds, and thus being able to close his tired days in oblivion, in poverty, and in the holy peace of religious life. Our hearts could stand no more, and we shed tears of love, of holy jubilation, of repentance, of gratitude which made a mark on our souls, never to be eradicated (page 148-149)."

Father Superior General in his homily gave to the Guanellian Family some guidelines, issues to be enlivened during this jubilee year by the spirit of our origins. He concluded saying that, "*Jubilee celebrations are not only an event to be remembered with great admiration, but a commitment, stimulus and occasion of improvement in our journey to holiness and of carrying out the works of mercy we have received as inheritance.*"

On that same day, the jubilee year was opened in all provinces of the Guanellian world. For the sake of brevity, we would like to mention the celebration that happened in India.

The Guanellian Communities joyfully gathered together at St. Joseph Seminary in Cuddalore (the Indian Mother House). The celebration began at the parish Sahaya Matha, the cornerstone of our Guanellian mission. The parish priest, Fr. Roosevelt heartily welcomed the Vicar General of the Pondicherry-Cuddalore Archdiocese, Rev. Anthony Samy, many local priests, religious and seminarians. The meaning of plenary indulgence and its spiritual effects, followed by intense communal prayer, preceded the procession. A Relic of the Blessed Founder was solemnly carried along the streets amidst prayers, songs and traditional dances until the procession reached the seminary where a solemn Eucharistic Celebration was held. The community of Chennai served at the altar, while the community of Bangalore was in charge of music. During the celebration, six boys from the nearby Boys Home received their First Communion. At the end, all Servants of Charity renewed their religious vows.

A prolonged applause welcomed the news regarding the Venerability of Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini. Posters on the centennial were distributed to the

numerous Houses and parishes. They summarize through pictures the different Guanellian Houses and apostolates in India.

The whole celebration was done in an atmosphere of great solemnity at the presence of many priests and religious from different dioceses and Congregations, confreres, seminarians, parishioners, benefactors and friends of the Institute.

The **Centennial Program** provides for many events, some of which are already celebrated.

Let us recall first the *Guanellian Pilgrimage to Holy Land* led by Fr. Umberto Brugnoli, vicar general. From 24 April through 3 May, 31 pilgrim confreres and sisters visited the *holy places*, has a series of conferences, intense moments of prayer and personal meditation-time. Our confreres welcomed them at the Holy Family House in Nazareth. Everyone witnessed a climate of family and unforgettable moments of joy and communion.

Another great event was the *Pilgrimage to Lourdes* together with the Diocese of Como and Unitalsi (12-18 October 2008). More than 200 people from the Guanellian Family (SdC, DSMP, cooperators, GLM) attended. Mary was very close, and that feeling will be for ever in the heart of the participants.

A third event dealt with the *Historical Seminars* in Rome and Como.

The planned monthly *day of recollection* for SdC and DSMP are registering a good participation.

On 7 June 2008, at the Mother House in Como the *Don Guanella Museum* was dedicated. It is organized around rooms associated with Fr. Guanella when living in Como (1886-1915) and objects belonging to the Founder and his closest collaborators. The new Museum was strongly pursued by the two Congregations (SdC and DSMP) and, in the words of the provincial superior, Fr. Remigio Oprandi, "*its purpose is to become a religious and cultural center that collects and preserves items referring to Fr. Guanella, and also to spread his charism, spirituality and ministry. The idea underlining the Museum was to create a place where a visitor can walk, meditate and appreciate the rich humanity, intense spirituality, generous charity, spiritual fatherhood of the Founder that are still today at work through his two Congregations and lay people inspired by him.*"

The Museum was dedicated around 3:00 pm and opened by the Mother General, Sr. Giustina Valicenti, and the Father General, Fr. Alfonso Crippa, the National GLM President. Mr. Vittore Mariani, Most Rev. Diego Coletti, Bishop of Como, Mr. Sante Frantellizzi, Prefect of Como Province, Mr. Stefano Bruni,

Mayor of Como, and Hon. Erica Rivolta. Numerous confreres, sisters and lay collaborators were attending, all there because attracted by the charism of the Founder in their journey towards holiness and charity.

The Museum offers to the visitor a thorough view of Fr. Louis Guanella as a priest of God, a man of active charity, a man of culture, a man in relation with God and neighbor, a view of his historical time and of his spiritual family present in many countries.

Another great event has been the “Display on Fr. Guanella” at the 29th edition of the Rimini Meeting (24-30 August 2008). It was possible through the tenacious commitment of Fr. Mario Lino Mapelli, SdC, who gives a summary description of it.

“The exhibition on Blessed Luigi Guanella has the purpose to show life, charism, and ministry of Father Guanella, and the educational method he had left to his religious to be brought forth in the world.

The display is divided into three different but unifying sections:

- Meeting Father Luigi Guanella. Step by step, a DVD would accompany the visitor through the different stages of life of the Founder and the places of his ministry;
- A series of panels will help the visitor to have a good picture of the Guanellian charism, houses, and religious Congregations;
- Every day, confreres will be on hand to present their specific Guanellian field: ministry among children, the disabled, the elderly, parish life, missions.

There are two ideas at the heart of the display: answering to the needs of the poor and lonely, and their education. Spiritual, physical and intellectual development pertains to all stages of human life. Even when something is lacking, they could be partially improved by their readiness to be open to reality, and to the increasing of their own self-esteem.

Father Guanella cared about formation and schooling before and after being a Founder. He was convinced that it was the key for the common people to fully mature and to see the beauty of their life and the results of their efforts.

Charitable works of mercy were never born from theory, but from practical needs. Once a need is identified, we have to intervene according to the teaching of the Gospel and the example of Jesus, the Good Samaritan and Good Shepherd.

At the exhibition, written material of Father Guanella will be available: letters, writings, books and articles on the Guanellian formation and identity. Many were the visitors who gave their appreciation on the job well done and on the opportunity they had to know more about our Founder.”

5. Historical Seminars on the occasion of the Centennial

Two were the historical seminars dedicated to the centennial. The first, “*Vowed to Charity*” was held in Como, Divine Providence House, on 7 June 2008. The second, “*The desired Approval*”, was celebrated in Rome, St. Joseph House, on 21 September 2008. Both were organized and prepared by Centro Studi Guanelliani in Rome. Though the subjects taken into consideration were different, the seminars had something in common: speakers, topics, and the presence of many SdC, DSMP and lay people. We offer here a summery on the first seminar held in Como.

After some words of introduction, delivered by both Superior Generals, the seminar was opened with a historical presentation. Fr. Saverio Xeres, director of Nicolò Rusca Center and expert on the history of the Como Diocese, gave a general view of the Diocese of Como during a period of time that had seen deep transformations, in particular during the year 1908. First, he briefly outlined significant figures among the clergy and the laity of that time, and of the content of ideas and activities that were occurring in that year. Secondly, Father Xeres brought to the attention of the audience the uneasy relationship that occurred between Father Guanella and his Bishop Alfonso Archi, who was Bishop of Como since 1906. Guanella’s apostolate was fully dedicated to serve the “least ones”. That activity, in the eyes of the Bishop, was a little bit unusual for a diocesan priest, and it was taking Guanella away from a more regular participation in the life of his own diocese. The two newly born Congregations were running Houses in different parts of Italy and Switzerland, and they were asking for more independence from the diocese. That was annoying the Bishop, in whose diocese their headquarters and several of their facilities were located. It took a long time for the Bishop to change his mind and to understand that “the unusual activity” of Fr. Guanella was the answer to the most hidden poverties of the time. He saw that Guanella was carrying out an apostolate that was a “providential complementarity” to the traditional charitable activities sponsored by the diocese. Finding out that those Houses were useful and giving prestige to his diocese, the Bishop in 1910 presented to his diocese Father Guanella as a man to be praised for his “big heart”, always open to welcoming and healing human miseries”.

The second presentation was more juridical. Father Giancarlo Rocca, an expert on the history of religious life and director of the Dictionary of Institutes of Consecrated Life, outlined a phenomenon of the time: the many requests forwarded to the Vatican since the beginning of 1800 by new religious Institutes requesting pontifical approval. Church Law was unprepared to welcome the new “breath of the Holy Spirit” that was changing religious life. The Holy See, in fact, did not treat the new Institutes, that were blossoming one after another, on the same level as the ancient Orders. Only at the beginning of 1900 did the Church

promulgate the first documents that were giving some guidelines to the new Congregations. We have to wait until the 1917 new Canon Law to have a full recognition of the members of those Congregations as true religious. In such context, the vows pronounced by Guanella and companions on March 24th, 1908, are not to be considered “public”, because the Servants of Charity Institute was not yet approved by the Church. Their profession of religious vows, however, should be considered “the beginning of a new way to perceive the Congregation”, the first crucial step leading to the *Decretum Laudis* published on August 15th, 1912. It was the first canonical recognition of the Holy See regarding the Servants of Charity.

Father Nino Minetti, SdC, superior general emeritus and Guanellian historian, gave a precise and passionate retrospect of the circumstances leading to the event that fundamentally changed the life of the new Institute. He read the first few lines of the minutes written by Father Guanella himself: “Evening of the Solemnity of the Annunciation, March 24th, 1908. After a spiritual triduum of preparation, according to the desires of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and in answer to the desire for some time expressed and cherished by the professed, the undersigned priests gathered together to make the profession of their perpetual simple vows in the Institute of the Servants of Charity in the following juridical order: being the founder, Father Luigi Guanella was the first to profess his perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience”. Regarding the other eleven religious, there is the list of their name, age, and period of time spent with Father Guanella. Father Leonardo Mazzucchi was one of the newly professed and on that evening he left moving words worthy to be quoted. “Before God, who was present and accepted our aspirations and resolutions expressed in those sacred vows, we were the little flock, the “*infirmi mundi*”, the unworthy instruments which God, generous with comforts and promises, was calling into the public field of the Church and society for the providential beginning of an everlasting and glorious undertaking. It will succeed if we will be faithful to the divine designs and intentions for the restoration of the world, brought back to Christ by works of charity”.

Sister Michela Carrozzino, DSMP, and director of the Centro Studi Guanelliani, reminded the audience that the year 1908 had been a year of many significant activities within the two Congregations, a “very good harvest” for the Guanellian Institutes. On that year, the Church was celebrating the 25th anniversary of Episcopal ordination and 50th anniversary of priestly ordination of the Holy Father, Pius X. All Guanellian Houses celebrated the event through many festive happenings, the first of which was the January 27th dedication of the House, near St. Pancrazio Basilica in Rome, named after the Pope. Later on, Father Guanella bought the land where the future St. Joseph al Trionfale Basilica would be built. For that purpose, he began a fund-raising campaign, made contact with many benefactors and started to check on different designs. His charitable ministry was already welcomed by many Vatican authorities. His participation in the International Eucharistic Congress in London, during the

month of September of that same year, gave him another precious opportunity to widen and foster his contacts with “big shots” that would reach their heights with the Pope’s personal friendship. Pius X would grant six private audiences to Guanella in that year. 1908 is also the year when the DSMP would receive their approval from the Holy See. On September 27th, 1908, the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars approved the Guanellian Sisters and officially welcomed them into the Church’s religious Congregations.

After thirty years as a founder, at 66, Father Guanella received finally the first authoritative confirmation that what he had done, and still was doing, was good in the eyes of the Church. He had already written in 1896: “By the approval of the Holy Mother Church, our Institutes will find life and prosperity”.

Thanks to this heritage totally rooted in the Church, the two Guanellian Institutes may joyfully celebrate their centennials, and may continue their witness to evangelical charity. Father Alfonso Crippa, SdC, superior general of the Servants of Charity, closed the seminar by saying: “Knowing our origins is an important step, because it keeps alive our identity, and helps us to be faithful to the charism. We have to believe that our going into the world and the running of our charitable ministries are authentic, for they come from the experience of the Founder, an experience that is much greater than our own ministry. While it is good to go back to our origins, each one of us, however, has to be aware of the demands of today’s world and be so creative that we too may one day become builders of history”.

6. Guanellian Cooperators

The Italian Association shows fidelity and good will in continuing its journey though facing some difficulties. What is lacking is new youthful blood that could inject the typical enthusiasm of youth. Both general and provincial councils are proposing some interventions favoring the progress of our third Guanellian family.

We would like here to present the most important activities produced by the Northern and Southern-Italy Cooperators.

Northern Italy Cooperators

On Sunday, 12 October 2008, the new social year was opened in the sacred Heart Shrine in Como. On the occasion of the Pauline Year, the provincial council proposed to the members a presentation on the charitable activity that is

carried out by Fr. Leonello Bigelli, SdC, at the “Casa Gastone” within the compound of St. Cajetan House in Milan. After a brief greeting delivered by the President, Fr. Bigelli gave his power-point presentation on his experience of charity. A Mass followed in which the members renewed their Promise. After lunch, the participants gathered together around the altar of Blesseds Louis and Clare for the proper prayers requested for acquiring the plenary indulgence on the occasion of the Centennial of the Servants of Charity Institute.

The provincial council has planned the Advent Day of Recollection in preparation for Christmas, to be held on Sunday, 14 December 2008, at the Youth Center, Via Don Luigi Guanella, 13, in Como. The Day was led by Fr. Giovanni Ceriotti, SdC, chaplain of Blessed Louis Guanella House/St. Ambrose ad Nemus, in Milan. Schedule: 2:30 pm, registration; 3:00 pm, meditation; 4:00 pm, Eucharistic Adoration and Confessions; 5:00 pm, Mass.

It was an occasion to gather together in prayer and fraternity, and to exchange to each other a very “Merry Christmas”.

Central and Southern-Italy Cooperators

On 3 October 2008, at the house hosting the Roman Province headquarters, the provincial council of the Central and Southern-Italy Cooperators gathered together with the Presidents of local groups of cooperators, and those Religious, delegated by the Guanellian Congregations to accompany them in their formation.

The meeting was productive in exchanging ideas and reflection. Schedule: 8:00 am, Morning Prayer and assembly; 12:00 Noon, Eucharistic Celebration presided by Fr. Pino Venerito, SdC; 3:00 pm, assembly; 6:00 pm, conclusion. 2008-09 Calendar of Activities:

• *Formative theme for local groups*

“A Year with St. Paul and Father Guanella”

a) The Word of God: “How and Why we should read the Bible”

b) “Don Guanella Voglia Di Bene”, new biography written by Mr. Mario Sgarbossa.

• *Days of Recollection*

The two Days of Recollection, Advent and Lent, could be carried out individually or in groups.

When, where and themes should be settle with the Religious who are animating the local groups and with the area Servant of Charity delegate.

- ***Provincial Retreats***

A Retreat is a prolonged time dedicated to silence and meditation. This year the theme is “Bread and Lord” and will be held during the month of July (when and where will be communicated later on).

- ***The Promise***

The Feast of Blessed Louis Guanella is still the established date for taking the Promise.

- ***Meeting for reviewing and planning***

This meeting, that gathers provincial council, presidents of local groups and religious delegates, will be held during the first week of October 2009.

Cooperators of the Santa Cruz Province (Brazil)

In our Province, the Association is growing. There are 383 among cooperators and aspiring cooperators divided into 33 local groups and two provinces. They regularly meet once a month for prayer, formation and planning activities.

During the year 2008, we held two general assemblies of cooperators, one in Rio de Janeiro-Anchieta (Brazil) on 23-24 August 2008, while the second at Capao da Canoa (Brazil) on 13-14 September 2008.

Both were crowded assemblies. More than 200 cooperators and aspiring cooperators were attending together with many SdC and DSMP.

The chosen theme “Missionary Disciples of Jesus Christ” and the logo “Charity and Life” should give a new boost to the members of the two associations so that they may carry out with renewed enthusiasm their vocation to be missionary disciples of Jesus Christ by promoting life in charity.

7. Guanellian Lay Movement

A) Italian Guanellian Lay Movement

• *Rome - Servants of Charity General House, 2 e 3 February 2008: Third Meeting of the Italian GLM National Council*

The Italian GLM national councils met three times during this first year of their mandate. At the General House of the SdC, Fr. Alfonso Crippa and his Councillors gave us a welcoming hospitality. To them we send our warm thanks.

We have spent two day of hard work on important and delicate topics. Prof. Vittore Mariani opened the meeting by expressing his appreciation for all that the Council had accomplished in its first year. He professed optimism for a bright future of the Movement, and gave thanks, for all that has been accomplished, to the providence of God the Father and to the intercession of the Founder.

A short report of topics, discussions and decisions we went through is following.

- Sr. Franca Vendramin, DSMP, read a short report on the GLM taken from the minutes of the SdC and DSMP general councils meeting held in Rome on 13 December 2008.

- The Council reviewed the rooting of the GLM in the country and took into consideration the *ad experimentum* draft of the GLM handbook.

- Fr. Bogoni introduced us to the Programs dealing with the first centennial of Fr. Guanella's consecration. On the occasion of the First Centennial of the Religious Profession of Fr. Guanella and his first confreres, the SdC general council has promoted a two year reflection on the values of religious profession, and had published different activities concerning the Guanellian Family. The activities will be printed as soon as possible and spread around as much as possible.

- Before closing the meeting, the Council had planned the calendar of their future activities.

• *Barza d'Ispra, 30-31 August 2008: IV Meeting of the Italian GLM National Council*

The fourth meeting of the Italian GLM national council was held this year in Barza d'Ispra at the end of August. The meetings were supported by daily

prayer and Eucharistic celebration. Fr. Giancarlo Schievano, SdC, welcomed us, together with his confreres and collaborators, by a cordial and fraternal hospitality. To all them our gratitude. Three were the main points taken into consideration: Third Draft of the GLM Document; Preparation for the meeting with the general councils of SdC and DSMP and the superiors of the Italian Provinces; planning and organization of the National Assembly to be held on December 2008.

• ***Rome-Santa Rosa House, 4- 5 October 2008: Meeting among the two general councils of SdC and DSMP, the superiors of the provinces, and the Italian GLM National Council***

After a profitable two day meeting, we offer the final decisions on the GLM:

- before Christmas 2008, the general and provincial superiors of the SdC and DSMP should send to the GLM secretary, Mr. Dino Stella, via e-mail (mlg.italia@guanelliani.it) the written contributions on the GLM Document;
- before January 2009, drawing of the new draft of the Document by all the interested parties;
- before Summer 2009, in a date to be determined, meeting among the GLM National Council, general councils of SdC and DSMP, and superiors of SdC and DSMP of the Italian provinces for the signing of the Document;
- in the meantime, visit to the Pontifical Council for the Laity to learn about the criteria necessary to become an official Church Movement;
- pledge to find a lay person to be the GLM point of reference in each House;
- 6-7-8 December 2009: GLM national assembly.

B) Bogotá (Colombia), 24-25 May 2008

• ***III Nazional Congress of the Colombian Lay Movement and I Nazional Congress of the Guanellian Youth Groups***

As GLM in Colombia we have gathered together two Congresses into one:

- Third GLM National Congress
- First National Congress of the Guanellian Youth Groups.

For some time, the GLM groups in Colombia were committed to sustain the Guanellian Youth Groups and to make possible that, within the GLM groups, a Guanellian Youth Groups may be established.

We were joyfully surprised to notice that the four GLM groups were able to establish and develop their own youth group. That was the reason behind the invitation of the Guanellian Youth Groups to participate to the Third GLM Congress.

As Fr. Pedagna, SdC, reports, the idea was a success. We gathered in Bogotá, St. Mary House, run by the DSMP: around 130 people, among them were 50 young people. The GLM groups went through three themes (Parish, Formation, Laity) taken from the Aparecida Document and from the GLM Document, while the four Youth Groups gave their own reports on their origins, their formation, and their areas, receiving at the end a standing ovation.

An intense and creative Eucharistic Celebration close the meeting. We should mention also the fraternal meals impeccably served by the GLM of Bogotá.

The Sisters DSMP were simply wonderful in their welcome and care.

It was a truly beautiful experience of the Guanellian charismatic family-spirit. Both GLM and Youth Groups offered interesting ideas for further developments.

