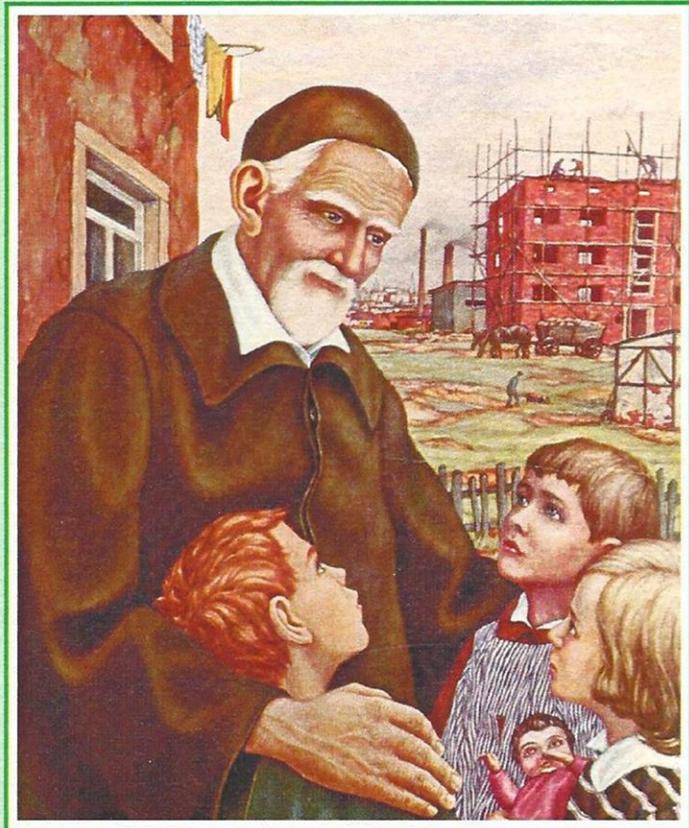


# VINCENTIANA

51<sup>th</sup> YEAR - N. 1/2

JANUARY-APRIL 2007



Helping the Missionaries  
to Be Faithful, in All Seasons

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

GENERAL CURIA

# GENERAL CURIA

Rome, 25 January 2007

*Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul  
and the Foundation of the Congregation of the Mission*

## *To the Members of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

*... the Congregation of the Mission, faithful to the gospel, and always attentive to the signs of the times and the more urgent calls of the Church, should take care to open up new ways and use new means adapted to the circumstances of time and place. Moreover, it should strive to evaluate and plan its works and ministries, and in this way remain in a continual state of renewal (C 2).*

As previously announced in the circular after our December *tempo forte* council meeting, we have selected three projects as the winners of the Systemic Change Award for 25 January 2007. We had a total of 18 projects presented, from which we chose the three winners. They are: 1) from the Province of Madrid, Spain: a project on hospitality for and integration of transients in Andújar; 2) from the Province of Curitiba, Brazil: a project for helping street people in the city of Curitiba regain their rights and dignity; and 3) from the Region of Vietnam, Province of Paris, France: a project for helping mountain children with their schooling.

I want to thank all those who submitted projects, corresponding to the Systemic Change Award. In particular, I am grateful for the creativity and example that you give to the members of the Congregation of the Mission, through your efforts, together with the poor, to bring about changes in the structures that oppress them. I remind all the members of the Congregation of the Mission that the overall purpose of the Systemic Change Award, as well as the Mission Award, which we will be offering again on the feast of Saint Justin De Jacobis in July, is to stimulate our efforts at evangelization and service to the poor throughout the world. The economic benefits that

come from these awards certainly help in the execution of the project, but I consider this secondary to the overall goal of these awards, which, as I stated, is to keep alive that fire for doing good things, as a sign of love for the poor, as we walk together with them, our brothers and sisters, on the road to salvation and for the honor and glory of God.

Below, you will find a brief summary of each of the projects.

## **PROVINCE OF MADRID**

### **Project “Welcome and Integration of Transients” in Andújar**

Andújar is situated in a geographic zone which unites the north with the south of Spain. This accounts for the influx of many people without resources, who lack housing and the possibility of integration into society. The parishioners of the Parish of the Divine Shepherd, for which the Congregation of the Mission is responsible, detected this need and created, together with the members of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Parish Charity, the Association of the Vincentian Family of Andújar, which is responsible for the “Saint Vincent de Paul” welcome and integration center.