C) A Elverson (Pennsylvania), U.S.A, 10-12 October 2008: Third U.S.A GLM National Meeting

The members of the Guanellian Family gathered at Elverson (Pennsylvania) to listen at a message of hope during their Third GLM National Meeting.

A total of thirty participants gathered in prayer to receive from and give encouragement to the SdC and DSMP present in the United States.

Fr. Luigi De Giambattista, superior of Divine Providence Province, gave a talk on hope, a virtue we all have received from Jesus. Faith – he said – cannot be closed into some norms. It is above all meeting God, a meeting that procures joy and hope. Our Guanellian apostolate is first of all a way to recognize beauty where others see ugliness (especially in the disabled). The handicapped are our treasures. By hope we were saved, and we have to bring that message of hope to others.

8. Guanellian Youth Movement

VII National Meeting of the Guanellian Youth Movement

(Napoli - Centro don Guanella - 24/27 April 2008)

“Commitment, work and being in relation to each other during free-time and festive celebrations”.

That was the theme offered to our meditation and discussion at our 7th meeting. Many were the young people who attended and who had come from the entire Italy, from North to South, and from the Islands.

Moments of prayer (morning and evening prayer, Guanellian rosary...) were dotting our days together with games, songs and much fun.

That was not all we have done. We had interesting topics offered to us by different speakers: prof. Luigi Caramiello (sociology professor), prof. Silvio Lugnano (professor in criminology), prof. Mirella Giovene (sociology professor) and Fr. Cesare Riva, SdC.

Another great event was the concert offered by Fr. Giosy Cento. It was the first time that I and many others had the opportunity to listen to this priest whose mission is to provide inspiration through his songs that speak about love, solidarity, life and faith in the Lord Jesus.

There was a lot of work, too, especially for the local youth and volunteers who generously gave their time and energy to prepare and organize the meeting.

Useful and meaningful was the candle-light procession along the streets of Naples on Friday evening, 25 April. It was a way to attract the attention of the local people to fight together against drugs and organized crime, plagues that are affecting more and more youth and society.

The whole meeting was an occasion to underline our being a family, the beautiful Guanellian family.

With us there were several priests and sisters who are leading the formation of our groups, the superior general, Fr. Alfonso Crippa (who presided at the concluding Mass), the provincial superior, Fr. Pino Venerito, Sr. Franca Vendramin, general councillor of the DSMP, some seminarians from the International Seminary in Rome with their rector, Fr. Nico Rutigliano, two novices, Salvatore and Michele, the confreres belonging to the “Community for Vocations” in Bari, representatives of the GLM National Council. To all and to the community in Naples our heartfelt thanks for being with us.

From this meeting, ideas to go on were not lacking at all. We are aware that we have the responsibility to “give reason to the hope that is in us”. It is the main leitmotiv that was at the center of all the addresses given to us.

Young people who have a clear Christian identity strongly “demand” hope and, through their belonging to Christ, they would like to build a new humanism.

I give my best to all the participants to treasure what they have received so that they may make visible our being Guanellian Youth when working, playing, free-time, and having festive gatherings.

Rosanna Furci

9. Formation

a) Course for Formators (II year)

The Course (Roma - 31 August/21 September 2008) was addressed to those confreres who have participated to the previous one held last year. 27 confreres from Asia, Africa, Latin America, U.S.A., and Europe were present.

There were two purposes for the course:

- 1) To give an opportunity to Guanellian formators to enrich their ministry by adding important elements from the Sciences of Formation according to a Christian anthropology and the Guanellian spirit present in the Servants of Charity *Ratio Formationis*.
- 2) To check on their own formative abilities and to give them a better direction (in view of better progress of the individual/s under their care), and above all of their own progress in better serving the Church, the Institute, and candidates.

Topics: *personality development and pathology; pathologies and immaturity in regards to affective-sexual development; discernment; family influence in a vocation journey and dynamics of a vocation to married life; guidelines on social psychology and community dynamics; accompanying a vocation and guided review of that stage.*

A round table discussion on how formation could affect the candidate on relevant themes: acculturation (Fr. Crippa), finances (Fr. Nava), apostolic spirituality (Fr. Lorenzetti).

The week dedicated to knowing and deepening the *Ratio Formationis*, led by Frs. Allegra and Rutigliano, was hard-working and fruitful. The participants had the opportunity to visit our Houses in Perugia and Naples.

b) Course on the Ratio at the General House in Rome (14-20 May, 2008)

From five countries, Frs. Mauro Vogt (Brazil), Gustavo De Bonis (Argentina), Carlos Staper (Mexico), Charles Makanka (Congo) and Uche Desmond (Nigeria) convened at the General House in Rome to study and have a better knowledge of the new SdC Ratio Formations. What is the meaning of these Latin words?

More or less, we may explain the ratio as what a formation of a Servant of Charity entails. The Ratio presents the formative curriculum of a man who desires to become a Guanellian religious. It gives goals, criteria and dynamisms on the entire formative journey of a Guanellian, from postulancy through novitiate, juniorate, and permanent formation till reaching the point of a full resemblance of the religious to Jesus, the creator who chose us out of love.

Our confreres, Frs. Nico Rutigliano and Alessandro Allegra were our guides. By showing a lot of patience and great experience, they accompanied us step by step through the different themes. Open to our interventions, they pass on us the experience of the Congregation that in the last few years did its best to draft a document fruit of many suggestions and observations coming from previous general chapters and committees.

The Ratio was approved by the last general chapter and became part of the Congregation's most important texts together with the Constitutions, and the GEP. As an official document, it should be welcome, loved and studied. That was the main reason why we convened in Rome: to get a better knowledge of it, to make it known to our confreres, and to invite them to love and appreciate it.

We are happy to have a stable document helping in forming future generations of Guanellians, a text that is trans-cultural, a practical instrument that collects the experience of the Church along the centuries and the spirit of the Congregation.

The fraternal presence of Frs. Umberto and Piero made us comfortable at the House, and spurred us to comply with the purpose of our going to Rome: to establish the foundations of our formation curriculum according to our cultures, and of the motivations of being Guanellians consecrated to God.

The title of the Ratio, "Through the ways of the heart", is very meaningful: it is the atmosphere of our Guanellian formation, the pedagogy of the heart.

Hopefully, we will be able to transmit to the confreres its contents and values in a way that all of us will be journeying to the Lord by one mind and heart.

Let our Blesseds guide us.

P. GUSTAVO DE BONIS

10. New and Future Guanellian Activities in the World

Our Congregation never stops. In spite of its lack of vocations in the Old World, the advancing age of many confreres that were till yesterday valid witnesses of the charism in mission territory, our sight is all the time eyeing future unfolding new horizons. We are encouraged by the blossoming of many new youthful reinforcements from Asia, Africa and in part from Latin-America.

We welcome the near opening and dedication of the *first House in Poland* in 2009.

The so much in distress and needy Democratic Republic of Congo now has a *second House and religious community in Kinshasa*.

In India (Divine Providence Province) a new *Postulancy House* was opened in Sivagangai (T.N.). This new community will extend its care to poor and disabled persons of nearby villages at their homes. Next June 2009, the SdC will take over the care and management of an already functioning facility for 300 residential patients and given us by the Diocese of Ootacamund (Oothy) in *Thalavadi*.

In the Philippines, the SdC are finalizing the taking over of a facility for elderly and boys in poverty owned and run by the Diocese of Balanga, near Manila.

Regarding Vietnam, we are still in contact with the local religious authorities, and we plan to send there two confreres from India next June-July 2009 for a first approach and to learn the language.

11. 25 years of our Guanellian presence in Mexico

On 7 December 2007 we have closed the celebration of 25 years of our Guanellian presence in Mexico. It was opened at the DSMP House in Mexico City by a Holy Mass. The following 15th was dedicated to present the different activities (Day care for Children, Techo Fraterno, Domingo Frantellizzi Community Center). The 29th was dedicated to seminars and exhibitions of musical groups. On 5 December, we celebrated an appreciation day for staff and volunteers; the celebration was presided at by Bishop Victor Sanchez, vicar of the area, who was surrounded by fifteen confreres, including our general secretary, Fr. Piero Lippoli, and our general treasurer, Fr. Mario Nava.

On Saturday, 6 December, Fr. Cosimo Pedagna, one of the pioneers and for 16 years in Mexico, presided at a celebration for the benefactors. On Sunday, 7 December, solemn Mass presided at by Bishop Pierre Christophe, Apostolic Nunzio to Mexico, at the presence of all the Guanellian activities and communities. A dinner, a show and much more followed.

Fr. Lippoli commented, *“It is an apostolate desired by the Lord and carried out in prayer”*. He recalled the day, 2 December 1983, when in Rome, in the Good Shepherd Church, a Mass was celebrated before the departure to Mexico City of Fr. Pietro Scano and Fr. Giacomo Panaro.

God’s call came through the local Church; *“a journey founded on trust, because, as Fr. Guanella used to say, it is God at work”*. In welcoming the two missionaries in Mexico City, Bishop Carlos Talavera Ramirez said, *“Prepare yourselves to see and meet a lot of poverty, the day to day condition of the people you go to meet. However, that is also the condition of those who are God’s friends, those who God loves”*.

Many other confreres later on joined the two in their ministry, followed by Mexican and Colombian seminarians who then became confreres and Guanellian priests.

Fr. Piero added, *“We are here today to give our thanks to all past and present confreres and to their dedication, tenacity and enthusiasm shown along these years. We also thank the local religious authorities who have welcomed, helped, and encouraged us in many ways; our thanks to the civil authorities who have helped us in many difficult situations when we were looking for places suitable to open our activities towards the poor. We have to thank many good people who were close to us and giving their precious advice, manual work, and financial support. We have to especially give thanks to the people of God who surrounds us, the poor people, friend of God and ours. Perhaps our confreres, in coming over, were thinking that they were bringing something to this population. On the contrary, they had received a lot, and, through them, the Congregation. Above all, we have to give thanks to the Lord, Father of Providence. Thank you, O Lord, because your Providence was never lacking during these 25 years. You were all the time close to us. After all, the Congregation is yours, and it is You who are at work through our hands.”*

12. Meeting of SdC and DSMP provincial superiors of Latin-America

That 20-22 February 2008 meeting was held in Canela (Brazil). Present were Fr. Carlos Blanchoud, SdC, general councillor, Sr. Georgina Alves da

Costa, DSMP, general councillor, Fr. Enrico Colafemina, SdC, superior of Our Lady of Guadalupe delegation, Fr. Sergio Rojas, SdC, superior of the Cruz del Sur province, Fr. Ciro Attanasio, SdC, superior of the Santa Cruz province, Sr. Neli Bordignon, DSMP, superior of the Our Lady Aparecida province, Sr. Antonina Sanchez, DSMP, superior of the St. José province, and Sr. Sara Rodrigues, DSMP, superior of the Colombian delegation.

Discussed topics: Document of the 5th Conference of Latin-America Bishops held in Aparecida (Brazil) presented by Fr. Geraldo Hachmann, professor of theology at PUC of Porto Alegre and member of the Vatican theological committee. Fr. Mauro Vogt, SdC, made comparison between some aspects of the Document and the Guanellian charism.

On the second and third day, we discussed topics of mutual interest: annual meeting among provincial superiors, by-annual meeting among provincial councils, and organization of the “Juniore” meeting to be held on July 2998.

Other subjects on the table were: the importance to establish in each House the GLM; how to increase communication between SdC and DSMP; how to boost vocations ministry; suggestions for the meeting among provincial councils to be held in San Paolo on February 2009.

13. Seminar on “The art of accompanying people to deal with death”

Over 300 people made their formal registration. However, the participants to the seminar were around 600. The meeting was sponsored by the Pious Union of St. Joseph at the St. Joseph al Trionfale Basilica in Rome (25-26 January 2008) that will celebrate its centennial of foundation in 2009. Its enrolled members are hundreds of thousand and present in all continents. Fr. Luigi Guanella established the Pious Union by giving it its own charism: accompanying the souls of people in their last moments of life.

An appointment continuously removed

Fr. Mario Carrera, SdC, director of the Pious Union in Rome, said that, “The meeting’s purpose is to invite death to come out in the open, from the hidden place where our culture has relegated it, so that we may face it. We should go back and repossess the fact that death is a natural event, an event that

gives sense to our life. Since birth, man journeys toward that last event of his human life, the moment when a human being completes his earthly life and meets his God.”

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican Secretary of State, said in his homily, concluding the seminar, “People use all tricks to exorcise death. Instead, we should learn how to face it in peace and, above all, to prepare ourselves to meet it. Christians in particular should be “witness of the good news”, He, the Christ who proclaimed himself the light that scatters darkness, and life that destroys death. Though still an enigma, death should not throw us into despair or, worse, terrorizing us. We should live our life reaching out to the life that never dies and cultivating the hope that leads to eternity.”

Educate about death to educate about life

Death is a “sacred topic”, and “our culture needs sacredness”. This is what prof. Vittorino Andreoli, psychiatrist, said in his opening remarks on “Educate about death to educate about life”.

“Our society expelled the idea of death and even the experience of death. Today’s man forgets the past because it is not useful to a highly accelerated and frenzy society like ours. He does not understand the future either, because everything happens in real time, right now. In this way, there is no time to think about death and to prepare ourselves to die. There is no time even to pay attention to those who die. Therefore, one dies alone, because one lives alone. There is no more natural death. There is no more real death. There are only show-deaths, the “artistic” deaths so many times portrayed in movies or TV shows. There is a set of videogames called Killers. A player piles up points by killing human targets. The winner would be the one who “virtually” kills more. Games like these help boys to consider the death of someone else as entertaining, or a heroic act. Adults too have an “unhealthy” relationship with death. It is considered a disease. One dies because he is a sick person. People do not want to die.

Once a person reaches success, he does not want to loose it at all, while who does not have it will do everything to possess it. The death is an obstacle to power. Instead such power-disease that devastates our society could be healed only through an education about death. Born as mortal human beings, we have to learn how to die and how to recognize the needs of the dying, in order to prepare ourselves to face our own death, because death will come sooner or later to everyone.”

Trust in one who does not leave us in the tomb

The Jesuit theologian Massimo Pampaloni said that “the degree of a society civilization is measured up by the attention that it gives to its dead and to death. Ours is of a disheartening quality. We use all the available tricks to remove death from view. We hide it, but at the same time we make a show of it through morbid curiosity and indecent images. The root cause is only one: fear. Thinking about death is “paralyzing” because it questions on how meaningless is life. Death interrupting life could be compared to the discrepancy existing between reality and our expectations from reality. Any hustle and bustle under the sun is in vain, because death will have the final word. Perceiving how absurd life appears in front of death carries dramatic philosophical results, the ‘rebellion’ of Albert Camus, or ‘the falling into the abyss of insanity’ of Durrenmatt. We may try other ways to survive absurdity: obsessive erotizing every bit of our life, over-enjoying life by all means, fanatic care of health, banning the notion of getting old, pursuing immortality and body perfection through aesthetic surgery. They are just effects of an obsessive fear of death and of its removal from our concern. For us Christians, death loses its deadly power on life once we believe that our life is in the hands of someone else who is not going to abandon us in a tomb for ever. The essayist Carlo Lapucci said that the funeral procession, that for years was literally stopping all activities in a town, is disappearing. Now it is no more a funeral, it is ‘smuggling’ out of a corpse. Once we refuse to accept the supernatural and Christian view of death, the abyss that opens up and welcomes our human life is nothingness”.

(a cura di Emanuela Bambara)

14. Our Web-site and E-mail

Dear Confreres.

As you may have noticed, we are constantly annoying you on the necessity of using modern means (= internet) for a faster, more direct and effective communication. We are doing it because we are convinced that to many confreres the computer is still an electronic taboo or just a simpler way to write letters or a homily.

In the previous Charitas, I have offered an important document from the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (though not of recent publication)

inviting religious to enter into the world of the internet for a personal cultural-religious benefit. Now I am presenting you what the Pope says through the recent message for the XLIII World Day of Social Communications.

Through our web-site www.guanelliani.org we are trying our best to keep you up-to-dated on the main events happening within our Congregation. Many confreres thanked us for giving them the opportunity to have a real-time follow up of the provincial chapters.

Now we are up-to-dating the reserved area of our web-site. In it, you may find our formative and informative documents, plus the different provincial “bulletins”.

Of course we need only one thing: to get into the habit of daily opening our web-site and to learn some advanced trick to enter into it. It is not so difficult!

Time ago I sent to all confreres of perpetual vows their address and password so that they may enter into the web and reserved area.

Once again I give you the needed instructions:

- To enter into the web mail you need to write your address and password (e.g. lippoli.piero@guanelliani.it and password).
- To enter into the reserved area it is enough the first part (e.g. lippoli.piero) and password.
- Usually appears a window advising you that you are not yet registered. Please, fill out what is requested and everything would be done automatically.
- If you desire to have more security, you may change your password. Please, follow these steps:
 1. Open the web-site guanelliani.org and click on *mail*.
 2. On the screen it would appear a security message recommending you not to go on. Disregard it, and click on “continue” (or something like that).
 3. Write your complete address and usual password.
 4. Once you enter, from the Menu (at the left side of the screen) click “PREFERENZE” (preferences). From two choices that will appear, please, choose “Cambia password” (change password).
 5. Write down twice your new password paying attention that is written correctly and click “MEMORIZZA PASSWORD” (memorize password).

The new password grants you greater confidentiality because only you can know it.

Because there is no need of particular confidentiality, **when entering the reserved area**, please, use all the time the given password, otherwise a new registration will be needed.

Don PIERO LIPPOLI



1. CHIUSURA DEFINITIVA DI ATTIVITÀ A GAETA E ALIENAZIONE DELLA STRUTTURA

Prot. n. 938/01-08

Al Rev.do Superiore provinciale
Don Pino Venerito
e Consiglio
Via Aurelia Antica, 446
ROMA

Il Superiore generale, nella riunione di Consiglio del 21 gennaio 2008, alla presenza del Consiglio della Provincia Romana, ha preso atto della chiusura ormai definitiva della Casa “*Opera don Guanella*” di Gaeta.

Da quando, alla fine del 2003, è stata sospesa l’attività con gli anziani, la Provincia ha tentato in vari modi di dare ancora vita alla Casa, ma tutte le iniziative si sono mostrate vane. Si è giunti quindi alla decisione di alienare l’immobile e quanto è di nostra proprietà. Presentatosi un’occasione valutata buona anche dai tecnici della Provincia, si sta procedendo al completamento delle pratiche per l’alienazione.

Pertanto il Superiore generale, avendo ricevuto il parere positivo dei suoi consiglieri, *dichiara definitivamente chiusa l’attività della nostra Congregazione in Gaeta, località Conca* e autorizza all’alienazione di quanto di nostra pertinenza, fatte salve tutte le procedure a norma del Diritto Canonico.

Con l’occasione vogliate gradire i nostri fraterni saluti.

Don PIERO LIPPOLI
Segretario generale

Roma, 28 gennaio 2008

2. EREZIONE PROVINCIA NOSTRA SIGNORA DI GUADALUPE

Prot. n. 937/02-08

Il Superiore generale, facendo riferimento alle indicazioni del 18° Capitolo generale dei Servi della Carità, Mozione n. 47, circa la riorganizzazione degli Organismi di Governo della Congregazione,

avendo indetto ampia consultazione presso tutti i confratelli della Delegazione Nostra Signora di Guadalupe e Santiago Apostolo, a norma del n. 309 dei Regolamenti,

avendo raccolto il parere positivo dei due Superiori e rispettivi Consigli delle due Delegazioni,

avendo ricevuto il voto positivo collegiale dei suoi Consiglieri, nella riunione del 7 e 8 gennaio 2008

erige

a norma delle Costituzioni n. 124, la nuova Provincia religiosa, con il nome di PROVINCIA NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE.

Essa è attualmente costituita dalle seguenti nazioni: Spagna, Messico, Colombia e Guatemala.

La sua sede legale è la seguente: PROVINCIA NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE, Calle Pino y Arrayán s/n - Colonia S. Miguel Teotongo - 09510 México D.F.

P. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superiore generale

Don PIERO LIPPOLI
Segretario generale

Roma, 2 febbraio 2008, Presentazione al Tempio di Gesù Cristo

3. ERECTION OF A NEW RELIGIOUS HOUSE

Prot. n. 966/05-08

To the Rev. Superior
Fr. Lugi De Giambattista
and his Council
Divine Providence Province
Samupillai Nagar
CUDDALORE

The general Council at the 5th of May meeting, has read a your request of erection a new Religious House in Legazpi. Taken into consideration the motivations and a correct number of confreres who will belong to that community,

the Superior general erects

as Religious House the Community of HARONG KAN SAGRADA FAMILIA in Legazpi.

No objection for Fr. Battista Omodei, appointed as local Superior by the Provincial Council.

Wishing to Fr. Battista and to all the confreres of this Community a good work in fraternal union and joyful enthusiasm, we assure our remembrance to the Lord and to Mary Mother of Divine Providence.

Fr. PIERO LIPPOLI
Secretary general

Rome, May 7, 2008

4. ERECTION OF A NEW COMMUNITY

Prot. n. 989/07-08

To the Rev. Superior
Fr. Lugi De Giambattista
and his Council
Divine Providence Province
Samupillai Nagar
CUDDALORE

The general Council, at the 15th of July meeting, has read your request of erection a new religious Community in Sivagangai. Taken into consideration the good motivations

the Superior general erects

the Community “*YESUVANAM*” - *Puliyadithammam (P.O.) - Kalaiyarkoil (Via) Sivagangai - 630405, as residence*, under the dependency of the provincial Superior.

Imploring from God special graces and blessings upon this new creature of love and charity, we wish a very good work in the formation field and in our mission.

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superior general

Fr. PIERO LIPPOLI
General Secretary

Rome, July 16, 2008, Memory of the blessed Virgin of the Carmel

5. EREZIONE A CASA RELIGIOSA DELLA COMUNITÀ PASTORALE/FORMATIVA DI COMO

Prot. n. 997/07-08

Al Rev.do Superiore provinciale
Don Remigio Oprandi
e Consiglio
Provincia Sacro Cuore
Via Tommaso Grossi, 18
COMO

Il Superiore generale, nella riunione di Consiglio del 14-16 luglio 2008, avendo letto la vostra richiesta di costituire la comunità in oggetto come Casa religiosa, lette e discusse le motivazioni, avendo ricevuto il voto favorevole dei suoi consiglieri,

erige

a CASA RELIGIOSA *la Comunità Pastorale/formativa “Beato Luigi Guanella”* che risiede in Como in Via Luigi Guanella, 13 ed esprime il suo consenso in favore di don Domenico Scibetta come Superiore della medesima.

Augurando un proficuo lavoro nel delicato campo che questa comunità sta portando avanti con dedizione ed entusiasmo, assicuriamo fraterne preghiere.

P. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superiore generale

Don PIERO LIPPOLI
Segretario generale

Roma, 19 luglio 2008

6. APPROVAZIONE DELLA COMUNITÀ DI CAMPODOLCINO

Prot. n. 998/07-08

Al Rev.do Superiore provinciale
Don Remigio Oprandi
e Consiglio
Provincia Sacro Cuore
Via Tommaso Grossi, 18
COMO

Il Superiore generale, nella riunione di Consiglio del 14-16 luglio 2008, avendo letto la vostra richiesta di costituire una nuova comunità in Campodolcino, nella sede della parrocchia recentemente affidata alla Congregazione, ricevuto il parere positivo, **approva la nuova comunità come Residenza alle dipendenze del Superiore provinciale.**

Augurando un sereno e proficuo lavoro ai confratelli che hanno dato la loro disponibilità nell'animazione di questa parrocchia tanto cara a tutta la Congregazione, assicuriamo un costante ricordo al Signore.

Don PIERO LIPPOLI
Segretario generale

Roma, 19 luglio 2008

7. CHIUSURA ATTIVITÀ SCUOLA PATRONATO NOSTRA SIGNORA DI NAZARETH

Prot. n. 999/07-08

Al Rev.do Superiore provinciale
Pe. Ciro Attanasio
e Consiglio
Provincia Santa Cruz
PORTO ALEGRE

Il Superiore generale, nella riunione di Consiglio del 14-16 luglio 2008, ha preso in esame la vostra lettera, datata 14 luglio a firma del provinciale, Pe. Ciro Attanasio, nella quale si chiede l'autorizzazione a procedere nella chiusura dell'attività della scuola Nostra Signora di Nazareth. Il Consiglio ha esaminato le ragioni che vi spingono a questo passo e le ha trovate giuste e motivate.

Il Superiore generale quindi, avuto il consenso dei suoi Consiglieri, concede il suo nulla osta per questa chiusura di attività, esprimendo voti che venga incentivata sia la scuola materna che il semiconvitto per i poveri bambini della strada.

Prendo occasione per augurare a tutti un buon prosiegua di lavoro nei vari campi della nostra missione di carità, assicurando un fraterno ricordo al Signore.

Don PIERO LIPPOLI
Segretario generale

Roma, 19 luglio 2008

8. CHIUSURA DELLA NOSTRA PRESENZA A CEGLIE MESSAPICA

Prot. n. 1002/09-08

Al Rev.do Superiore provinciale
Don Pino Venerito
e Consiglio
Via Aurelia Antica, 446
ROMA

Il Superiore generale, nella riunione di Consiglio del 15-17 settembre 2008,
avendo preso atto della firma da parte del Superiore provinciale di una lettera di intenti con l'Ordinario della Diocesi di Oria, con la quale la Congregazione si impegna a donare alla Diocesi la struttura riguardante l'aula liturgica e la porzione di fabbricato adibito a uffici parrocchiali, aule di catechismo e quant'altro,
avendo egualmente preso atto del definitivo ritiro dei nostri confratelli da Ceglie Messapica;
avendo ricevuto il voto favorevole del suo Consiglio, a norma del n. 345 dei regolamenti,
dichiara definitivamente chiusa la nostra presenza a Ceglie Messapica.

È sempre doloroso chiudere una Casa o un'attività, ma ancor più nel caso di Ceglie, dopo tanti anni di fecondo lavoro tra il popolo di Dio e soprattutto verso migliaia di minori che hanno ricevuto insieme alla formazione umana e intellettuale, anche quella dello spirito. Molti di quei ragazzi sono stati e lo sono tuttora nostri confratelli. A loro e a tutti quelli che in qualche modo si sono sentiti e ancor si sentono legati alla nostra Opera di Ceglie il nostro ringraziamento, le nostre scuse, la nostra preghiera.

P. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superiore generale

Don PIERO LIPPOLI
Segretario generale

Roma, 18 settembre 2008

9. APPOINTMENTS

- **Prot. n. 934 del 6 gennaio 2008**
 - Suor Michela Carrozzino, Direttrice del Centro Studi a Roma
- **Prot. n. 958 del 24 aprile 2008**
 - P. Cosimo Pedagna, II Consigliere provinciale (Provincia N.S. Guadalupe)
- **Prot. n. 959 del 24 aprile 2008**
 - P. Carlos Staper, III Consigliere provinciale (Provincia N.S. Guadalupe)
- **Prot. 961 del 24 aprile 2008**
 - P. Enrico Colafemina, Superiore provinciale (Provincia N.S. Guadalupe)
- **Prot. n. 962 del 24 aprile 2008**
 - P. Alfonso Martinez, Vicario e I Consigliere (Provincia N.S. Guadalupe)
- **Prot. n. 967 del 7 maggio 2008**
 - Fr. Eduardo Cerbito, Superiore della comunità di Quezon City (Filippine)
- **Prot. n. 984 del 16 luglio 2008**
 - Don Marco Grega, Superiore della comunità di Genova (Provincia Sacro Cuore)
- **Prot. n. 990 del 18 luglio 2008**
 - P. Juan Mauel Arija, Superiore della comunità di Chapas (Guatemala)
- **Prot. n. 993 del 18 luglio 2008**
 - P. José Angel Villegas, Economo provinciale (Provincia N.S. Guadalupe)
- **Prot. n. 996 del 19 luglio 2008**
 - Don Fernando Giudici, Economo provinciale e Procuratore (Provincia Sacro Cuore)

- **Prot. n. 1001 del 27 luglio 2008**
 - P. Bruno Tremolada, Superiore della comunità di Citta del Messico
- **Prot. n. 1015 del 15 dicembre 2008**
 - Don Angelo Gottardi, Superiore della comunità di Como

10. PASSAGGE OF PROVINCE

- **Prot. n. 948 del 10 marzo 2008**
 - Don Giovanni Case rientra nella Provincia Sacro Cuore
- **Prot. n. 968 del 8 maggio 2008**
 - Don Angelo Gottardi, dalla Provincia Cruz del Sur alla Provincia Sacro Cuore
- **Prot. n. 978 del 6 giugno 2008**
 - Don Domenico Saginario, dalla Provincia Romana S. Giuseppe alla Divine Providence Province

11. USCITE - ESCLAUSTRAZIONI - PERMESSI

- **Assenza con permesso**
 - P. Enrique Lopez Messina (Provincia Cruz del Sur), il 22 marzo 2008
 - Victor Troncoso (Provincia Cruz del Sur), il 10 giugno 2008 per due anni
 - Fr. M. Thanaskar (Divine Providence Province), il 26 settembre 2008
- **Hanno lasciato definitivamente la Congregazione**
 - Morales Rodriguez Ch. Oscar (Cruz del Sur) il 7 marzo 2008
 - Songa Lazar Ch. Ravi Kumar (Divine Providence Province) il 15 aprile 2008
 - Bakomba Kakala Ch. Blaise Donatine (Del. N.S. della Speranza) il 22 aprile 2008

- Joseph Thomas Ch. Rembert Fernando (Divine Providence Province) il 26 maggio 2008
- Antony Samy Ch. Soul Raj (Divine Providence Province) il 30 maggio 2008
- Belobakadja Lessaka Ch. François (Del. N.S. della Speranza) il 10 giugno 2008
- Rozo Rodriguez P. Gabriel Omar (Provincia N.S. Gudalupe), il 4 giugno 2008
- Oldani Fr. Sergio Juan (Cruz del Sur) il 19 giugno 2008
- Mabaya Fr. Nakasila Ghislain (Del. N.S. della Speranza) il 1° agosto 2008
- Iorlaha Chia Ch. Raphael (Del. N.S. della Speranza) il 14 agosto 2008
- Nsiala Ngemba Ch. Jean Pierre (Del. N.S. della Speranza) il 14 agosto 2008
- Vargas Torres Ch. Luis (Cruz del Sur) il 25 novembre 2008

12. RIENTRI

- Fr. Robert Vicor Raj (Divine Providence Province), il 9 giugno 2008



DOCUMENTS

1. January 2009 Meeting with Superiors of Provinces and Delegation

Ai Rev.di Superiori
di Province e Delegazione
Loro Sedi

RE: Relevant points and decisions from the Meeting with Superiors of Provinces and Delegation (Rome, 12-17 January 2009)

Dear Confreres,

Every year, in January, the superiors of provinces and delegation meet in Rome. The general council then gathers together to express its own impressions and discuss the main points and decisions taken into consideration by the meeting. They are busy days spent in friendship and hard work. We addressed important subjects, trying our best to draw from them some operative plans that each province should then undertake. I have summarized those operative issues into seven points.

1. Authority as service

We have examined authority, as we Guanellians experience it, in the light of the document, published on 11 May 2008 by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “The service of



authority and obedience.” What we have found out is that our Congregation is in need of a renewal on both “ruling” and “obeying.” Fortunately, there are no major anomalies in any province or delegation. From what your superiors said in the meeting, I have summarized the following points:

- There is the real necessity to have the confreres attend a series of courses to improve their service in authority;
 - This course should be mandatory to all superiors;
 - It could be open also to other interested confreres and to those sent by their provincial superior;
 - The first stage, twenty days, should be done in Rome probably during the period of the canonization of the Founder;
 - The second stage should be carried out within a province or delegation.
- New boosting for more and more integration among the three Latin-American provinces through regular and well-planned meetings;

- Necessity of interchanging confreres among provinces and delegation:
 - the youngest provinces and delegation are in need of older and more experienced confreres who should pass on to the new generations of confreres the Guanellian tradition and way of carrying out the charism;
 - while the oldest provinces are in need of some young confreres bringing new blood and enthusiasm.
 - Our exhortation was to use prudence and discernment in choosing the confreres to be sent abroad, and not to assign certain responsibilities to newcomers right away.
- There are some parish priests/pastors who would like to have a say in assigning a role to their assistants. We decided to follow our tradition: a provincial superior should discuss with the pastor and the local superior what kind of role a new assistant should carry out. That discussion should be held before the meeting between provincial and confrere, and before the publication of the obedience.

2. Next General Consultation

In the meeting, we did not spend much time on this issue, simply because the Consultation is on the shoulders of the general council. However, the superiors expressed their opinions:

- The Consultation should not be overloaded, but simple and short (a week);
- The superior general report should deal with what has been done on the Motions and Proposals sent forth by the 18th general chapter.
- There are two issues that should be taken into consideration from which new guidelines should be drawn for the next three years:
 - the religious community as “animating core,”
 - the progress made from the general chapter to the consultation regarding the Laity.

3. Formation

We spent time on discussing formation because of its interest and importance. All superiors considered formation an issue that should receive

greater attention and stimulus for the future of the Congregation. We have decided:

- To continue in your own province the School for Formators held previously in Rome;
- Each confrere should receive from his provincial superior a copy of the Ratio Formationis plus a brief presentation of it.
- Importance of “Tutoring” and commitment of the superiors to have it for the confreres within the first five years of ordination.
- The seminary for theology students located in Bogotá (Colombia) should be operative for the 2011/12 academic year. The novices now in Lujan, after their first profession, should finish their Tirocinium/Regency in November 2010. They then will move to Bogotá for their enrollment in the 2011/12 academic year.
- When possible and when there are suitable formators and a good number of students, philosophy should be done in each province.
- Novitiate is one for all the Latin-America provinces and done at Lujan (Argentina).
- Each province should give due importance to Postulancy and find good formators for this delicate moment of formation.
- The formation team of the theological seminary in Rome met the superiors and answered their questions. Communication between provincial superiors and seminary rector should be intensified.

4. 2009/10 Pastoral Plan

The previous Pastoral Plans were greatly welcomed by the confreres. Some remarks were offered: it should include more quotes from the GEP and from documents of local churches (Aparecida Document, for instance). Each provincial superior should add to the text some references from local church documents.

5. Laity

The subject was of interest to all. We are convinced that the Congregation is truly walking toward a more open collaboration with the laity. However, we should not hide difficulties, resistances and even lack of interest from some confreres. We agree:

- To continue our efforts in making confreres more sensitive in their animation of and collaboration with the laity;
- To provide more incentives in taking better care of the Association of Guanellian Cooperators according to the directives given by the 18th general chapter;
- To call for an International Meeting of the GLM on the occasion of the canonization of the Founder.

6. Integrated Center for Communications

All superiors praised the great efforts that the Congregation is giving to communications. The web site is getting more and more interesting, and its translation into different languages offers more material, especially regarding the field of charity. What is missing is that the confreres are still reluctant to open it daily, and so much work is done in vain.

- All superiors gave their availability and collaboration by naming confreres and lay people as references between provinces and center.

7. Economy

- The draft of the *“Financial-Administrative Manual”* was presented by the general treasurer and was welcome by all who praised his well done job. They assured him that each province would complete the sections regarding each Country.

I would like to extend my best wishes to all of you, especially to those who in different nations are starting a new social year. I assure you of my prayer and my esteem.

Father PIERO LIPPOLI
General Secretary

Rome, 4 February 2009

2. Intercontinental Mass

1842 – 19 December – 2008: 166th anniversary of the birth of Fr. Luigi Guanella

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Cooperators, and Guanellian Laity.

One of the major events dear to the Guanellian Family is approaching. For years, the birthday of our Blessed Founder is celebrated as a way to keep all of us in communion with each other. This year we will celebrate the 166th anniversary of Father Guanella's birth into human life.

Emphasizing the birthday of the Founder, through a Eucharistic Celebration (and particular intercessions as well) at the same time in different parts of the world, should be an important and simple way to be aware that we are a big family rooted in charity. We feel the need to re-enforce our communion with each other and to continue inviting people to join the charism of the Blessed Founder.

We have to intensify, this year, our coral prayer because God the Father is preparing something great regarding the holiness of our Founder.

Again and again, the teachings of the Church and of the Holy Father pass on to us successful examples of holiness that remind us an encouraging aspect of day-to-day holiness: everyone could reach holiness; holiness is a 'must' to all who are willing to live their life in a worthy way.

The Founder too proposed the same think to his spiritual children in their journey to holiness: "Though I am not forcing any Christian to reach the perfection of official sainthood, nevertheless no one can disregard to live a life of mortification, piety, and absolutely free from mortal sin, so that a light fragrance of civil and Christian virtues may affect society" (*Saggio di Ammonimenti Cristiani*).

The SdC and DSMP general councils invite the provincial superiors of their Congregations, cooperators and Guanellian laity to promote in their Houses and Centers the Intercontinental Mass to be celebrated at the same time in the world. The usual schedule should not be a hindrance to anyone, and could be changed once a year.

We re-offer together this activity by recalling the evangelical words: "Amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father (Mt 18:19)".

The cooperators present in Rome sent us a letter suggesting an activity to be carried out by all the Guanellian Family. We are more than happy to comply. They write: "It is a shame that the process for the canonization of the Founder is still far from conclusion. Is that because the prayers from the Guanellian world

are not fervent enough? It should be beautiful to offer to the Lord our prayers and also a day of fasting before December 19th, birthday of the Founder. This is our proposal to the Guanellian Family.”

Each community and family is free to welcome this suggestion in their activities.

As any other year, we would like to suggest some general intercessions proper to that Guanellian celebration:

- 1) That in this centennial year, celebrating the religious consecration of the Founder and his first confreres, our belonging to Christ may be manifested more and more in our day-to-day activities through our vows, fraternal love, spiritual asceticism, and will to offer “hand, mind and heart until we become victims for the poor of Jesus Christ, because, it is written that the Good Shepherd gives his life for his sheep (R. 1905)”.
- 2) That in this centennial year that celebrates the Church approval of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence Institute, we may continue to give thanks to God for his goodness towards each one of us.
- 3) That the need for more collaboration and co-responsibility in living faithfully and joyfully our charism and mission among us religious and lay people may grow and take root.
- 4) That the world afflicted by war because of religion, ethical, political and economical differences, may change into the message of peace, fraternity and solidarity announced to all on earth by the angels at the birth of Jesus.
- 5) That the Lord may give to our Family the joy to celebrate soon the sanctity of our Blessed Founder on earth.

The following would be the schedule of Holy Mass celebration in each nation.

Thank you for all activities and affection toward the Founder you will bring forth for that day. A joyful Merry Christmas filled with hope that blossoms when the heart is the dwelling place of the Lord.

Sincerely yours

Rome, 12 December 2008

Padre ALFONSO CRIPPA e Madre GIUSTINA VALICENTI

3. Decree of the heroism of virtues of Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini, SdC

(omissis)

... Because of this reputation of holiness, on 1 July 1946, the Diocese of Lugano opened the Informative Process that was closed on 25 March 1964 and followed by the Rogatorial Process. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints recognized their validity by a Decree published on 9 July 1982. Once the *Positio* was ready, a discussion was held on the heroism of virtues. On 30 March 2007, the Theological Congress of Consultors met with a positive result. On 22 January 2008, in an Ordinary Session, Cardinals and Bishops, after the report of the Most Rev. Andrew Maria Erba, Bishop emeritus of Velletri-Segni, have recognized that the Servant of God, Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini, has exercised in a heroic degree the theological, cardinal and other virtues.