#### **Purpose of the project:**

That the transients and the homeless might have space, time and means in order to heal their wounds, recover standard habits and integrate into society, living an independent life.

#### **The following programs were developed:**

- “Welcome” that provides a day’s stay and covers the basic necessities.
- “Help in emergency,” when the person requires an extended stay.
- “Social integration” both for the new transients and the regulars. If it is detected that they do not have the capacity to follow the process (the sick, those in excessively chronic situations), they are steered toward other resources.

The program’s duration is approximately one year and includes three phases: welcome, recuperation and integration into society. During this period, they have various activities in order to arrive at: adequate living together, growth in self-esteem, recovery of work habits, professional qualification, etc. The final months of this program are carried out in protected apartments, as a first step toward independent living.

At the same time that they try to give back to these homeless people the dignity that they thought lost, the persons who are at their service (volunteers and hired staff) mature in their faith, serving Jesus Christ in the person of the poor.

## **PROVINCE OF CURITIBA**

### **Project “Macon” in the city of Curitiba**

The population of “street people” is growing in the city of Curitiba. Little by little, these human beings are losing their dignity, their self-esteem, their family ties and they are taking refuge in drugs and prostitution, because they are unable to manage their own lives.

In the face of this situation, the priests and seminarians of the Vincentian Seminary, Our Lady of Grace, timidly began their service by taking food to the square in front of the cathedral on certain nights. The foundation, Social Action of Curitiba, invited them to participate in a joint service. From that was born the project, “Macon,” to recall the experience that Saint Vincent had in the city of Macon, and which later united other public and private organisms of the city.

### **Purpose of the project:**

To give people who live on the street, in the center of the city of Curitiba, a space where they can take care of their basic needs, recover their self-esteem, become socially integrated, and exercise their rights as citizens.

In order to “take care of their basic needs,” there is the Cohabitation House, offered by the prefecture, where meals, facilities for personal hygiene, clothing, health care and physical and cultural activities are available.

For the purpose of “recovering self-esteem,” the possibility of collaborating in the work of the house, times of spiritual reflection, individual and group work in order to stimulate their own resources and develop a sense of community.

The “social integration” is carried out by promoting professional workshops, which promote relationships among them and offer professional qualification for future integration in the marketplace. Courses in management of their own resources in order to arrive at financial independence are also given.

They are oriented toward the “exercise of their rights as citizens” through information about the resources of the social-assistance network in accord with their needs.

Participation in the project permits the seminarians to be involved directly in the service of the poor, in the line of Vincent de Paul, and in collaboration with other public and private institutions. At the same time, it has enabled the formation program to establish the Association of the Miraculous Medal in the province.

## **REGION OF VIETNAM (PROVINCE OF PARIS)**

### **Brief History of the Project:**

Father Marie Augustin Nguyen Huu Gia, Superior of the house of Kadeune, and the confreres of his Vincentian community work in collaboration with two communities of Daughters of Charity in the area in the service of the poorest of their mission. These are the mountain people, ethnic minorities of the Don-duong District, Province Lam-Dong, Vietnam.

These mountain people are extremely poor; many are illiterate and not very civilized. The population is about 25,000 inhabitants, of which 6,000 children and young people between the ages of 10 and 20 attend the elementary and secondary schools sponsored by the State. The educational level and the quality of education leave much to be desired: 30% of the students quit their studies in the middle; very few reach the final year of secondary school and most fail the university entrance exam.

The reasons for these scholastic failures are: The mountain students do not assimilate courses given in the Vietnamese language, because they speak another language. In addition, they do not have the means, nor the possibility of studying at home, because work in the fields and keeping watch over the cattle takes up all their time.

### **Project:**

To help and promote, as far as possible, the scholastic success of the children by the following means:

- paying the school expenses for the poorest, thanks to benefactors.
- constructing a hostel in order to permit these children to do their homework, study and review their lessons. It will allow those who are 15 km away or who have transportation difficulties to spend the night there. Developing a scholastic library.
- finding teaching coaches to help the students who are weak in Vietnamese, mathematics, and modern languages.
- in the future, opening an apprenticeship center for trades: carpentry, masonry, sewing, information technology, etc.

**Purpose of the project:**

- To raise the standard of living of these ethnic minorities
- To allow the mountain children to be schooled until the final year of secondary school, if possible
- To give them a place to study and do their homework after class
- To do remedial schooling
- Human formation. Catechism classes, formation of catechists

This hostel could be, in the future, a breeding-ground of Vincentian vocations and a formation center for catechists.

**Favorable conditions for carrying out this project:**

We have a team of collaborators, land for constructing and the sum of 80 000 000 Vietnamese piastres (around 5,000 USD).

Each of these projects concentrates on the most abandoned, empowering them to face the reality of their times. Each is clearly in line with the thought and charism of our beloved founder, Saint Vincent, who continues to challenge us when he says:

*The Little Company of the Mission dedicates itself to serve the poor, who are God's "chosen ones." Because of this love for the poor, we have reason to hope that God will love us. Therefore, let us go forth and work with renewed love in service of the poor. Let us seek out the poorest and most abandoned. Let us realize that the poor are our lords and masters and that we are unworthy to render them our small services (SV XI, 392-393).*

I look forward to more new and exciting projects in our next Mission Award — prior to the Feast of Saint Justin De Jacobis in July — which should be submitted no later than 30 April, in time to be studied at our *tempo forte* meeting in May.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,



G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

## *To the Members of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

As we begin this most holy season of Lent, I pray that it be a time of dying and rising for each and everyone of you, my brothers in the Congregation of the Mission. When reflecting upon Lent, perhaps one of the Scripture passages that most comes to mind and helps me to see what the Lord asks of us is the passage about the grain of wheat: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit” (John 12:24). Let this Lenten season be a time when we die to ourselves, individually and communally, in order that we might live more fully in the Lord Jesus, whose passion, death and resurrection is the integral focal point of Lent.

Might I suggest for your meditation this Lenten season, in order to live more fully the Passover of the Lord and experience once again the newness of life that comes in the Resurrection, that you focus on your own identity as a member of the Congregation of the Mission. I propose an examination of how you live out the characteristic virtues that Saint Vincent spelled out for us. They are like the five smooth stones that the youth, David, used to slay the giant, Goliath. They are the foundational pillars upon which the members and the Congregation as a whole are built. David, although small and weak in comparison to Goliath, stood firm and strong, believing in himself and believing that God was with him to confront the giant obstacle.

The characteristic virtues help us to stand strong before whatever obstacle it is that hinders us from living out fully the vocation to which we have been called. As we know, the characteristic virtues are those gospel values that Saint Vincent “particularly admired in Jesus Christ.” They are virtues that he lacked and yet ones that he strove to live out, to understand and to put into practice in his own life.

Here are some brief reflections on each of the characteristic virtues. I ask you to take to heart what you reflect on and may God’s grace help you in the process.

**Simplicity**, Saint Vincent said, “is the virtue I love the most” (SV I, 284; English I, 265), so much so “that I call it my Gospel” (SV IX, 606; English IX, 476). “I have special devotion and consolation in saying things as they are” (*ibid*). These words can help

us to identify simplicity in its real meaning as truth, sincerity, transparency. Living out simplicity helps us to avoid being two-faced, saying one thing and meaning another, or saying one thing to the face of a person and another thing behind his or her back. We are called to be simple, to say things as they are, but, might I add, always with charity toward the other. As Saint Vincent tells us, it is the freedom to speak to another “with full confidence, without concealing or disguising anything” (SV I, 284; English I, 264-265).

There are certain situations that call for the true living out of simplicity; for example, when friends sit down and speak to friends, even about difficult issues. Another example would be in the relationship between the local superior and the members of the house, when the Constitutions call for personal interviews, which should be carried out in utter simplicity. Simplicity must also be present in the “neophytes” seeking to commit themselves to following Jesus Christ in the Congregation of the Mission. Sincerity is called for on the part of our members in formation, especially in their relationship to their formators and their spiritual directors.

**Humility.** Saint Vincent called it “the characteristic virtue of the mission. Oh holy virtue, how beautiful you are. O little Company, how lovable you will be if God grants you this grace” (SV XII, 204). Then Saint Vincent again called humility “the virtue of Jesus Christ..., of his holy mother..., of the greatest of the saints..., it is the virtue of missionaries” (SV XI, 56-57).

Humility is the virtue that enables us to recognize and admit our weaknesses and limitations, creating the possibility of trusting more in God and less in ourselves. At the same time, humility enables us to recognize our giftedness, a giftedness which is to be put at the service of others. It is the virtue that allows the poor to draw close to us. It is the virtue that helps us to see that all are equal in God’s sight. At the same time, it enables us to draw close to the poor.