After having presented to the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, a precise report on the different processes by the Cardinal Prefect, the Holy Father welcomed and signed the deliberation of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and on the same day he solemnly declared: The theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity both toward God and neighbor, and the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude and all other virtues were heroically exercised by the Servant of God Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini of the Institute of the Servants of Charity, Apostolic Administrator of Lugano, for the case and purpose in consideration.

The Holy Father explicitly asked to make public this Decree and to record it in the Acts of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Rome, 15 March, anno Domini 2008

JOSÉ Card. SARAIVA MARTINS
Prefetto

✠ MICHELE DI RUPERTO
Arcivescovo tit. di Biccari

4. Authority within the Guanellian religious life

Introduction

It should be very useful, as an introduction to the topic of authority and its spiritual value, to recall what Fr. Nino Minetti suggested during the last general chapter of the Servants of Charity.

A religious Congregation is first of all a spiritual entity before being a mere human gathering. An adequate definition of a religious Congregation could be borrowed from St. Paul when describing the Church, *a living body*.

A Congregation is a living body.

A living body is totally different from a heap of stones, or a stony wall. The unity of a body is something else than a static composition of a building. A wall can stand because its stones are well cemented to each other (gravity law). It is not enough for a living body a static cohesion. In a body there is a principle that organizes and regulates everything; there is a central system, a heart that guarantees and keeps life and blood circulation going everywhere in the body. The heart and the central system receive signals from different organs and members that assure the body of their good functioning. Life needs to be ruled and preserved (circulatory and nervous system).

More or less the same thing happens in a Congregation. We may call “government” the entity that assures the good functioning and good health of the body.

Before being a structure, the government of a Congregation is the sum of relationships and activities by which life exists and keeps moving (Chapter documents, 126).

I am not going to mention the structure of the different kinds of authority, neither the juridical norms regulating the exercise of authority.

Authority comes from fraternal communion and becomes service toward the same communion.

In other words, authority does not exist in a planet different from the one where other people live.

The Code of Canon Law when dealing with authority states that it is the duty of authority to make decisions and to issue orders. Canons 618 and 619 extensively describe many other non-secondary duties of those in authority.

I will deal with:

- 1) the evangelical meaning of authority, understood as service, originated from Jesus Christ, and modeled on Him;
- 2) suggestions from the Church Teaching on the role of a superior within a religious community;

3) the Guanellian style that should lead those who are in a position of authority inside a community.

I will refer mainly on:

- * Marc 10:45
- * Fraternal Life in Community, n. 49-50
- * 1910 Regulations: Houses and their Directors (local superior, local council, confreres).

1) The evangelical meaning of authority

a) The service (diakonia) of authority

Authority within a religious community has its origin and exercises its role differently from a mere human authority. It is significant that all four gospels detail the teaching and lifestyle of Jesus in order to contrast the attitude of the apostles pursuing first place and power. We may read, for instance:

- 1) Marc 10:35-45
- 2) Luke 22:24-27
- 3) John 13:1-17

The New Testament presents “authority” as “diakonia”, *service*.

“Service” expresses the secret of Jesus’ life: being a gift to others. He reserves nothing to himself, but everything is done in obedience to the Father for the good of his brothers and sisters.

His death on the cross is his supreme gift, his ultimate service.

For that reason, Jesus prevents that those tempting human criteria of authority, intended as power, may affect his disciples and, later on, his Church. He demands that the greatest may be the servant of all.

The Church is “diakonia”, service to mankind. Authority in the Church was born from a gift of God and has to be molded in the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus.

b) Meaning of service in the gospel

In our world today, the word “service” is so used and abused that has no meaning anymore. Service is an honor, a business, an elegant way to impose ourselves and dominate others. We have to go back, instead, to the true meaning of the word and make it part of our life.

A help comes from Marc 10:44-45, “Whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

First characteristic of the evangelical “service”: it is not something that I do periodically. Jesus says that it should be an attitude: “I am among you as the one who serves (Lk 22:27)”. It is a belief deeply rooted in the heart, a decision of will that takes the whole person because it qualifies each action and move of his life. It is important to verify in ourselves if we truly think like that, and truly intend to give that mark to our active life.

Second characteristic: service is clearly in contrast with an attitude of being served or to use others for our own purposes. The gospel unequivocally says: Jesus came to serve not to be served.

The two logics are opposing each other and irreconcilable: We cannot serve two masters, my ego and my neighbor! According to the gospel, a selfish person will be selfish all the time, in his private as well as public life. We cannot reserve some room for service and some other room for selfishness. A “style” – a way of being first rather than doing – follows a person everywhere. When it does not show up, it seems that our service has not taken its roots; it is still something artificial that did not change the inner side of a person (B. Maggioni, *Elogio del servizio*, Rivista del Clero italiano, 1995).

Third characteristic: service means taking responsibility towards others. “That is what “ransom” means: solidarity among members of a close family. When in difficulty, a relative cannot ignore the situation. What is happening to you regards also the family. We should live like that. Feeling responsible is not only a question of generosity, but of attention and solicitude, ability to see and to understand, like the Good Samaritan that, in seeing the wounded man, understood the gravity of his situation. Generosity is not yet service. A sudden outburst of generosity is not yet service, even when sincerely done. We never improvise service. We have to build it. We need to be aware that we are serving. It is easy to fall into an immediate and disorganized act of generosity that invents forms of service pleasing and gratifying more the “servant” while totally useless to the recipient. It is a disrespectful behavior.” (B. Maggioni)

Fourth characteristic: true service does not only answer the needs of a person, but takes into consideration and care the whole of that person.

There are times when we show more concern and efficiency about the needs, rather than the people in need. It is more or less the attitude we may show toward our health system: it is well advanced in technology and scientific discoveries, but it neglects the sick (it is ironic that he is called “patient”)!

Among the works of mercy, mentioned by Jesus in the last judgment, there is “giving food or drink”, but also “giving hospitality” to the stranger and “visiting” the sick and those in prison.

“Giving hospitality” means to welcome the stranger into our own life, our concern, our home.

“Visiting” means to notice the other, to care for him, to make our own his situations of need. In this sense the gospel says that “God has visited his people”.

These evangelical connotations are valid to all believers, for our belief influences somehow other people. They, however, regard in particular those in authority because they, more than others, are exposed to the temptation of using their authority for their own projects and interests.

Even superiors have to obey, and more than their confreres.

To whom should they obey?

Above all to God’s will regarding their community, then to the charism, to the spiritual and apostolic mission given by God to the Congregation, to the Constitutions and Regulations, and to the directives of their major superiors. Their obedience should precede the obedience of their community by helping their confreres to live by obedience.

2) The teaching of the Church

The most recent documents of the Church Teaching regarding authority within religious communities are:

a) the Decree “*Perfectae caritatis*” of the Vatican II from n. 11 through 14 (anno 1965);

b) *Fraternal Life in Community*, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, n. 47-53, deals with authority and service to fraternity (1994);

c) apostolic exhortation “*Vita consecrata*” on n. 43 explains in detail the task of authority (1996);

d) the document “*Starting Afresh From Christ*”, Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, on n. 14, deals with the duties superiors have (2002);

e) Church suggestions:

- these documents reflect upon and present in a new way the role and duties of authority that should be up-to-dated according to the new Ecclesiology, and taking into consideration the new sensibility of contemporary society;
- the way of ruling, as well as the way of obeying, may vary according to time and culture.

“Fraternal Life in Community” states, “New governing structures emerged from revised Constitutions, require far greater participation on the part of men and women religious. This has led to a different way of approaching problems, though community dialogue, co-responsibility and subsidiarity. All members became involved in the problems of the community.

This greatly affected interpersonal relationships and, in turn, affected the way authority is perceived. In not a few cases, authority then encountered practical difficulties in finding its true place within the new context (5e”).

My advice is to read frequently these documents in order to better internalize them and on them to examine our own life.

Notes on number 49-50 of “Fraternal Life in Community”

From this text I select only some useful suggestions. First of all, the text details duties and style of authority that should be connected more strictly to evangelical roots.

Duties:

- a) service toward the spiritual progress of the individual,
- b) building a true fraternal life in the community,
- c) the particular mission to be carried out according to the charism of the Institute (49).

Perhaps, more than duties, they are areas in which the service of authority is called to intervene.

The document presents also three characteristics of authority that are pointed out in our contemporary context.

- I. spiritual authority;
- II. authority conducive to unity;
- III. authority capable of making final decisions and ensuring their implementation (n. 50).

I. Spiritual authority: “authority has as its main task building in unity the brothers of a fraternal community, in which God is sought and loved above all. The superior’s main task will be the spiritual, community, and apostolic animation of his community (50a”).

It is a beautiful possibility that, maybe, we still dream of. Those in authority should be charismatic persons, rich of God’s gifts; persons who have assimilated the spirituality and mission of the Congregation, and able to be secure guides to their confreres.

Such people are a priceless gift, and we should often pray that the Lord may send them. Besides, if a superior is capable also to disentangle himself from the myriads of norms and matters requested by society, much better!

In any case, let us keep in mind that we need to trust in the Lord and be humble in front of Him and neighbor. It's already a great full job!

II. Authority conducive to unity. The document reminds those in authority of their commitment to create a climate favorable to sharing and co-responsibility. "Authority should encourage the brothers to assume and to respect responsibility; promote, by their respect for the human person, voluntary obedience; listen willingly to the members, engage in dialogue and offer timely opportunities for encounter; give courage and hope in times of difficulty; look ahead and point to new horizons for mission (50b)".

Here too a splendid goal is offered. Unfortunately, here too we show delay, tiredness, and difficulties from both parties: authority and community.

Since our early years of seminary formation, we were taught that true obedience should be blind and irrevocable; that we should passively do everything and only what is being requested.

It is not so. If obedience wants to be respectful of a human person and earn some merits in front of God, it has to come from an act of free will. It should be able to enter into dialogue with authority, be active in taking responsibilities, be willing to give its contribution, and ready to face the unpredictable.

Do not be afraid to ask the contribution of elderly confreres. It is good to you and to them, because they sometime prefer to isolate themselves, thinking that they should be left at the margins of the community.

III. Authority capable of making final decisions and ensuring their implementation. The Vatican document says that the whole religious community should spend time together in discernment before taking important decisions regarding their religious life. "Community discernment is a rather useful process, even if not easy or automatic, for involving human competence, spiritual wisdom and personal detachment (50c)". It goes on saying that authority has to show constancy and fortitude in carrying out and ensuring the implementation of decisions that were taken. At the same time, he has to respect the competences of the local/provincial/general councils and the norms of canon law.

Several times in his regulations Father Guanella touches upon community discernment. In the 1911 Regulations to the DSMP there is a chapter dedicated to "conferences". "A conference means to expose one's thoughts, and judgment, to listen to the judgment and thoughts of others, and from the comparisons made, to deduce consequences, or practical decisions in regard to

the facts on which the conference has been held (1986 English edition, chapter 30, page 313)".

In the 1910 Regulations to the SdC, Father Guanella mentions the tasks of councillors.

First task is "to study very carefully the Rule, the Regulations and their spirit" (104). It means that a councillor should have already assimilated the charism of the Institute found in documents that deal with it, and in the historical events through which the charism has been expressed.

Other requirements regard the heart and mind of those participating to the conferences: "The councillor will also be helped much by keeping a tranquil, serious, charitable spirit and attitude" (1910 R., 104).

No one should lack "the spirit of prayer and charity" because the gift of counsel comes from God before being virtue a person acquires.

Regarding the general councillors of the DSMP, Father Guanella writes: "(from the conference) they should not leave before saying what they think...; they should speak without flattering because that is not good; without useless fear because it is not good; without desiring that their advice may triumph, because they could fall into the sin of pride."

Father Guanella does not spare any ink in offering practical suggestions for a true discernment of God's will when important decisions regarding spirit and mission of the Congregation are at stake.

At meetings where the confreres are asked to discern particular matters, it should be useful if they would receive some help from people of faith and well-informed on the issues in question.

Obviously, it is necessary to faithfully observe the juridical norms regulating the competences of the different levels of authority. For instance, there are norms that deal with provincial/general Chapters or provincial/general Councils where it is requested to cast a vote that could be either consultative, or deliberative, or collegial.

I would like to conclude this second section by quoting Pope John Paul II on the spirituality of communion that should be at the foundation of the presbyteral and pastoral councils. By analogy, his considerations could also be useful to our Councils and meetings: "The theology and spirituality of communion encourage a fruitful dialogue between pastors and faithful: on the one hand uniting them a priori in all that is essential, and on the other hand to pondered agreement in matters open to discussion. To this end, we need to make our own the ancient pastoral wisdom which, without prejudice to their authority, encouraged pastors to listen more widely to the entire People of God. Significant is St. Benedict's reminder to the abbot of a monastery, inviting him to consult even the youngest members of the community: "By the Lord's inspiration, it is often a younger person who knows what is best (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 45)."

3) Guanellian Style Authority

a) How Father Guanella dealt with authority figures

At the time of his childhood (1800), authority was sacred. Normally everything was held by the father. Pa' Lawrence "was a serious and revered man, a little bit fiery, absolutist in ruling, a man of few words, straight to the point" (L. Guanella, *Gli anni della fanciullezza*, 125). Father Guanella often mentioned that Pa' Lawrence had a strong, hard character like the surrounding rocks of the nearby Calcagnolo mountain.

Though loving his children, he was, however, authoritarian. Father Guanella never complained about that or about having received a strict formation, solidly built on manual work. On the contrary, he was constantly reminding people that he was born near the Rabbiosa (angry) Torrent and a son of an impetuous father. In getting older, he worked on his temper and natural harshness, and moved away from the model of authority so present in the families of his time.

In 1854, when 12, he moved to Gallio Academy in Como. The impact was shocking. Fortunately, he found some comfort in those valid priests and teachers who were brightening the environment. He writes in "The Ways of Divine Providence": "In the evening I entered the 'cage' of the Academy. The Academy is a sacred place full of blessings, yet a free wild bird had entered a cage! What panic I felt the first time I went to bed and woke the next morning to find myself at the Academy! What a burden the discipline of the bell was to me and the frequently threatening shouts of superiors and prefects (p. 205, vol. 4)". The boy, though used to obeying, could not understand and accept that kind of harsh authority. He said it openly in the same autobiography: "At that time a very rigid educational system was the norm in all schools, a system which drove the heart more towards fear than towards love (W. of P. page 205)".

Two years later, 1856, Father Guanella moves to the diocesan seminary. The Jesuit Fr. Martina gives a glimpse of discipline inside the Italian seminaries at the middle of 1800: "A very strict discipline, at times even suffocating, was in force in all seminaries and formation houses. The rector had full powers; students were constantly under watchful guard; the frequency to sacraments was controlled; punishment was all the time harsh" (*Il Pontificato di Pio IX*, vol. 2, page 706). In his autobiography, Father Guanella mentions that "in the seminary the strict discipline of the rule is very taxing" (p. 215).

He spent two years (1862-64) as prefect of discipline at the Gallio Academy: "Guanella did not feel comfortable being strict. At the same time, superiors at the Academy did not feel the need to adjust to his kindliness which they considered to be excessive (page 212)".

Father Piero Pellegrini, SdC, gave an analysis on the relationship between Father Guanella and his Bishop Carsana at the time when he was finding out how to carry out God's projects. Fr. Pellegrini writes: "The promise of obedience made to the Bishop on the day of his priestly ordination became a long history of strong and hard obedience to God and to the mission that God entrusted to him. It was the interior voice of the heart, a voice purified by suffering, prayer and long waiting. He obeys his superior because a superior has to prove the call, and to guide the call to its fulfillment. His obeying did not exclude contrasts of opinions and difficulty in taking decisions. Some harsh and passionate words are even allowed when on the table there are great ideals to pursue. Father Guanella spent a lot of time to think about his call. He wrote twice to his Bishop apologizing for having lost his temper. The Bishop instead hardened his verbal expression toward his priest when he met him in Campodolcino. It is the difficult school of obedience. Each one of them does their part: Father Guanella pushes hard, the Bishop slows down; and both suffer; and both know that they are taking a risk. When advanced in age, Father Guanella reviews his life and concludes: "Let us do what the good Lord inspires us to do, because authority cannot prevent it" (Don Guanella Inedito, p. 307).

Father Pellegrini points out also Father Guanella's style in exercising his authority within the Congregation. It is traceable and found in the frequent correspondence that the Founder had with his confreres along the years. There are two main characteristics that influenced his personal style in exercising authority: 1) "Familiarity in treating and relating to people, conversing with people in a serene, encouraging, cheerful way of speaking in order to minimize tensions; helping a person to take responsibility by giving him a considerable range of action... 2) A reprimand from a superior has to be taken seriously; a peremptory order has to be followed; obedience has to be done at once when under strained circumstances, even at the point of dismissing possible objections (Don Guanella Inedito, p. 308)".

b) Father Guanella's teaching on authority

The mind of Father Guanella on authority and his suggestions on how to exercise it could be found abundantly in his writings to the two Congregations.

I. Authority and charism. The first element to keep in mind: authority comes from the charism and it is at its service.

God's gift (charism), in order to take form in human history and affect reality, has to be incarnated in the life of real people, into adequate structures, through appropriate human mediations. That happened to Jesus Christ, the Son of God (and also to the people of Israel) when, at the incarnation, He, by taking human flesh, took also the way of thinking, the mentality, traditions and

religious practices of the people of his time. It happens to the Church still today. She is the depositary of God's plan toward humanity, but also she is endowed with instruments, structures, norms that allow her to enter into dialogue with the world.

Without losing its vitality, the charism lives, moves and expresses itself through Rules, norms, fraternal community, mission and authority. It is logical then to deduce that Rules, Community, mission and authority are different according to each Institute. In fact, the authority of a Benedictine Abbot, of a Franciscan Guardian, a Jesuit superior, or a Guanellian superior is carried out in a different way, simply because the charism of those religious families is different.

"Vita Fraterna" states, "Persons in authority thus serve a community which must accomplish a specific mission, received and defined by the Institute and by its charism. Since there is variety of missions, there must also be a variety of kinds of communities, and thus a variety of ways of exercising authority. It is for this reason that religious life has within it various ways of conceiving and exercising authority, defined by proper law (49)."

Besides its binding reference to a charism, the service of authority has to take into consideration also Church suggestions on signs of the times and sound traditions of different peoples!

The Guanellian charism was given first to our Founder who carried it out through his foundations and handed it down to his spiritual children. From it, a particular style of authority and ways of exercising it come forth.

Father Guanella states his opinion on authority not only when he expressly speaks about that role, but also when he talks about community and obedience. In fact, the place of a superior is inside a community, where he exercises his role, and carries out his service for the benefit of the confreres under his care.

In our hands we have only two options for a better view and knowledge of the Guanellian style of authority: either we go through a chronological reading of the writings of the Founder, or we may choose the most significant texts and draw from them his vision on the subject.

The first way requests a lot of time, and a prolonged examination and analysis of numberless texts.

The second one could help us to draw from the texts the essential outlines of his vision on authority without, of course, being exhaustive.

For practical reasons, I prefer the second option that gives me the opportunity to read and explain a significant text, very consequential in its logic. In it we find the real mind of Father Guanella.

The text I refer to could be found in the 1910 Regulations of the SdC, chapter 8, page 116 of the English edition, "The Houses and their Directors" (*Note from the Translator: "Director" has been for years the common word used in our Congregation to define the "superior" of the religious community*).

To avoid misunderstandings, I would like to quote what Father Guanella says about superiors in the same 1910 Regulations. According to the Founder, the Lord himself provides superiors. They take his place and rule on his behalf: “Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me (Lk 10:16). Striking the superiors is like striking the eyes to hurt the pupils of God himself. We must, then, obey the superior as God’s lieutenant, and we should obey him heartily for God’s sake. In this way the Servants of Charity will be obedient sons of our common Father (1910 R, p. 58).”

II. The Houses and their Directors (superiors). First, I would like to make a brief introduction of these Regulations. Father Guanella was used to combine the Constitutions (Rule) with a set of Regulations whose purpose was to underline the values present in the Rule, and to suggest practical applications. A doctrinal, ascetical and practical commentary (Regulations) follows the commands of the law (Constitutions/Rule). The 1910 Regulations follows the 1907 Constitutions that became the juridical point of reference on which the Founder and his first confreres made their perpetual profession on 1908.