The opposite of the humble are certainly those who are proud hearted, with an attitude of “I am better than the other,” who look down at people from a place on high. Humility is a virtue which enables missionaries to inculturate, in other words, to become one with others, especially one with the poor. As Saint Vincent says in another place, it is a “perfect abandonment of all that you are and can be” (SV III, 279; English III, 279) with confidence in the one who is our Lord alone, Jesus Christ. Again, if we establish ourselves in humility, we will make the company a paradise and people will remark how happy we are (cf. SV X, 439; English X, 353).

**Meekness.** I call meekness the vocational virtue, or as Saint Vincent himself says, “an amiable way wins hearts and attracts them” (SV XII, 189). And again, “if a man cannot be won over by gentleness and patience, it will be difficult to do so otherwise” (SV VII, 226;

English VII, 241). Other words that we would use today concerning the word, meekness, would be gentle, gracious, amiable, friendly. In one sense it is related to humility in that it is the virtue that permits the poor to approach us. It is the virtue that make us approachable.

Meekness is not aggressive, angry, loudmouthed. It certainly is a key virtue in community. It is the virtue that helps build up the confidence of others in us, because when we are gentle, those who are shy will open up to us. Saint Vincent says “there are no persons more constant and firm in doing good than those who are meek and gracious” (SV XI, 65).

A theme related to that of meekness is that of hospitality, which is a characteristic that should distinguish any Vincentian: one who is welcoming; one who is attentive to the needs of others, and especially attentive to those who have come from afar.

**Mortification.** It is the virtue of Lent. We are called to die to ourselves. It is the virtue that calls us to give ourselves away, to think first of others, especially to think first of the poor, before ourselves. As Saint Vincent says, “the saints are saints because they walk in [the] footsteps [of Jesus Christ], renounce themselves, and mortify themselves in all things” (SV XII, 227). As he also said, prayer and mortification “are two sisters so closely united that one is never found without the other” (SV IX, 427; English IX, 336).

The time of Lent is a time of prayer and fasting. Fasting means much more than simply refraining from eating. It is that traditional Christian practice, which helps us die to ourselves. One of the dangers we easily face is to want to comfort ourselves, being unwilling, at times, even to make some small sacrifices for the other. Another danger is thinking first of my needs, my routine and, therefore, my comfort. In that there is the danger of unwillingness to go the extra mile for the other. As Saint Vincent said, the gift of mortification “is acquired only by repeated acts” (SV V, 436; English V, 443). So let this Lent be a time for us to practice the art of mortification.

**Zeal for souls** (or, as I would call it, passion for humanity). Saint Vincent said that “if love of God is the fire, zeal is its flame” (SV XII, 307-308). It is the consequence of a truly compassionate heart. It is all about passion for Christ, passion for humanity, and passion especially for the poor. Zeal is a true missionary virtue. It is expressed in availability, the disposition to service and evangelization even when old and infirm. As Saint Vincent said, “And I myself, old and infirm as I am, should not cease to be disposed, yes, even to set out for the Indies to win souls for Christ” (SV XI, 402).

Related to zeal is the sense of enthusiasm, which calls for action. As Saint Vincent also said, “Let us love God, my brothers..., but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows”

(SV XI, 40). We can understand zeal as a concrete expression of effective love, which is motivated by compassion or, in other words, affective love. As Saint Vincent said, "Imagine then that there are millions of souls stretching out their hands to you" and calling you by name (cf. SV I, 252; English I, 245).

*The Congregation, furthermore, tries to express its spirit in five virtues drawn from its own special way of looking at Christ, namely, simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification, and zeal for souls. Speaking of these five virtues, Saint Vincent said: "The Congregation should pay special attention to developing and living up to these five virtues so that they may be, as it were, the faculties of the soul of the whole Congregation, and that everything each one of us does may always be inspired by them" (CR, II, 14) (C 7).*

Lent is a time of special grace. Let it be a special grace for us to help us be who we are called to be, members of the Congregation of the Mission, faithful to following Jesus Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

Rome, 15 March 2007  
*Feast of Saint Louise de Marillac*

*To the Directors of the Daughters of Charity  
Throughout the World*

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

I write, first of all, to apologize to each and everyone of you for not having maintained contact by the written word in these years of my service as Superior General and yours as Directors of the Daughters of Charity. For those of you who have sent in written reports, some on a number of occasions, I do want you to know that I have read them with much interest and care. But I have only replied on a very few occasions, when I thought the report might warrant a response.

I find the reports very helpful, especially, for learning about the reality of the Daughters of Charity in the different provinces. This is of particular interest when I am visiting those provinces. In all my travels and visits, I spend at least a day with the Daughters of Charity, sharing with them and giving a mini-conference or having a dialogue. We always celebrate the Eucharist together and I get the opportunity to see some of their works. Usually, too, I have a dialogue with the Visitatrix and her council. Your reports are helpful to me in preparing for these visits. I deeply appreciate the role that each of you is fulfilling and I take seriously your being my representative before the Daughters of Charity of a particular province.

I want to say to all of you that I also value the wonderful and very qualified work that Father Javier Álvarez is carrying out as Director General of the Daughters of Charity. As you know, he is my man in the Rue du Bac before the Mother General and her council. I am quite happy with the role and responsibility that he is exercising there. The Daughters of Charity are too.

In closing, I want to encourage you to feel free to write to me at any time. It does not have to be just the report that you send every two years. If anyone needs to speak with me personally, please send me a note or an e-mail. I will try to get back as soon as possible with a response, which I hope will be uplifting and supportive of you.

Once again, I thank you for your generosity. I hope and pray that your time with the Daughters of Charity is, as one confrere stated in his report, enriching in your own vocation for being faithful to following Jesus Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the text "Your brother in Saint Vincent,".

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

Rome, 23 March 2007

*To the Members of the Congregation of the Mission*

***Tempo Forte (5-9 March) Circular***

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

The following are some of the matters that were treated in the *tempo forte* meeting and which may be of interest to the members of the Congregation of the Mission.

1. After a long and deliberate discussion, we named a new **Secretary General**, who graciously accepted to assume this position. He is Claudio Santangelo, originally from the Province of Rome. For a year and a half he has been serving in the Province of Austria. Most recently, he has been in Rome studying Islam. Claudio will finish his studies in June, when he will take up the role of Secretary General full-time. I am grateful to both the Provinces of Rome and Austria for their acceptance of this decision of the Superior General and his council. Claudio replaces Father Juan Carlos Cerquera, who, for reasons of health, was unable to continue in the role of Secretary General. On behalf of the whole Congregation of the Mission, I want to thank Father Juan Carlos for the generous service that he provided to the Congregation, as well as to me personally as Superior General, during his time in this position.
2. One of the issues to be discussed at the **International Visitors' Meeting** in June will be the frequency, duration and content of the General Assemblies. Father José Antonio Ubillús generously accepted to head the Curia Technical Commission for that meeting. He informs us that there are still a number of Visitors who have yet to process their visas for Mexico. **I would like to reiterate, after many warnings, how difficult it is to get a visa for Mexico.**
3. We discussed the organization of **Servant-Leadership in the Curia House**. Father Giuseppe Guerra has been named legal representative for the Curia in Rome. He will continue in his position as Assistant to the Treasurer General for another period of three years, as well as continuing in his role as Postulator General. He will also assume, on a full-time basis, the role of Procurator General, which he has been doing *pro tem*, since Father Varghese Thottamkara left the Curia.