1) *Superior and council.* “What is generally lacking in founding new Houses is not the financial but the moral means, that is, the availability of personnel. Most of the times, the difficulty lies on choosing the right person fit to direct the new House (1910 R, p. 117).” He explains the reason and gives a list of qualities and abilities that a superior should possess. Here they are: “A good superior (director) must have a right intention to be able to deserve the help from God. He must possess at least enough prudence to dispatch the business and to direct the personnel subject to him. He must be strong in overcoming difficulties and energetic in undertaking and pursuing the development of the House (idem).” Practically, what a superior needs is right intention, prudence and fortitude. *Right intention* introduces him as “man of God”. *Prudence* is the virtue that acts as a mediator between the project that has to be done and the right ways applied to put it into practice. In this process, a superior should stay away from whatever hinders integrity, like deceit, sterile use of tactics, whim or pride. *Fortitude* helps a person to overcome those obstacles that in different ways and times make more arduous the road to perfection. For more information, please, go to the 1899 Internal Regulations (Italian Edition, Opera Omnia, vol. 4, p. 970-72).

2) *Together with his council.* “The superior seeks the cooperation of the council which is subject to him. In this instance the following could occur:

** The superior may possess a strong initiative, clarity of direction, and an enlightened experience. He can make use of them with discretion for his own benefit and for the profit of his confreres, who in this way have the opportunity to learn greatly from him.

** In another instance, the superior and his confreres possess equal knowledge and energies. In this case, it is well to stick to the proverb that says, "Four eyes can see much better than two."

** Finally, it may happen that, until the individual members of the council become experienced, the superior carries the whole load in directing. In such a case he should use discretion so as not to go beyond his authority. He should consider his subordinates as true brothers so that he does not belittle religious charity." (R 1910, 117-118)

Father Guanella speaks words of respectful relationship toward each person and his talents; of a relationship enlivened by charity, balanced by discretion, able to form people and prepare them to new tasks. The Regulations do not mention any juridical norm because they are already present in the Constitutions.

3) *Superiors and Personnel*. This number of the 1910 Regulations deals with superior and confreres. "It is the superiors' duty to form his subordinate confreres and make efficient use of them. It is as essential to form the subordinate according to the spirit and the direction of the Institute, as it is to have good leaven in order to bake a fair amount of dough into delicious and nourishing bread. Superiors must employ all possible care, patience and constant determination in this work of zeal." (page 118)

Father Guanella is concerned about the future of the Congregation: it is fundamentally important that a superior be open and ready to prepare confreres capable to handle responsibilities. Such task requests from his part a patient and constant application, because each person has his own pace. How can we prepare confreres to assume responsibilities? Little by little they have to learn the ropes until they are skilled enough to handle greater undertakings. Every day, the confrere "in training" has to exercise and challenge his talents and skills in dealing with useful businesses under the direction of the superior who can even allow him to make some mistakes, as the proverb says, "We learn by our mistakes".

"In the works of the House of Divine Providence, when a Servant of Charity is found to have right intention, to be good and pious, and capable to manage administrative matters, it will be good to supervise him from a distance without obstructing him in his enterprises. He should be given almost complete freedom of action within which a Servant of Charity needs to set forth his energies in fulfilling the duties which have been entrusted to him in the name of God (p. 118)."

A superior has to put his trust in those who are subordinate to him and be ready to accept their mistakes. He has to give them, confreres and personnel, room to exercise their autonomy. A teacher, for instance, should show respect to his students; he should constantly urge them to go further on, and offer them occasions to show what they have learned; and he should withdraw once they have reached the pre-arranged goals.

4) *Interaction with subordinates*. From the 1910 Regulations it is evident that a superior has solicit and accept the support of his council and, secondly, prepare personnel to handle particular roles. But how can we introduce confreres in such profitable collaboration?

“When can a confrere be securely appointed for an office? Naturally, it may be answered that this will be done when, like a little bird in the nest, the confrere has strengthened his wings so as to be able to fly. Such ability, of course, is relative to persons, situations, offices and the like. It is certain that when the path of Divine Providence is clearly seen in the starting and progressing of good work, we must trust in the help of grace as well as in the simple yet ardent faith of the Servant of Charity who is called to manage the works of mercy. An Institute in its beginning is a baby-institute which the Lord wants to help and people are willing to regard with indulgence. What will the local superiors do? They should follow the given directions and do them as soon as possible. Like Moses they should keep only and absolutely the authority of command which is meek, humble, and benevolent. A good portion of their authority should be shared with the confreres as Moses did when he anxiously shared the grace of command equally with the seventy elders of this people. Seeing this, the confreres will be anxious to get together, will work with trust as brothers, will be interested in the great work of their own sanctification and the sanctification of their neighbors. They will learn to live ever more the life of the Institute and to sacrifice themselves for the prosperity of their Institute, as a good son sacrifices himself for the prosperity of his own father (p. 119).”

From this long quotation, I would like to point out that the exercise of authority should be “meek, humble, and benevolent”, after the model of the Holy Family of Nazareth, and in particular of St. Joseph.

A superior is not the Almighty that knows all and can do all. His authority should be shared with others, be open to collaboration, strengthen communion, and help all the members of the community to give their contribution to the Guanellian apostolate.

Conclusion

Days ago I had the opportunity to read some considerations given, I guess, to DSMP superiors during a course of their permanent formation. I would like to quote a passage that I think is pertinent to the situation we are going through today.

“Before choosing and naming a superior, we (provincial/general councils) should bring forth all the objections we seem valid. After having chosen and named her, we have to humbly accept God’s will. To those Sisters that the Lord chooses and sends, He tells them not to fear, “I will be with you”. A superior,

that lives under constant fear, in a state of anguish or being on the verge of constant nervous-breakdowns, cannot be a valid animator (leader). A superior, that gives the impression of being ashamed or apologizing for being a superior, cannot be a superior. A superior, that complains all the time of being inadequate to her task and not being able to do what the community requests, cannot be a valid animator.

A superior instead should show that she had accepted her role in utter simplicity. She is helped both by God and Sisters to carry it out as a beautiful opportunity to serve Church and Congregation, for the realization of God's plan in the world. I even add that a superior should share her ministry as a providential occasion to realize her own personality. She should not exercise her office only externally, but she has to deeply enter into her role. She should make it her own by using all her personal qualities. She should find interior consonance with it, and occasions to further mature through the new things she will learn or invent. Love is always creative and always new, and it is able to discover in every person and event reasons to rejoice."

Don PIETRO PASQUALI

5. What kind of religious life has a future? Which religious life deserves a future?

Which points should we insist upon, so that our Religious Life may still make sense today?

Reading:

"I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM (...). Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid (...). I have told you this before it happens, so that when It happens you may believe (...). I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain (...). If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belong to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you, 'No slave is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours (...). I have told you this so that

when their hour comes you may remember that I told you. I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world!” (Jn 13:19; 14:27.29; 15:15-16; 15:18-20; 16:4.31).

“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Mt 14:31).

1) We are at the crossroads

For years we are saying that religious life, especially in some areas of the world, is in “crisis”. The fact is that, in this time of globalization, crisis is all over. In fact, religious life does not have the monopoly of this crisis. It is in crisis because our historical period of time is in crisis, especially in our Western society. It is not a crisis regarding only religious. No; we should say that religious too are facing a crisis. Even marriage and priesthood (included the married one) are in crisis. It is not a crisis originating from celibacy, but from a whole culture that is in crisis. Now another crisis is being added, the financial one that is striking the whole world. It means that we religious are part of this world, a world that is unfurling under our eyes now.

It is a cultural crisis that has changed and is changing views, scales of values and interests of today’s men, who do not hold any connection to the past (“it was done so all the time”, “when I was young...”) and to memory anymore. Their point of reference is the present and the future (“let us change, and let us see!”, “change is exciting!”). Tradition is out of the equation, while our personal/community pet projects are in. Fidelity to the past (tradition) is out, while the present “here and now” is in. Traditional concepts (“for ever”, “final”, “perpetual”) on which many aspects of our life are built (immutable values, eternal dogmas, objective morals, perpetual vows, final commitment...) are gone.

The only thing that does not change at all is the idea that everything changes, can change, and has to change. We are at the stage of the “liquid life”, “I consume, therefore I am” (Z. Bauman). “Everything is possible, nothing is sure”: therefore it is better to rely on man rather than God. That brings straight to a radical secularization of society, to a lack of clear religious and cultural roots, to a new paganism that is affecting the life of so many people who are not atheist per se, but only indifferent, not interested on what is not immediate and possibly source of pleasure. The result is the collapse of the previous mentality and the breaking down of today’s one. The ensuing pluralism carries with it a reaction so much present in those different fundamentalisms we face today. Pluralism opens the door to instability, to superficiality that leads to fragility and vulnerability, to a more prolonged human immaturity, to a general falling into individualism and relativism. We are truly witnessing a deep crisis, a “cultural revolution” more radical and faster than the French Revolution of old (1789).

Nevertheless, in this historical moment not everything is negative. On the contrary, this situation urges us to meet the other, to cultivate mutual respect, dialogue, tolerance, sense of universal fraternity, and friendship, to go over ideological and political dictatorships, myths and false idols, to reach a new social conscience, and to give value to the simple and small things of our daily life.

We should remember that the word “crisis” does not have a negative connotation. It comes from the Greek verb “krinein” that means “to discern”. Crisis means discernment. When a situation has changed, we have to discern in it what is positive and worthy to take into consideration, what is negative and should be avoided. In Chinese, the word “crisis” is represented by two ideograms symbolizing “danger” and “opportunity”: a moment of change, a crossroads that supposes a risk but also growth, more or less like the crisis that affects a teenager when he emerges into maturity, or the middle age crisis that ends into the wisdom of a more mature person.

2) In such situation, how religious life is evolving?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to oversimplify. We may run the risk to be too partial and not giving the exact picture of the situation. Because I have to make things simpler, I would like to divide the situation of religious life in the world into three main areas: Western world, the former Communist world, and the so called Third world.

1. By borrowing an image from the Bible, we may say that the Western world is between *the desert and the new creation*. In Europe, in North America, Australia and New Zealand, people are immersed in secularism, in a frenetic research of happiness-hedonism and freedom at all cost (VC 85-92). The current financial crisis and recession could bring grave social tensions, but also an opportunity to review the previous situation (unbridled consumerism) in favor of a greater sobriety of life and a return to certain values, like family and altruism that were left behind. Religious life in the West faces lack of vocations and aging members. In front of this bleak situation, three interests are rising in recent years among young and adults.

a) One interest favors the contemplative dimension of religious life both among the contemplative Institutes and those new foundations of apostolic life. There is a break with activism and a renewed interest on prayer, though – especially regarding prayer – it is often a mere theoretical interest (desire level, readings, conferences...), because rarely we become men and women of deep prayer life (like those people who want to waste weight and get informed on all the available diet possibilities, but at the end they follow them for a limited time or not at all).

b) A second interest seeks immersion into society by living with the common people, though at time we should not talk about immersion, but of melting and disappearing in their midst.

c) A third interest deals with the desire to serve the least ones. Here too, more than once, it is only a theoretical interest, because their personal lifestyle continues to be carried out according to the middle or upper class way of life they were living before. Their interest is most of the time limited to particular experiences that last only some weeks or months of volunteering during summer time.

Don't make me wrong: they are fine and precious interests. However, they are no more fine and precious when they fall into intimism, individualism, and a more or less conscious desire not to incarnate themselves into a vocation and a ministry, but only to melt and disappear into the mass.

As a consequence, a good number of young religious do not show any interest towards the big facilities they have inherited from their predecessors or toward the efficiency-minded ministry of past times. They are more interested on being small, small groups, being signs, leaven among the mass, close to real people, more interested on *being* rather than *doing*. We should keep that in mind when we try to review the ministry of the Institute: which apostolate should we suppress? Which one should we strengthen? Which one should we open?

Among the many mature and enthusiast young religious, you may find a quite few still in their middle-class ways and habits, comfortably seating on the side, holding a fragile human personality, plus a weaker and more inconstant spiritual life. You may find around young religious who are fascinated by pre-Vatican II ideas and tendencies. If you see strange religious habits around (and here in Rome, where everything happens, you may see a large collection of them) you bet they are from new foundations. However, this happens also among adults and elderly, and among religious not from the Western world.

Because of these years' crisis, many Congregations face a big generational gap: there is no more the middle generation, the religious in their forties and fifties. There are communities formed by "grandparents" and "grandchildren" with no "parents" in between. Unfortunately, like in normal families, there are not a few grandparents and many grandchildren, but there are too many grandparents and too few grandchildren, which makes the situation a little bit "unnatural". This situation makes particularly difficult the case of young religious left alone or almost alone in a community formed by more or less old confreres. Either they somehow get in contact with other religious of their own age or their perseverance in religious life will become problematic.

There are religious in their thirties, forties or fifties (or more) that continue to be the "youth" in their Province or even Institute, distorting reality because "youth" they are no more, at least chronologically.

2. In the *former Communist world*, or where the Communist government is evolving (one party, lack of freedom of expression, capitalistic economy), we may say that, *after the age of martyrdom, many ambiguities have appeared together with a will to be and count something*. Religious, resurfacing after the fall of the Soviet Union (1989), brought with them the strain of much suffering and even martyrdom that had edified the whole world. Once free, they had to go through a fast up-to-dating in many matters, trying their best not to betray their values and roots, and not to follow the Western flawed influences that in the meantime were arrogantly invading their countries and souls. It was not an easy job, because 1) elderly religious wanted to return to the mentality and to the great big facilities they remembered were well alive before Communism; while 2) those religious, who spent all their life under the Communist regime, never had the opportunity to live in a religious community, or to deal with an economy done in a community; and finally 3) because the new religious, joining a Congregation after the fall of Communism, wanted to assume Western attitudes, thinking and acting simply like their Western counterparts. It was, and still is, the moment we have to dedicate to dialogue and mutual help, because all of us need to learn from each other. No one has “the” model valid to all. In the end, certain “messianisms” (either from right or left) proved to be false. It is important to remember that those generations of religious born under Communism, or have endured it for years, are now disappearing, while the generation that did not endure that regime, and did not see its horrors, is taking the stage. It is the generation known as the child of the post-communist and neo-liberal environment; a generation that shows other ambitions and problems, very similar to those present in the rest of the world; a generation that has reached, and is still reaching, freedom too fast, without the slow and progressive process that has taken place in other parts of the world.

3. Regarding the *Third World*, the situations are extremely various, and it is more difficult to encapsulate them into a generic description, for we find in many places a situation very similar to the one in the Western world, while in other parts it is totally different. We may say that in the Third World we find *vitality, creativity, and need of solid religious foundations*. It is true that those religious who live in big cities run more or less the same risks that the Western religious are running today. However, the majority of religious is greatly immersed into the life and world of common people and very concerned in serving the poor.

There are exceptions, however. It is not rare to find religious, priests and formandi (in or from Latin America, Africa and Asia) who are living a middle-upper-class lifestyle and ignoring the poor of their own country. Think, for instance, about those religious who possess the latest sophisticated technological gadgets, or those who periodically spend time and money around the world as

tourists, maybe using money taken from the collection plate or from rich parishioners or from European or North American acquaintances. In Rome, and not only in Rome, we may see that state of affairs! Some of these disgraceful religious and priests (and even seminarians) have the audacity to receive on one hand financial support from Westerners, while on the other they are not ashamed to insult and accuse them of exploiting their poor people and country.

Thanks God, there are many, many others religious who are giving their life to the poor, without fanfare and big financial help from outside. Newspapers and TV channels do not talk about them, but they are the true heroes and the true saints (even martyrs) of our times.

Finally, in all three areas (third, former communist and western worlds) there is an urgency that no one can take lightly: careful attention to the initial and permanent formation of the candidates, and their perseverance. There are too many of them, unfortunately, that after a few years of great and generous apostolate abandon their vocation. We need to give more time and prepared formators to them, avoiding the temptation to be engulfed by the constant emergency of filling up the vacant positions that are affecting our apostolic ministry! We should not lose the best treasure we have, the confreres, because without them, all our apostolic plans and programs are just a piece of paper and theory. The Italian Conference of Bishops document “Renewal of Catechesis” wisely says that in a fast-paced time like ours, we need more than ever to treasure “time”. In a time so enslaved to superficiality and speed, we need serenity and depth, because life grows very slowly. How contradictory is our social and cultural situation in which we live and move!

That means that, during the formation years of our candidates, superiors and formators have to be patient and, at the same time, to be demanding, especially when dealing with fundamental values: sense of responsibility, altruism (that makes us happier to give rather than receive), constancy, simplicity of life, even a certain degree of austere life, being open to renunciations, spirit of prayer, being able to live in fraternal community, being able to live in a community and to welcome what the local-provincial-general community and superiors decide, availability to embrace the mission of the Institute (and not only of the Province of origin), and, finally, the necessary spiritual direction (especially, but not only, during the initial formation). Consequently, regarding plans and projects of the Institute, the formation of formators is of primary importance (“the building of the builders” as Pope Paul VI was used to say). As much as possible, they should be religious humanly and spiritually mature (that does not mean “perfect”), prepared even on human sciences (pedagogy, psychology...), and especially proficient on the charism of the Institute whose content they have to pass on. Formators should be available to give their time and energies to the formandi. They should not be overburdened by other commitments. In a Province, being a formator is one of the most

important positions, if not the most important, because he is the one that, day after day, deals with the candidates, who are the future of the Province and of the Institute.

3) Characteristics of religious life that should be stressed because they have a future

How religious life should bear witness to Christ in a future already made present? There are some points on which we should meditate and examine ourselves.

3.1. Point of no return. The new is already among us

We should persuade ourselves that with or without us history goes on anyway. More than ever, religious life is getting more international and more inter-aculturated within a history that moves faster and faster. Problems should be weighed and resolved by taking into consideration the whole world and the different cultural situations, and not according to the culture of the country in which the Institute was born.

Many Institutes are getting smaller and smaller in number. In some areas, we foresee a progressive aging of confreres that new comers cannot fill up. Unfortunately, even in some third world countries, where there were or still are enough vocations, Institutes have begun a descendant curve, either because new comers are decreasing or because new religious are abandoning.

This situation should open our eyes to discover or re-discover values that we had lost or forgotten:

- listening to the young confreres (as St. Benedict strongly urged in his Rule), because they are less depending from past circumstances and history;
- treasuring the gift of wisdom and experience of senior confreres who are absolutely not useless or a cumbersome financial burden;
- the ability to discern and to decide which houses we should close, those we should rejuvenate, or those we should create anew according to the signs of the times and possibilities;
- giving room to the lay collaboration that truly enriches religious who, therefore, would be free from being mere bureaucrats behind a desk and more concerned about the spiritual-charismatic formation of the laity, especially towards those who want to give their material and charismatic cooperation to the Institute. The Institute would become a “charismatic family” whose heart is the Institute itself.

3.2. Today, the greatest risk in not dropping in number but mediocrity

It is true that in today's religious life there is lot heroism, religious that coherently and joyfully live their vocation. We have to give thanks to God for that because it is true! However, in the midst of that consoling truth, it is true that religious life is in danger. Pope John Paul II reminded us that the danger does not lies in the few number of members (that depends from God and other historical – human factors) but in quality. In other words, the true sword of Damocles lies in mediocrity, the lack of evangelical perfection, the middle-class and consumerism mentality, individualism (we have a new idol now = “my” personal accomplishments), and ambiguity. Not a few religious around the world, even among the young ones, live a level of life and have pretences that are not according to their vow of professed poverty or according to the level of life that the majority of their people are enduring.

There is more dialogue today than before. There is more opportunity for formation than before, though sometime we should speak more about information on secondary issues than real formation. There is also, however, a prayer life often too wanting, many more activities, and more cases of religious who do nothing or do less of what they are supposed to do. We, however, should not confuse the “apostle” with a religious who simply spins around like a top.

There is a virus going around in the life of some religious and even communities: they do not show any joy regarding their vocation. It is a deadly virus when it runs into enthusiastic, generous young confreres. If, by chance, those unhappy and resigned religious should leave the community, where are they going to?

The hour has come to stop wasting time and debating secondary issues. We should go after the essential ones, what is truly important. From Matthew 5:3, we know that we are salt of the earth. However, to give taste to food it is enough a small amount of it. The important thing is that salt should taste salt. Again from Matthew (13:33), we know that we should be leaven. It is enough a small portion of the right one to leaven lot of dough. We are also a seed (Mt 13:31-32). From a good seed, though small, a big tree could come out.

Trying to summarize the characteristics on which religious life should insist in order to be faithful in today's world and to merit a future according to the needs of Church and society, I would like to offer you a “Decalogue”:

1) First and source of all the following characteristics is and must be our persistence

– in believing in the primacy of God, in the passionate research of the Absolute present in the life of men and Church;

– in being witnesses by risking their life because longing for God. It should be their answer to secularism, intellectual sloth, comfortable indifference, skepticism and superficiality;

– in re-affirming the primacy of *being* on *doing*, by bearing witness that man is much more than what he produces, because he is a value by himself by being a child of God.

I am talking about a life built on faith and, consequently, on prayer. *Religious are men and women of God.*

2) Fraternity and solidarity, by being patient and tireless builders of communion: that should be our answer to individualism, egotism, violence, injustice, uniformity, slavery of social over-organizations, passivity, and comforts (VC 91-92). *Fraternal life.*

3) A simple and frugal life should be our answer to the insane rush towards an unbridled consumerism that is destroying creation, and is the origin of social-economic unbalance (VC 89-90). *Austerity of life.*

4) Humility combined with courage. Humble courage and spirit of service should be our answer to the lust towards economic power and political dominion, and even to the temptations of triumphalism and power present in the Church (especially among the clergy). Religious should not be afraid or shameful to be and show what they are, “free men... servants of God” (1 Pt 2:16), “always ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence...” (1 Pt 3:15-16).

5) Gratitude and forbearance should be our answer to the unrelenting, heartless and merciless way of dealing with and exploitation of others (I give you, so that you give me back = do ut des). Therefore, we should be signs of the *overabundant perfume of Bethany* to a society that risks choking in the ephemeral joys of life (Jn 12:1-8; VC 104-105).

6) Cordiality, generosity, mercy should be our answer to formality, to impersonal, “computerized”, cold and distant relationships. *Good Samaritans* (Lk 10:25-37; 6, 36), *models of tenderness and closeness.*

7) A spirit of possible and given reconciliation should be our answer to tensions, to new and old ill feelings (among families, peoples, ethnicities, social classes, tribes, castes, groups, regions, cultures, religions). *Spirit of universal opening and dialogue.*

8) Kindness, welcome, benevolence towards all [starting from the “least” (Mt 25:31-46) and the neighbor of my next door, convinced that it is better to build bridges than walls] should be our answer to economical, technological and technocratic depersonalization. *Witness of goodness, humanity.*

9) A joyful life and vocation, fruit of faith, hope and strength that comes from love, should be our answer to dissatisfaction, resignation, sadness and a certain “teadium vitae” (tediousness of life) that could bring to alcohol, drugs, double life (even among religious), consequences of a hedonistic society (VC 88). In spite of difficulties, we should be *witness of love towards life* as a gift

from the God of life (Gn 1-2; Dt 30:19-20; Ps 8; Wis 11:23-26); a love towards life that makes us witnesses of simple and mature joy (Fraternal Life in Community 28), because the Lord is with us all days until the end of time (Mt 28:20). We know that where sin abounds, God's grace overflows all the more (Rm 5:20). "If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rm 8:31). Let us not be afraid (Ps 27).

10) Depth, mother of wisdom and fruit of human and spiritual maturity, and, when possible, cultural preparation and qualification should be our answer to superficiality, to a-critical and banal attitudes made up by slogans, fashions, internet navigation, TV commercials. *Models of reliability and competence in our roles.*

Today's religious should be more than ever a Christian who builds his religious life in particular on:

- a) the centrality of God, his Word and prayer life;
- b) fraternity;
- c) simplicity, authenticity and even austerity of life that brings him closer to the poor and needy of every kind and in every part of the world.

He should be a man of God, joyful because of life and opportunities to open himself to others, rich in humanity, having a clear and full human-Christian-charismatic identity, and a balanced life (Acts 20:37; 2 Cor 9:7; Rm 12:8). Humanly speaking, he should be cordial, simple and competent (that does not mean that he should be a clown or a multi-graduated), because he prepares himself, understands and lives what he says and thinks. If he has the opportunity to have a degree, much better! He should know, however, that people were never persuaded by Master Degrees but by example of life. A religious should be a witness not because is exempted from difficulties, but because he spreads around his serene, peaceful, positive, joyful and simple inner self. When a religious is so, he attracts the attention of today's world, and he becomes an apostle without even knowing it. The world demands such religious who are not in need to advertise their life and vocation. Others will do it for them!

At this point allow me to say that today's religious are the best or the worst advertisement to religious life, the best or worst appeal to vocations (VC 63d, 64c, 93f).

3.3. Mutual Responsibility

In the last decades after Vatican II the interpersonal relationships within communities increased, due, among other factors, by the "fall" of certain structures. In the old days, if two confreres did not like to talk to each other, recollection and silence could have been an "excuse" or even a justification for such behavior. Today instead that behavior would be recognized as wrong and unjustified.

We cannot forget that we, being members of a community, should feel responsible to each other. A religious will be more faithful to his vocation and mission when helped and supported by his fellow confreres.

We have been called by God to live together, to grow together, and to follow Jesus together. There it is the origin of our mutual responsibility. If my confrere goes through some difficulty, he has the right to be helped by his confreres, and the confreres have the duty to give him a hand. I have the right to be helped, while my confreres have the duty to help me. Religious profession is a commitment between God, Church and Institute represented by the local community and the individual religious. No one has a dispensation from this act of fraternity.

Because many people today, included religious, live a situation of human and spiritual frailty, we are compelled to live more intensely this responsibility towards each other. If we preach couples, families and society at large to be open to each other and help each other, we should be the first ones to give the example. When a confrere goes through a crisis or makes plans to abandon the Institute, we truly need to make a thorough examination of conscience: did I help my brother? Did I love him? Did I marginalized, isolated or abandoned him?

Even the confrere in difficulty should question himself: am I allowing my confreres to help me?

God entrusted each one of us to each other: a wonderful and great responsibility! The document "Fraternal Life in Community" states: "The quality of fraternal life has a significant impact of the perseverance of individual religious. Just as the poor quality of fraternal life has been mentioned frequently by many as the reason for leaving religious life, so fraternity lived fully has often been, and still is, a valuable support to the perseverance of many. Within a truly fraternal community, each member has a sense of co-responsibility for the faithfulness of the others; each one contributes to a serene climate of sharing life, of understanding, and of mutual help; each is attentive to the moments of fatigue, suffering, isolation, or lack of motivation in others; each offers support to those who are saddened by difficulties and trials. Thus, religious communities, in the support they give to the perseverance of their members, also acquire the value of a sign of the abiding fidelity of God, and thus become a support to the faith and fidelity of Christians who are immersed in the events of this world, where the path of fidelity seem to be less and less known (57)."

The Lord makes his presence through the brother that gives a hand. Let us recall that both Judas and Peter were under temptation; both betrayed their Teacher; both repented. However, while Judas chose solitude and hang himself (Mt 27:3-5), Peter instead took refuge in the community. The brothers welcomed him back, and, after his resurrection, Jesus himself confirmed his being leader of the community in spite of his betrayal (Jn 21:15-17). Thomas did not meet the risen Jesus because he was not with his brothers. He had the opportunity to meet Him eight days later when he was with his brothers (Jn 20:19-29). On the way to

Damascus, Jesus tells Saul to go to the brothers and ask them what to do (Acts 9:5-6; 22:10). The One who called us to follow Him together with the brothers, He will give us the necessary perseverance within the community.

3.4. The right attitude in front of today's difficulties

Now, what is the right attitude we should assume in front of today's difficulties and different possibilities? For sure not fear, but trust, courage, humility, evangelical poverty, abandonment in God, an always provident Father! It is easy to say it; much more difficult to put it into practice especially when, in spite of many efforts, renewal of life, and sincere fidelity, we are unable to welcome new vocations. That could be a demonstration that lack of vocations in an Institute (Province or community) is not all the time caused by lack of prayer and fidelity.

Church and Congregation are neither a business (even though we may add in front the adjective "apostolic"), nor an international corporation dealing with a Christian "product". They are a community of faith whose "master" is the Lord, and whose "capital" is His plans, not ours. The Lord is not bound to tell us his plans beforehand (Is 55: 9-11; Jn 3:8; Rm 11: 33-35). He does not allow us to frame or constrain his divine Freedom, but He asks us to be all the time at his disposal. We try to spy on God and on his divine intentions, with the intention to possibly change or re-program His mind. The inexhaustible source of our peace is His presence in the boat with us, though we do not know for how long he allows the water to fill the boat. We are not even sure if he will get up to calm down storm and wind (Mt 8:23-27)!

We know that, on our way to Emmaus, He is with us. Sometimes, we too have a hard time to recognize Him (Lk 24:13-35). We know that where two or three (not many people are necessary!) are gathered together in his name, He is in their midst (Mt 18:20); even when we are unable to see Him and have the impression that the chair reserved to Him is empty. Sometimes we expect Him to come among us through strong winds or powerful earthquakes, while He prefers to come to us like the whispering of a breeze (1 King 19:9-14). We would like to be a big number, while only a few are enough to Him, if that is His will (Judges 7:1-8). We should be content to know that He is with us always until the end of time (Mt 28:20). He has always the last word on how things may go, not we.

3.5. Broadening our horizons

As I mentioned before, God is not bound to follow our plans, projects and programs. He expects us to do our part. After that, let us allow ourselves to be happily surprised! God acts where, when and how He wants. Let us respect His freedom!

It means that the Kingdom of God is more important than the Church, the

Church is more important than my Congregation, the Congregation is more important than my province or local community. “Vita Consecrata” says over and over that religious life will always exist in the Church, and not necessarily in the historical forms we experience today (VC 3b; 29b; 63c). The history of the Church teaches that many Orders or Congregations have disappeared either because of their internal decline or loss of their original spirit, while others went to their death despite of the holiness and heroism of many of their members. Even in this situation, it is still valid the evangelical principle “Do not judge!” (Mt 7:1), “Do not avenge yourselves, but leave it to God” (Rm 12:19). If in the Church there is some Congregation that increases in number, let us sincerely rejoice (Rm 12:15; 1 Cor 12:26). The rest is just envy. Maybe it is God’s will (and this should be what we should care) that one may increase and another may decrease (Jn 3:30). St. Paul rejoices when some people, moved by jealousy towards him, proclaim the gospel. What they have in mind is to annoy the apostle. On the contrary, he rejoices because what he truly wants is that the Lord may be proclaimed (Phil 1:12-18). What is important is that if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord, because none of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself (Rm 14:7-9).

3.6. The so called “ars moriendi carismatica” (charismatic art of dying)

To a Christian it is fundamental to learn how to die in the Spirit. It is sign of human maturity and of a charism, a special gift from God. It is not a tragedy! History teaches that groups and individuals were born, grew up, and later died. The Holy Spirit did not raise us up in the Church for the purpose of survival, but to bring to a conclusion a specific mission. Let us never forget that children come into a family from the human will of parents. Parents are those who decide to transmit physical life. A religious vocation instead is a gift from the Spirit that we have to witness but we cannot transmit to another person.

The real problem, therefore, is not death, but if God’s hours has come. The problem is not “natural” death, but “suicide”, or the car accident that can be avoided (I am recalling the death of four young men who recently died because the driver was too drunk). We should never forget that our local communities, provinces and even Institutes were not founded for their auto-preservation, but for the kingdom of God. Our fidelity to the Lord (if we took care of our spiritual health) will make us sure that our death will be “natural”. Knowing how to die is a sign that we trust in God, that we abandon ourselves to his provident will; a sign of humility and true evangelical poverty. It happened often in the past; it is still happening today to some groups (communities and provinces); it will happen also tomorrow. Nothing new under the sun! We are getting overly upset because we are not used to die. That’s true! Experience tells us that other people are dying, not we. That experience did not happen to us yet!

This “ars moriendi” (art of dying) recalls also the “ars vivendi” (art of living): the particular spiritual attitude that, when facing death, enables us to embrace life and reinforce our fidelity.

When we had done our best and, in spite of it, we foresee death, it should be enough to keep in mind that we have given our contribution to history; that we have witnessed evangelical humility, faith, and abandonment to the Father, Lord of history and giver of all charisms [VC 3, 29, 63, 70g). It should give us serenity and even joy. That reaction will be a sign of our good spiritual health, like Simeon (“Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace (Lk 2:29)”) or St. Paul [“I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the just judge, will award me on that day (2 Tim 4:7-8)”). Saint Paul did not convert either the Roman Empire or the majority of his Jewish brothers. He fought the good fight and did what he could do for the Kingdom of God.

After all, the function of religious life, in this pilgrimage of Church and humanity on earth, is not to cover everything, to do everything, and feel necessary. Its purpose is, according to the charism of each Institute, to seek God, to remind people that God is the origin, the life, the final homeland of all and of everything (VC 17-19). In the midst of all the challenges coming from the historical period of time of ours, Religious life should be the prophetic witness of God’s paternity and fraternal love (VC 84-95).

Conclusion

Certainly, God continues to be present among us at our crossroads in a surprising, purifying and creative way. He knows our difficulties. He is not asking us to make miracles that only He can make, but to face present and future through a life of a serene, not naïve-childish, hope (sometime we receive discouraging encouragements!) typical of a mature Christian person, because Jesus is our hope beyond comparison (1 Tim 1:1).

The future of religious life does not depend from the number of its members, from their worldly prestige, successful activities and institutions, social or ecclesiastical power, but from their being joyfully attentive to the voice of the Spirit. Let us never forget that the Spirit is our strength, that He is the One that originated us in the Church, for the Church and for the world. It is the same Spirit that throws us into crisis and, when necessary, decrees our death when we do not bear fruit from the talents we have received (Mt 25:24-30; Lk 19:20-26). I would like to quote a famous sentence from Georges Bernanos, “The Gospel is young. Only you are old!”

One more thing: It is a waste of time trying to guess what kind of religious life we will have in the future. We should instead put all our efforts to live our religious life today as much faithfully as possible. This is the best preparation for

the future that the Lord, in his mercy, will give us. If we would ask Jesus what kind of future we should expect and how many successors we will have, maybe, Jesus will give us the same answer He once gave to Peter regarding the disciple that He loved. Peter asked, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus answered, “What concern is it of yours? You follow me.” (Jn 21:22)

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6. Authority-Obedience in religious life in the Instruction “The Service of Authority and Obedience” (Faciem Tuam, 11 May 2008)

Before entering into the specific details of this presentation, we should first inquire if the Instruction “The Service of Authority and Obedience” represents some novelty of Church Teaching among the many documents on religious life that were published in the past few decades, especially on this theme considered “sensitive” by Church and religious as well¹.

I would like to summarize my personal answer into three points. 1) The concept that obedience is due only to God is repeated over and over; everything else is mere mediations to reach divine Will. 2) There is an insistence on the fraternal-community aspect and on the human maturity by which authority should be exercised and obeyed. 3) The awareness that both who obey and rule have their own limitations that usually lead to tensions, difficulties, and even “conscientious objection”. They do not affect obedience in a negative way, but they help obedience to be more complete, truer, because it appears humanly more mature² and evangelically more Christological. Those limitations do not underscore also the fact that those who exercise authority “are responsible for final decisions” as previous documents were underlining (FT 20).

¹ Initials of documents of the Magisterium used in this conference. *Faciem Tuam*: FT; *Ecclesiam Suam*: ES; *Lumen Gentium*: LG; *Gaudium et Spes*: GS; *Perfectae Caritatis*: PC; *Evangelica Testificatio*: ET; *Marialis Cultus*: MC; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: EN; *Mutuae Relationes*: MR; *Religious and Human Promotion*: RUP; *Canon Law*: CDC; *Redemptoris Mater*: RMa; *Christifideles Laici*: ChL; *Catechism Catholic Church*: CCC; *Fraternal Life in Community*: VFC; *Vita Consecrata*: VC; *Fides et Ratio*: FR; *Novo Millennio Ineunte*: NMI; *Starting Afresh From Christ*: RdC.

² “Childish dependence” (FT 25a), and “childishness” (FT 20b), “paternalism or maternalism” (FT 14b) are dangers to be avoided.

1) Christ is “the” model in seeking and welcoming God’s will

God the Father has given us Christ as a visible model on whom we should learn how to seek and live his divine Will in history (FT 8). In fact, the Instruction says that obeying to God’s will is not an attitude added to Jesus’ personality, but it is a visible expression of his obedience to the Father (FT 23a). “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me” Jesus says in John 4:34. “Christ in his life and work was the perfect *amen* and the perfect *yes* spoken to the Father (FT 23c)”. We are called to continue His life in history so that others may find the opportunity of meeting Him (FT 23b). His obedience carries out the mission entrusted to him by the Father.

Our obedience, as disciples of Christ, should, therefore, be the continuation in history of the obedience of the incarnated Son to the Father, “filial obedience” (VC 16c), “which is not servile but filial... a reflection in history of the loving harmony between the three Divine Persons (VC 21d)”. It is Christological-Trinitarian the theological foundation of our life as Christians. We should not fall into the mistake to consider authority-obedience in religious life as a mere organizational, practical, sociological, and efficiency factor disguised under apostolic purposes. Borrowing from St. Paul, we may say that we are members of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12 ff) and Eph 4:11-17). Consequently, our obedience to the Father becomes true continuation of Christ’s obedience. In this sense, we fill up in our flesh (personal or community human life) what is lacking to Christ’s obedience to the Father by the help of the Spirit, in his Church, for the Kingdom (Col 1:24) “so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21). Christ’s obedience ushered in the obedience of the new Israel, the new people of God, the Church, and in her the obedience of religious families and individual Christians along the centuries.

Let us ask: what is this Father’s will that for our sake we have to seek and fulfill – like Christ – within the parameters of history, time and circumstances to which we as Congregation, Church, humanity are connected?

The answer: we should recognized Him as the only Holy, so that his historical and eschatological Kingdom may come and his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6:9-10; Lk 11: 1-2). His kingdom is carried out as far as his plan of salvation is brought about; the kingdom that in his infinite love He planned in Christ since the foundation of the world; a kingdom that is little by little carried out in history, but whose fullness will be reached only in Christ in the life to come (Eph 1: 4-14; Col 1: 13-20). Salvation and Kingdom: they are nothing else than happiness and fulfillment of man as far as man is perfect according to the full maturity of Christ (Eph 4: 13-16). Divine will begins to be fulfilled when man believes in the Son that the loving Father has sent to the world (Mc 1:15; Jn 3:16; 17:3), so that no one may be lost (Jn 6:40). God is love (1 Jn 4:8.16). He shared with us his divine nature (2 Pt 1:4) by pouring into our

hearts his divine love through the Spirit (Rm 5:5), so that the Blessed Trinity may come and take his dwelling place in us (Jn 14:23) allowing us to enter into communion with Him (1 Jn 1:1-3). All that would happen when we strive to inseparably (1 Jn 4:20-21) love Him and our neighbor with all our heart (Mt 22:37-40). It happens when we hold, as invisible point of reference, the perfect love of the Father himself (Mt 5: 43-48) and, as visible points of reference, the way Christ acted and the way the Father loved us in Christ (Jn 15:9-17).

So, if Christ is our model, how did He carry his obedience out? The Instruction answers: Christ put all his trust in the Father: “Even if in his passion he gave himself up to Judas, to the high priests, to his torturers, to the hostile crowd, and to his crucifiers, he did so only because he was absolutely certain that everything found its meaning in complete fidelity to the plan of salvation willed by the Father, to whom, as St. Bernard reminds us, “it is not the death which was pleasing, but the will of the One who dies of his own accord”³ (FT 5c).

In the Gospel, the life of Jesus appears as an experience of filial communion with the will of the Father. His first and last words express clearly his docility: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house (Lk 2: 49)?” and “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46). They are echoing in history the words of Psalm 39: 7-9 that the Letter to the Hebrews puts on the lips of Jesus since the foundation of the world: “When he came into the world, he said... Behold; I come to do your will, O God!” (Heb 10: 5-7)

This should be the object of the third invocation we pray in the Our Father: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”, and of the statement that Jesus repeated over and over in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Yet, not as I will, but as you will”. Obedience in the midst of trials: “He learned obedience from what he suffered” (Heb 5: 8); an obedience “to death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2: 6-69), that in life is always our daily bread. On the cross, Jesus said “It is finished” because he has been the “yes” of the Father to mankind, God’s fidelity to men, the “amen” of humanity to the Father (2 Cor 1: 20; Rev 1: 4-5; 3:14). An obedience, we have said before, “which is not servile but filial... a reflection in history of the loving harmony between the three Divine Persons (VC 21d)”.

It is an obedience that is manifested in an attitude of listening at (FT 5-6) and constant seeking what the Father wants: “Whoever belongs to God hears the worlds of God” (Jn 8: 47). Being Jesus a true man (GS 22; CCC 470), he too was seeking, discerning and formulating the will of the Father. He too went through “multiple external mediations” (FT 9a), and not always He found easy understanding and carrying out that will, because he was “found human in appearance” (Phil 2: 7). He grew up and learned (Lk 2: 40. 52). He “has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin” (Heb 4: 15). His public life begins and ends with three trials regarding his mission and obedience to God’s

³ St. BERNARD, *De errore Abelardi*, 8, 21: PL 182, 1070A.

will: the temptations (Mt 4: 1-11), the agony in the Garden (Mt 26: 38-39; Heb 5: 7-8), and death on the cross (Mt 27: 46; Ps 22 and 31).

During his passion, Jesus experienced his “night”, as the mystics say. He suffered and learned obedience, as the Letter to the Hebrews says. It is in the Garden that we may properly see his discernment. While in Matthew 26:39, he asks, if possible, not to suffer (but to do God’s will anyway), in verse 42, he simply says that His will be done, and not to be spared. In verse 46, Jesus has already decided: “Get up, let us go!” He understood and fully accepted God’s will. “He was heard” (Heb 5: 7) not because he had to suffer, but because he was helped to understand and accept his suffering. In fact, to Jesus the cross was not a fateful and unfortunate event he is forced to accept. He willingly embraced it in a positive way. By seeing in it the will of his loving Father, the cross weighted less. As FT 5c states, it does not mean that the Father liked the cross as such. He was pleased by the faithful love leading Jesus to the last consequences in favor of men, his brothers. We may apply to Him what St. Paul says regarding detachment from material things and even from violent death. Are not material things in themselves a positive entity, but what brings a person to the following consequences: “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but I have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor 13: 3)⁴.

Here lies the reason why Jesus was so free in front of suffering and death (“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life. No one takes it from me...” (Jn 10: 17-18). In his obedience to the Father, Jesus is a man totally free and independent: free in front of money (Mt 6: 25-33), in front of men (Jn 6: 15; 5: 14), in front of the powerful (Mt 26: 63-64; 27: 13-14; Lk 13: 32; 23: 6-12), in front of his family (Lk 2: 49; Mc 1: 3: 33), in front of those holding religious and political power (Mt 22: 34; 23: 12-32), in front of the Law (Lk 5: 21 ff; Mc 1: 22; 2: 27-28), and in front of death (Jn 10: 17-18; Mt 26: 36-46).

Jesus’ obedience appears at times costly, difficult, and devastating (FT 8c). It is the obedience of a human being who reaches the incredible point of giving his life for the people he loved (Jn 15: 12; Phil 2: 8). However, it is not a forced obedience. Jesus is not forced to give up his life. He gives his life freely (Jn 10: 17-18), even joyfully, like a mother that suffers in giving birth, but rejoices once a new child was born (Jn 16: 21). We know how much the Lord loves those who joyfully give (2 Cor 9: 7), who joyfully perform works of mercy (Rm 12: 8). The freedom of his love brought Jesus to give away himself without reserve (Gal 2: 20; Eph 5: 2). It was indeed a hard to endure obedience, but it was freely accepted, filled with vigor and courage, even joyful. His love toward the Father and to his brothers led him “to love to the end” (Jn 13: 1), “to die on the cross” (Phil 2: 8), and to “it is finished!” (Jn 19: 30). The Crucifix is not a mere image

⁴ St. Augustine: «Martyres non facit poena, sed causa» (*Enarr. in Psal. 34, 13*).

of tragic suffering and death, but an image that shows how faithful He is to his love towards those he loved. The crucified Jesus is a comforting image, an image that proclaims victory over sin, suffering and death.

2) The Church: a communion of obedient people in constant listening and discernment on what God wants

In the life of Jesus' disciples we should encounter the same attitude present in Jesus. He is the supreme model: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mc 3: 35). The disciples are therefore united to Him in listening at God's will and so they form his new family, the family of the new Israel. This new family is formed by "those who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk 8: 21): listening and practicing are the two elements that characterize the "relatives" of Jesus (FT 8c). It is in this sense, common to all believers, that we should understand obedience in the Church. This is the obedience requested along the centuries. It is the obedience that precedes, sets and explains not only the obedience of a religious to his superior, but also the obedience of each believer to what is requested by the ecclesial community, included obedience to those who have the ministry to lead Christian people, the hierarchy.

Therefore, the Church is not divided between those who are in command and those who obey, because all have to obey. The whole Church follows her Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, by listening at Him and to fulfill God's will through the help of the Spirit. Each disciple of Jesus obeys God's will according to their vocation. Religious have their own ways. Unfortunately, there are people who endorse the relativistic idea holding that following Christ one way or another is just fine. Not true! Each should seek what is "his" vocation, his own God's will, and to welcome it in joy, love and fidelity. Obedience should not be a source of oppression but of freedom (FT 5-6; VC 91), because God is love (1 Jn 4: 8-16), and gives the best of his love to all when He offers the gift of a vocation (Jn 3: 17; 12: 47; Rm 8: 28; 1 Tim 2: 4; 2 Peter 3: 9). To a Christian, his vocation, whatever may be, is not inferior or superior to other vocations. No, his vocation is the right one for him because that one is God's will on him.

Our obedience to the Father occurs within the ecclesial community. Therefore, we have to take into consideration not only the personal relationship between God and our conscience, but also the relationship with the brothers and sisters in the Church in their journey towards the Lord. In other words, our obedience to the invisible God takes place within his visible community, the Church, just as our invisible love to God is made visible in the love toward our neighbor (1 Jn 4: 20-21). If the nucleus of Christian life is love (Jn 15: 12-17), because God is love (1 Jn 4: 8-16), the exercise/service of authority and obedience in the Church is the way to live love, fraternal love, "so that the world

may believe” (Jn 15: 12-17; 17: 11. 21-26). Both authority and obedience will be Christian as far as they express love. It is love the proof of their evangelical authenticity, because “love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rm 13: 10; 1 Cor 13); “above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3: 14).

“Above all these” means that charity must come first and foremost above all things; above our desire to keep a mere external order, or particular “ecclesiastical politics”, or particular image of Church we would like to maintain. The reason is that God, the Truth (Jn 3: 16; 14: 6), defines Himself as love (1 Jn 4: 8-16). Therefore, love is already “the” truth, because it makes us participate to God’s life (1 Jn 4: 7-8. 12-16). Consequently, when one claims that he is defending a Christian truth to the detriment of love, he is contradicting himself: that truth is not a truth. There is no love without truth, and no truth without love. While we may reach salvation through love without knowing the truth, we cannot be saved by revealed truths that are separated from love (Mt 25: 31-46; Lk 12: 47-48; 1 Cor 13; James 2: 14-26 and LG 14-16; CCC 839-848).

The exercise of authority and obedience in the Church proceed from love (communion) and manifest love and communion. When lived in a Christian way, they lead to a more intense communion (Jn 1: 1-3; VFC 58; VC 46a). Authority will be more Christian and more credible when, in its search of fulfilling God’s will, its exercise is motivated by charity, favors charity, is a sign of charity, and brings people to be more deeply rooted in charity. In other words, authority should carry out more and more the participation of the Church to the communion (agape) with the Father through the Pascal mystery of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn 17: 11-21; 1 Jn 4: 8.16; Rm 5: 5; 2 Peter 1: 4) by becoming in this way the visible image of the “loving harmony between the three Divine Persons” (VC 21d).

Communion is the foundation and goal (1 Jn 1: 1-3) of our Christian life. In communion, the disciples listen, discern and do God’s will. In the Church there are many gifts given by the Spirit (Rm 12: 3-8; 1 Cor 12: 14; Eph 4-5). One of them is the hierarchical authority that has to be exercised for the common good, simply because it is a gift of the Spirit. A body is formed by many different members. Each one has its own function. No one is useless. Authority is one of them. It is essential but not the only one. Even obedience is a gift, a service to communion and authority. We serve by listening, discerning, holding a dialogue, ruling and obeying. Faith precedes authority. Authority, coming from faith, is at the service of communion (1 Jn 1: 1-3). Faith precedes and explains how the exercise of authority should be carried out in our Christian communion. After all, each one of us has to do the will not of a member of the community, but of God. In this research all are called to collaborate in virtue of the different sacraments they have received and in virtue of the characteristics of their own Christian vocation and human commitments. Some people within the

community are chosen by the Spirit to offer their human and spiritual gifts to the service of building community, to make it strong and one in faith. Through them, the Spirit confirms all the ecclesial community (Mt 16: 18-19; 18: 18; Lk 22: 32; Jn 21: 17; 1 Jn 1: 1-3).

Authority should be understood as a transient historical occurrence. When we reach the final communion with God, authority will cease. Therefore, in the Church, the absolute is only God, not authority; hence the necessity to listen to all, within and without the community, convinced that no one (individual or community) will be able either to possess the truth in its entirety or, much less, to exhaust it. It will be a great grace when truth will little by little take possession of us. The Church is formed by all of us, and all of us have the responsibility to form the Church. The Church urges collaboration from all her members and demands respect toward the roles that each one of us hold, because no one is the owner of the Church.

We all are brothers, fundamentally equal (LG 32; Canon Law 208; CCC 871-873; VC 31b and 84-85) having a common Father and Teacher (Mt 23: 8-12). Here lies the evangelical and human truth found in the words of Pope Benedict XVI during his Installation Mass in the Petrine Ministry (24 April 2005): "... I am not alone. I do not have to carry alone what in truth I could never carry alone... My real program of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by him, so that he himself will lead the Church at this hour of our history... Let us pray for one another, that the Lord will carry us and that we will learn to carry one another⁵."

These words are not mere rhetoric. They are telling the truth. Here it is the reason why we say that authority has its own human limitations (FT 13d, 18a, 21ac; VC 92). It would be a big error in judgment if authority would not be aware of them (FT 20g, 25a).

At this point two more questions arise: How can we seek God's will within the Christian community, and what is the real role of authority? It is true that we are called to freedom (Gal 5: 13), that all of us possess the Spirit (Acts 5: 32; Rm 5: 5), that we are no more under the Law (Gal 5: 17-18), because where the Spirit is there is freedom (2 Cor 3: 17). But it is also true that, while we are in this mortal body, we possess an imperfect freedom. We possess only the first installment of the Spirit (2 Cor 1: 22). We have a treasure in earthen vessels (2 Cor 4: 7). We see in a mirror (1 Cor 13: 12). We are God's children now; but it does not yet appear what we shall be (1 Jn 3: 2). Consequently, we still need to look after Him in our own way, going through all human, personal and community efforts. The limits of our human and spiritual maturity demand

⁵ *Homily*, AAS 97 (2005) 709; cited in FT 12b.

search, discussions, laws, norms, inevitable tensions, and obedience (FT 9b). In his letters, St. Paul himself sets forth many concrete norms.

In this context and for that purpose, the authority of the Church Teaching has the duty to help individuals to search and carry out God's will, and to lead the community towards the historical accomplishment of God's plan. The mission that the Spirit entrusts to the Church Teaching is then a mission of service in forming the conscience and life of the community, not in superseding the responsibility of someone. In fact, the Magisterium teaches, sanctifies and rules (LG 24-27; *Mutuae Relationes* 13; CCC 888-896).

As we were saying before, this search and obedience to God's will is mandatory to all in the Church; it is a community effort. The authority of the Magisterium is not the only authority, because not all the time God's will is clear (GS 33b; 43b), because all possess the Spirit (Acts 5: 32; Rm 5: 5), and because, as Blessed Pope John XXIII said, one thing is the substance of the "depositum fidei" (deposit of faith) and another thing is its formulation and its historical and cultural accessories⁶.

A Magisterium is true when docile to Christ and to the Spirit. Even inside the Church we have to obey first God and then men (Acts 4: 19; 5: 29; FT 27a). If there is someone who live a passive life in the Church, he will be unfaithful to the Spirit that is in him, even when that obedience to God may create tensions in the community, like those between Peter and the community of Jerusalem (Acts 11: 1-18), between Peter and Paul (Gal 2: 14), between James-Peter and Paul-Barnabas (Acts 15). Mutual respect, listening, dialogue are necessary in a community. I have the right to be respected, to be listened, and to express my opinion. On the other hand, it is my obligation to do the same towards others. It is not a fashion that today is up and tomorrow is down. It is not either a benevolent concession from someone, even when that someone holds the service of authoritative Magisterium (see *Ecclesiae Sanctae*).

Therefore, criticizing in the Church is not a lack of obedience when, once charity is saved, an individual or a group are sincerely convinced that they have to make their critical remarks in the name of their search of God's will. It is a sign of responsible love towards the Church and to her fidelity to the Lord. It should be enough to recall the fierce criticism that St. Catherine of Siena directed to the Popes in Avignon (France) when asking them to return to Rome, or the lack of understanding between St. Theresa of Avila and the Apostolic Nuncio in Madrid, or the conflict between St. Francis of Assisi and his Bishop... (VC 43, 46, 84, 85, 91, 92). Reproving certain things going on in the Church and among some of her members is not a sign of less love to the Church, when done in love and responsibility. On the contrary, it shows that we love her more. Criticizing

⁶ Cfr. John XXIII, 11 October 1962: opening homily of the Vatican II Council.

our parents for what they do wrong or seeing in them some defects does not take away our love to them. The rest is immaturity, lack of serene objectivity. Who loves a person or the Church he may criticize them when necessary, while continuing to love them at the same time. Let us keep in mind that is only because of love and through love that he criticizes. Silence is not always a sign of mature obedience. It could be a sign of indifference or lack of responsibility in front of the common good of Church and society. To listen and to be listened is a duty and a right belonging to every Christian, if we truly want to seek God's will (Novo Millennia Ineunte 45a). "The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversity (...) Therefore the Church of the third millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church's life" (NMI 46a).

In this painful search of God's will in the Church, Christian tradition has envisioned the possibility of "prophetical signs", that is, the possibility of a Christian to perceive with absolute moral certainty that he is receiving an inspiration from God that goes beyond the usual norms and ways of doing of Church authority. Besides this extreme case, could a challenge under the form of protest against the way authority is exercised, or an honest and responsible opposition to it, exist? It is not a matter of opposing authority as such (if not, it is a problem of dogmatic ecclesiology), but of opposing concrete decisions, ways to set questions, or even ways of serving the Church. It is an attitude of sincere criticism in seeking God's will. A true friend is always sincere to his friend even when he may have a hard time to accept the truth. He does it because he loves his friend and seeks his good (Proverbs 27: 5-6). In our case, it is an act of responsibility towards the Church-communion. In fact, in Church history, reforms came to be because they were the result (or consequence) of a sincere and responsible opposition from some of her members. Let us think about the liturgical, biblical, ecumenical reforms of the Vatican II. Most of the time, those reforms were spearheaded by theologians that years before were almost condemned by the Roman Curia. The then theologian Fr. Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) said years ago, "The Church lives always under the call of the Holy Spirit to reform herself, to pass from the old to the new. Why great saints were sometimes in tension with Church and world, and had to suffer by the hands of the Church? True obedience does not come from those who flatter (they are called "false prophets" by the genuine ones), or from those who look to avoid challenges, or from those who do not want to upset anyone, or from those who want to put first their comfortable life. A obedience led by love and truth is the true obedience that made the Church fruitful along the centuries, setting her free from the Babylon temptation and bringing her back at the side of the Crucified Lord"⁷. The Magisterium itself accepted the prophetic and provocative

⁷ J. RATZINGER, *The new people of God*, Rome 1971, 284-286.

spirit of many religious along the centuries (Evangelii Nuntiandi 69; VC 84b, 46, 74, 84-85).

Sincerity and responsibility are seen: 1) in an appropriate and humble exposition of one's point of view ("no" to fear, ambition, passivity, lack of ecclesial co-responsibility in seeking God's will); 2) in a sincere desire to seek "truth" ("no" to double play and personal interests); 3) in a constant respect to all and to the person in authority ("no" to insult or denigration of brothers); 4) in a constant effort to reconcile the needs of obeying the legitimate authority with the needs of our conscience that cannot be renounced. "Yes" to respect toward the right conscience of all, even when they are wrong. Let us remember St. Paul in Rm 14-15 and 1 Cor 8-10. Everything should be wrapped in the spirit of faith and prayer. Those who find themselves in this situation and act accordingly are surely serving the Church. They are in the Church, even when they may create crisis or tensions. They are helping the Church to know better God's will and to fulfill it (LG 37a; Canon Law 212; CCC 907 and 911).

All that tells us that authority in the Church is necessary but also temporary, and that in the Christian community we all have to obey. St. Paul said that the only Head, Mediator (1 Cor 3: 5-7. 9. 11; Col 1: 18; Eph 1: 22; 1 Tim 2: 5) and Shepherd (Jn 10: 11-15) is Christ. Peter, Paul, Apollos are God's collaborators in the community (1 Cor 3: 9), members of the Church and in the Church for the good of the Church. Here it is the profound evangelical truth of the Papal title "servus servorum Dei", servant of the servants of God. Only God possesses true and complete authority. Only Christ possesses absolute authority in the Church. Before the different ministries and charisms given by the Spirit for the good of all, there is in the Church a fundamental equality (LG 32; Canon Law 208; Christifideles Laici 15a, 17g; CCC 872; VC 31): all together seeking and fulfilling God's will, each one with their own gifts and for the good of all.

3) A religious community and "its" way to listen at and fulfill God's will

The Instruction says that "consecrated life flourishes in the ambience of this search for the face of the Lord and the ways that lead to Him (Jn 14: 8), a search that underlines each day's struggle. The consecrated person gives witness to the task, at once joyful and laborious, of the diligent search for the divine will" (FT 1b and 8e).

From what we have said till now, it is clear that religious are not "those who obey" in the Church as if the rest of the Church is exempted. Religious life is one of the many ways available to seek and live God's will. It is an extension in history of Jesus' obedience to the Father.

At the origin of the relationship between authority and obedience specific of religious life, we find communion of charism, community life and mission. It

is the “con-vocation” of some believers by God, who calls them to live a more intimate communion among them according to the charism of the Founder that incarnates and interprets the mystery of Jesus’ life. A Founder emphasizes in particular some aspects of Jesus’ life that are more in tune with the gift (charism) given him by the Holy Spirit. The recent document says that the common “Yes” to God unites the brothers into one communion of life. Consecrated together, united by the same “yes”, united in the Holy Spirit, religious discover day after day that their following Christ “obedient, poor and chaste” is fulfilled in community life, like the apostles that followed Jesus in his public ministry. United to Christ, religious are called to be also united among them. They are one in their mission of being prophetically countercultural toward the idolatry of power, possessions, pleasure (cfr RPU 25). Thus, obedience binds and unites different wills into one fraternal community, endowed with a specific mission to be fulfilled in the Church.

Obedience is a “yes” to the plan of God who has entrusted a particular task to a particular group of people. It involves a bond with the mission, but also a bond with the community that together has to serve here and now. It requests also genuine trust in superiors, whose role of service and leadership (MR 13) is to safeguard the compliance of apostolic ministry with mission. In communion with our superiors, we have to carry out God’s will, the only one that brings salvation (VFC 46bcd; FT 18a). The Instruction refers constantly to God and community in its entirety, that is, superiors and subjects together, all with their eyes fixed intently on what God wants from them.

From this communion/convocation, a double service comes forth: the inward one is the common search of God’s will and fraternal life in community; the outward one is the apostolic mission (VFC 58; VC 46a, 72). In this context, authority and obedience become two aspects of an only process of obedience, that is, of service to God. They are two complementary ways of a same attitude of obedience to God by which all religious, together, seek and carry out what is pleasing to God (FT 12e); “all obey, each with various tasks” (FT 18b). Between who rules and who obeys there is a diakonia and mediation mutually necessary. Each one is to the other presence of God: “brothers and sisters become sacraments of Jesus and of the encounter with God (FT 19c).

What is then the specific aspect of relationship/service authority-obedience in religious life in comparison with other Christian vocations? First of all it is not a mere imitation of Christ’s obedience (the “why”), because obedience is common to all vocations, as far as it is possible to human nature. The aspect, typical of consecrated life, has to be found in the “how”, in the kind of mediation by which a religious is called by the Spirit to seek God’s will and to carry out Christ’s obedience. This mediation is made visible by 1) the particular charismatic “reading” and experience of the Gospel made by the Founder that we accept and follow because we feel – through the inspiration of the Holy

Spirit – charismatically in tune with him. A religious is urged to follow and imitate Christ by following and imitating the “how” the Founder answered to the Spirit, and thus he enters among his spiritual disciples. 2) Secondly, mediation is made visible by embracing religious life in a form of community life that includes also the vows of chastity and poverty. The individual religious is called to discern and to carry out the will of the Father in community, together with others disciples of Christ that the Spirit gathered together. These others, together with their human and spiritual riches, are now part of the life and mission of a religious: the “convoked” ones become “confreres” (FT 9c, 12a).

Therefore, in consecrated obedience, more than “renouncing” his own will (though it can happen like in any other Christian vocation), a religious should open his heart to new and larger horizons, and organize his will around the confreres that God, in His own way, gives him. The opening, the “widening” of ourselves to embrace our confreres would shape our human and spiritual way of thinking and doing. A religious does not renounce his thinking, his seeking, his having an opinion, or his ability to make a decision. He renounces to do it alone, by himself. It is renouncing his “solitude” for communion. The relationship among confreres becomes a constant going over the “I-You” opposition in order to enter the level of “We”. Each religious should embrace the “We” in his religious life. Each religious has to endorse communion by offering, freely and willingly, his human and spiritual abilities (intelligence, experience of life, qualities) to his confreres, and vice-versa. There is no contradiction between obedience and freedom (VC 91b). An individual religious and his community become “sacrament”, sign of their journey in meeting God and his will (FT 19c). The mutual obedience in a community and the obedience to a superior are not a mere sociological-organizational-ascetic-juridical issue, but a deeply theological-spiritual one.

At this point, what are the role, mission, ministry and service of a superior?

Religious, in order to protect and foster their unity and fidelity to communion and mission entrusted by God, – according to their own charism ad rule – choose among them a confrere whose role should be to take care of their community. Communion and search of God’s will is a work done by all confreres and not a monopoly of a few. A superior is particularly called to dedicate all his time and energies to that task. He is therefore the servant of communion and of the common search of God’s will. The Instruction says, “While *all* in the community are called to seek what is pleasing to the Lord and to obey Him, *some* are called, usually temporarily, to exercise the particular task of being the sing of unity and the guide in the common search both personal and communitarian of carrying out the will of God. This is the service of authority” (FT 1c).

Therefore, when people dedicate and consecrate themselves to God’s service, authority should foster and sustain their consecration. We may even call authority “the servant of the servants of God”, because its task is to build

fraternal communities of brothers where all seek and love God above all things (Canon Law 619; FT 12d, 13a, 21ac). It is necessary that a superior be himself first a spiritual man, convinced that the spiritual dimension should hold the first place in the personal life of confreres and their community life. He should be aware that the more God's love grows in the hearts of his confreres, the more their hearts will become one. His primary task should be the spiritual and apostolic animation (FLC 50a, FT 12a, 13) of his community of brothers.

A superior's task could resemble – I repeat, resemble – the task of a bishop: a spiritual teacher, prophet, instrument of sanctification and government, a confrere that guides his confreres (MR 13, 14c, 26-27; Canon Law 619; FLC 50, VC 43, 93). On the one hand he is a confrere among confreres; on the other he represents and serves the expectations that God and Church have on his community. He “represents” God not because he is infallible in his decisions [his human limits are explicitly listed (VC 92b; FT 13d, 18a, 21c, 25a)] but because he tries his best to seek God's will by using his competence and the means that the Church endorses (Word of God, Rule, Constitutions, General Chapter Decisions, signs of the time...).

By giving their “humble reverence” to their superiors (PC 14), those who obey welcome in faith the mediation of God's grace, have the certainty that the Spirit lead them, and that they are sustained in trials (Acts 20, 22 ff; VC 92b). What's happening is that we put our trust in God, who acts through the community to which he called us. Consequently, we trust our brothers, and those who are called to preside upon us and lead us to God.

A superior is a member of the community; he is in the community; he is for the community. He is among the brothers, close to each one of them, always ready to help and “wash their feet” (Jn 13: 1-17; Mt 23: 11; FT 12b, 17b). He is seeking “what God wants” by the help of their prayer and advice (FT 12d).

FT 13 tells about some priorities in the service of authority. FT 20 explains the role of persons in authority for the growth of the community, while FT 25 details authority and mission.

The true head of a community is not a superior, but Christ the Lord to whom superiors and community as a whole strive to serve. The superior has been called to be “memory”, leaven, encouragement, and stimulus. He is not the substitute of the confreres' conscience, but gives responsibility to all. He is the man that listens and serves, who never represses, or, worst, morally subjugates his confreres to him.

Superior “and” community are not two independent or opposing entities. A superior without a community or a community “for” a superior cannot exist and make no sense. Confreres are not at the service of their superior, but both confreres and superior are at the service of the Kingdom of God. In this context, authority is an important service, but not the only one: “far from lowering the dignity of the human person, religious obedience leads it to maturity by

extending the freedom of the sons of God” (PC 14b), and there is no contradiction between obedience and freedom (VC 91b).

Summarizing: religious obedience 1) has to be human, adult, mature and sustained by faith, not individualistic, egotist, childish (FT 25a, 20b), passive, secularized, while authority should not be a sign of paternalism (FT 14b); 2) should have Christ and God’s will as the only point of reference; 3) should be expressed by fraternity in the Congregation; 4) should see the superior as a confrere to whom we should show gratitude for his service, for whom we pray, and to whom we give our support in discerning and carrying out God’s will by our dialogue, sense of co-responsibility, and collaboration (FT 19b).

However, what sometimes happens in the Church at large could also happen in religious life. There is always some religious who believes that he cannot pay his act of obedience in front of something fundamental that is not sinful. (When authority requests obedience on something fundamental that is sinful, authority loses its reason of being). It happened in Church history a quite few times. A religious, after years of being a member of a Congregation or Order, decides to abandon his religious family because he is absolutely certain that God is calling him to some other Congregation or to be the founder of a new one. How many Institutes were founded by religious who previously were belonging to another one! When the Church approves the new Institute, she implicitly recognizes that the religious did the good thing when he abandoned the previous Institute. Two famous examples are St. Theresa of Avila and Bl. Theresa of Calcutta.

The most common issue, however, that brings a lot of problems and headache to a community, is the case of a religious who wants to remain inside the Institute while refusing to obey his superiors. The Instruction takes into consideration this case (FT 10, 20e, 26-27). The Instruction makes a distinction between “difficult obedience” (FT 26; 10a, 20e, 26-27) and “objection of conscience”, given “the obscurity and ambivalence of many human realities” (FT 27d). Regarding the first case (FT 26a) the Instruction admits that some instances of obedience can be particularly “absurd”. After having mentioned some advises given by St. Benedict and St. Francis, the Instruction recognizes that is understandable a certain attachment to personal ideas and convictions, fruit of reflection and experience of life, matured over a long time. It even says that “is also a good thing to seek to defend them and to carry them forward, always in the perspective of the Reign of God, in a straightforward and constructive dialogue” (FT 26c). On the other hand, it is not to be forgotten that the model is always Jesus who “did not pull back from death on the cross” (Heb 5: 7-9). Therefore, even though a religious may go through periods of inner confusion and refusal of authority, the Instruction reminds him that in such painful situation he should trust more and more in the Father so that His will may be done.

Regarding the second case, one could ask: can there be situations in which a person's conscience would not seem to permit following the directives given by persons in authority? This is the case of the so-called "objection in conscience" of which Paul VI spoke (ET 28-29). It says, "It is true that conscience is the place where the voice of the Lord resounds, the voice that indicates to us how to behave", but "it is necessary not to confuse this voice with those which emerge from a subjectivism that ignores and disregards the sources and criteria that cannot be given up and are mandatory in the formation of judgments of conscience" (FT 27b). Therefore, a religious "has to reflect long before concluding that it is not the obedience received, but what is sensed within him that represents the will of God" (FT 27c). He has to examine himself through the mediations that God gives him. Even if "it certainly remains indisputable that what counts is to arrive at knowing and fulfilling God's will, it ought to be likewise indisputable that the consecrated person is committed by vow to accept this holy will through determined mediations" (FT 27c).

In these cases, a religious should renounce his own personal opinion (even when he strongly believes it is the right one) in order to follow what the community or the superior are asking of him. How can we justify that renunciation and see it as a valid human and Christian attitude? A renunciation is justified when it is motivated not by forced reasons or convenience or passivity as it is something imprudent or sinful. In this case a religious should not obey and authority would lose its reason of being. Pope Paul VI says that when an order is manifestly contrary to the laws of God or Constitutions of the Institute, or involves a serious and certain evil, there is no obligation to obedience (ET 28). A renunciation will be justified when a religious recognizes in his confreres and in their opinions a value that allows him to do what they ask without diminishing his responsibility and dignity. He embraces the will of his confreres because he humbly recognizes the human possibility that they are right and he wrong (FT 27b; ET 28). But above all, because, theologically speaking, he recognizes by faith not only the possibility, but the certainty that God is using his confreres for his own good (He calls a religious to discover his divine will within a community) and that the order he has received is lawfully given (FT 10a). He knows that confreres and he himself can make mistakes. That is not a surprise or a scandal to anyone! Beyond the confreres' human fragility, he trusts in God that has called him to a community of life and charism with them. And God cannot make mistakes (FT 10c). He obeys "not only God but others, but in every case, for God and not for others" (FT 11a). This does not mean that he is renouncing his dignity and responsibility. He has to frame his obedience into the bigger picture of his confreres and Institute. He has to be fully and humbly aware that he too has limits and opportunities to make mistakes. If, later on, he will discover that his confreres were humanly right (and not only theologically) and he was wrong, much better! Instead, if he will discover that he was right,

well, many heavenly graces will be bestowed on him because he had made an act of obedience to the Gospel and his vocation (the true purpose of life) and sought God through the mediation of confreres and authority that God himself has given him. Therefore, he did what God was asking him to do, his divine will. It is obvious that faith is extremely important and decisive in our life as religious. There is no reason to be frustrated and embittered, not even in the second case. The obedience of us religious should be all the time fruit of those gifts of intelligence and life experience given us by God. Obedience should never be only rationality: faith and trust in God must have the last word.

In the life of a believer there should always be “Fides and Ratio” (faith and reason) as Pope John Paul II explained in his encyclical.

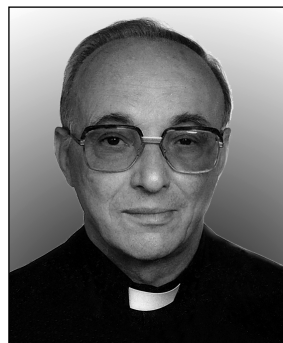
We should be more like Mary that, at the Annunciation and Birth of Jesus, questions the Angel (Lk 1: 34) and meditates in her heart (Lk 2: 19.51). Her obedience is a believing and perplexed obedience (FT 31a), but at the same time she is ready to obey (VC 112c). She trusts in God and abandons herself to Him: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord”. She is not a passive girl, alienated by false religiosity, but a strong woman. She is an example of the biblical “poverty”, where trust and abandonment to the Lord abound.

P. J. ROVIRA cmf.

DECEASED CONFRERES

1. Father Carlo Ferrario

Born: Veniano di Appiano Gentile (Como),
11 December 1918
Entrance: St. Jerome Seminary, Fara Novarese,
5 October 1935
Novitiate: Barza d'Ispra, Don Guanella House,
12 September 1938
First Profession: Barza d'Ispra, 12 September 1940
Perpetual Profession: Vellai di Feltre (Belluno),
Istituto Bernardino Tomitano, 12 September 1943
Priestly Ordination: Gatteo (Forli), Istituto L. Ghinelli,
15 June 1946
Ordained by His Excellency Carlo Stoppa, Bishop of Sarsina (Forli)
Death: Rome, Ospedale S. Carlo di Nancy, 17 June 2008
Buried in the family tomb in Veniano di Appiano Gentile (Como)



The death of our confrere Father Carlo did not come as a surprise. The evident deteriorating of his health was caused by his advanced age and chronic illnesses that were his companions for the last twenty years. He died suddenly in his habitual and serene attitude of abandonment in the hands of God and keeping the smile that was peculiar to him.

It is our duty to binds his memory to the esteem and gratitude that he had earned for the numberless acts of goodness he had spread in the Congregation during his sixty-two years of priestly ministry. Our fervent prayer should accompany him to be part of the heavenly crowd of Guanellian saints that are enjoying the reward of the Lord. The sadness of our hearts is mitigated by this solemn liturgy in which we invoke upon him full light and beatitude that only God can give.

Father Carlo was a gift of God's kindness to us. He was born and grew up in a profoundly Christian family. His father Caesar and his mother Louise

Borghi were exemplar in goodness, sacrifice and work. After Elementary school, he followed the rule of working, so common at the time, in which he tasted and experienced the sacrifice that will accompany him in his future Guanellian mission.

In a letter, kept in the General House archive and dated 4 October 1935, his pastor, Fr. Leonardo Colombo, presents him to the rector of St. Jerome Guanellian Seminary in Fara Novarese, Fr. Michele Bacciarini. He writes, "Today I have introduced to your Rev. Superior General a very good seminarian that was dismissed by St. Peter Seminary in Milan because of his school difficulties. He is more than good in everything else, as the letter from the seminary rector, Fr. Umberto Oriani, states. Rev. Superior General spent time talking with him and manifested his readiness to accept him among the Servants of Charity provided that you, Rev. Rector, would accept him. Now I am writing to you and hopefully you will say a "resounding yes". I promise you that you will never regret accepting Carlo among your seminarians. I would suggest to have him enrolled for a semester to the third year of Ginnasio. If he is not prepared enough for it, please, be free to enroll him to a lower year."

In fact, from the school report of the second year of Ginnasio, together with some marks below standard, we read some good remarks: "We confirm previous good information on his disciplinary-moral behavior and his spirit of piety".

The trust given him by his Pastor and Fr. Bacciarini, that welcomed the young Carlo into St. Jerome seminary despite the negative notes on him, reveals that our history is not always written under bright lights, but often under the shadows enlightened by the fiery cloud that protected the Jewish people during the night in the desert.

Fr. Carlo will be ordained a priest in Gatteo di Romagna (Forlì), when 28. During the advance of the American Army, the boarding school in Gatteo was closed, and priests and boys took shelter in the Houses of Cassago and Milan until the end of the Second World War. In spite of being the Gatteo House under reconstruction because of the bombings, his priestly ordination was held there. Some relatives were courageous enough to attend the ceremony, bringing him the joy and closeness of his family.

His first obedience leads him to Rome, St. Joseph al Trionfale, as a spiritual assistant (1946-1950), as parish administrator (1950-1954), and as parochial vicar (1954-1972).

From 1972 through 1991: pastor at Mungivacca (Bari), pastor at Ceglie Messapica (Brindisi), collaborator at the Sacred Heart House in Fasano (Brindisi), collaborator in Valle Aurelia (Rome), parochial vicar in Miano (Naples), St. Joseph Cottolengo Parish in Rome, as parochial vicar. In 2006, already gravely ill, he moves to St. Joseph House in Via Aurelia Antica (Rome) where he will close his exemplary religious life.

Fr. Carlo spent his life not only giving his energies to pastoral ministry in different parishes run by the Servants of Charity in the St. Joseph Roman Province. He managed to teach theology courses in local public schools and pastoral ministry to the St. Antida Sisters at the nearby Via Circonvallazione Trionfale in Rome.

A long list of pastoral ministries eloquently speaks of him as a person of particular human and priestly virtues, of gifts of mind and heart, of availability to assume duties without withdrawing from hard working, ready to sacrifice, obedient without reserve, faithful to his religious life, rich in faith and spiritual life. The many offices and roles that Fr. Carlo carried out fully illustrate the components of his maturity, of being a priest of deep faith, of a shepherd always ready to work for and in the Church, all the time in tune with his superiors. He never took any major decision without deep reflection and consultation with his superiors. For sure he endured great sufferings for the inevitable incomprehensions and superficial evaluations on his pastoral performance and choices, not always accepted or understood by confreres or people.

It is not easy to give a full account of his activities and personality. However, we cannot forget to mention that some of his traits are those who are perpetuating his memory among us. He was physically slightly built, but strong in his moral, spiritual and cultural dimensions. At the first place, we should mention his moral innocence, his humility that was bordering on candor. “*In eo videtur tamquam Adam non peccasse*”, (in him it seems that Adam had not sinned) is not an exaggeration. His original goodness made him incapable of malice and capable of genuine relationship with God and people he dealt with.

Some characteristics were standing out very clearly: prayer life, fidelity to his priestly ordination, awareness of having been called by God to carry out a supernatural mission. His fidelity to his priestly duties never lost its vitality either by routine or obstacles, included his illness. We were touched and moved in seeing him, already wrecked in his body, worry and in anguish regarding the celebration of Holy Mass or the Liturgy of the Hours. He was afraid of not celebrating them properly and faithfully, because they were the two most important celebrations of his day. He was reassured only when he had the certainty that he had perfectly absolved all his main daily duties.

He had never been a man of books and high cultural achievements. He did not have the time to pursue any of them because of his many offices entrusted to him in his years of priestly ministry. To make up for it, he was scrupulous in preparing his homilies because he knew that he was not a good “talker”. On the contrary, he was able to give sound teachings in few words that were going right to the point.

His soul is now among the “righteous ones” that Scripture says are in the hands of God. He lived for the Lord, died for the Lord, and now he is awaiting his resurrection in Christ Jesus.

In the eternal dwelling place of the saints, his role now is to contemplate the face of God and to pray for all of us still here. Let him pray for the compelling needs of the Congregation in this difficult moment of its history, for those people he guided by wisdom and holiness of life, and for the Guanellian communities so that they may give again and again holy souls who are eagerly embracing Christ as priests and religious.

Thank you, Father Carlo, for your love towards us, for the precious help you have given us, and for your shining example of holy and virtuous life.

You will be for ever in our hearts, sure that your resurrection will be like the one of Jesus, “an explosion of light, an explosion of love that breaks the chains of sin and death. The resurrection has opened a new dimension of life and reality from which a new world comes forth, a world that is transformed and drawn to Jesus” (Benedict XVI).

From the Funeral Homily delivered by Fr. Umberto Brugnoli

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