4. We discussed the **Vincentian Historical Sites** as a continuing effort to improve their visitor-friendliness, especially those of the Berceau and the Chapel of Saint Vincent in Paris. A project has been drawn up by Father Alain Pérez with regard to ongoing formation in the Berceau for the international Vincentian Family. There are hopes that we can put together some pilgrimage packages of tours to our different historical sites in France.
5. In the report on the **Archives**, we learned that 19 volumes of the General Councils from 1827-1969 have been recorded on CD and microfilm, as well as photocopies of the microfilm. We will continue the process of consultation in order to help us reorganize the Archives of the General Curia.
6. We received correspondence from the coordinator of the **Think Tank**, Father Robert Maloney. There are a number of things to report. The title of the Think Tank has been changed to become more language-friendly. It is now the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change. The Commission made a report at the annual meeting of the international heads of the Vincentian Family, at which it was decided to make Systemic Change the theme for this year's feast of Saint Vincent de Paul. The Commission also recommended some new criteria for the Systemic Change Award, which were accepted by the council and will be put into effect in the next letter sent out for the Systemic Change Award. The Commission is committed to publishing a book, which will be entitled, *Seeds of Hope*. It will also develop a didactic kit for understanding systemic change, as well as offering workshops. Among the materials in the didactic kit will be information on the question of water, as it is becoming an enormous worldwide problem today.
7. We studied the final **Financial Report** of the former Treasurer General, Father Elmer Bauer. I want to take this opportunity, in the name of the entire Congregation of the Mission, and in the name of the Curia and my own name, to thank Father Elmer for his generous years of service to the Congregation of the Mission in this role. Through his leadership and pedagogical capabilities, the financial portion of the Congregation of the Mission continues to improve.
8. The Superior General and council made the decision that the **Mission Distribution Fund** would be for the internal needs of the different provinces of the Congregation of the Mission and will not cover social programs. It was recommended that such programs make petitions directly to the Vincentian Solidarity Office. The Visitors of the provinces that receive help from the Mission Distribution Fund, as well as the eligible Conferences of

Visitors and some bishops of the Congregation of the Mission, received a letter on 13 February from the Assistant General for the Missions concerning the Distribution Fund for 2007. **They are asked to return their requests and reports to the General Curia before 30 April.**

9. Father José Antonio Ubillús, our liaison with the **CIF Program**, informed us of the mini-CIF that will be offered from 24 June to 21 July, with the option of an additional week to go to the Berceau and other places south, according to their usual itinerary. Their session on Leadership, which was to be offered from 25 February to 25 March, did not get a good response, so it was canceled, with the hope of offering it again in the summer of 2008. The regular Ongoing Formation Program of CIF will be from 9 September to 7 December in French, Spanish and Italian. The Vincentian Heritage Program will be offered from 15 April to 11 May in English. All are encouraged to participate in these wonderful opportunities to deepen our Vincentian spirituality.
10. The Superior General and his council decided to increase the number of provinces and regions that can be recipients of the **Vincentian Solidarity Fund**. The official list will be distributed and discussed at the Visitors' Meeting in June and will become effective on 1 July 2007. Before that, each of the Visitors concerned will receive a letter from the Superior General, informing them that their provinces can now or once again present projects for financing by the VSO.
11. We had a report from the Director of the **Vincentian Solidarity Office**, Brother Peter Campbell. From 1 December 2006 to 28 February 2007, the VSO accepted six new projects. The new projects accepted are from the Provinces of Fortaleza, North India, South India, Congo, Madagascar and Nigeria. In that same time period, the Vincentian Solidarity Fund provided grants to four micro-projects from the Provinces of Costa Rica, Cuba, North India and Ethiopia. I invite you to take a look at the website of the Vincentian Solidarity Office ([www.famvin.org/vso](http://www.famvin.org/vso)) and the most recent achievements in the March 2007 Bulletin.
12. We received a report from Father Manuel Ginete, the **Delegate for the Vincentian Family**. He gave us a summary of the annual meeting of the international heads of some branches of the Vincentian Family, which was held in Rome from 2-4 February. He also spoke of his visit to the Philippines with the Superior General. There they held a number of meetings with the different branches of the Vincentian Family. Father Ginete also participated in the National Missionary Days of COVIDE-AMVE and JMV-Spain from 2-4 March. He also participated in the General Assembly of AIC from 9-14 March.

13. In the report from the **Webmaster**, we first noted, with deep sadness, the death of Sister Gail Reith, RSM, who had been recently appointed to assist our webmaster, Father John Freund. She had a major role in expanding our internet presence beyond just being a newspaper to moving it into a major source of ongoing formation on-line. We have reached a new era in communication for the Congregation of the Mission. We did a video conference with Father John Freund, marking the first time that such had been used in an official report to the General Council. In preparation for the Visitors' Meeting in Mexico, Father John Freund would like to illustrate how internet sites can serve as a vehicle for communication and collaboration, as well as advocacy on behalf of the marginalized and formation for those who seek to serve in the way of Vincent. They also can be a medium for fundraising to support our ministries. We also discussed the possibility of improving the efficiency of communication from the Curia to the provinces and vice-versa through the establishment of new email addresses. We will start out on a relatively small scale with just provincial officials, such as the Visitors and Provincial Treasurers. The addresses will be formed using the provincial nomenclature from the beginning of the *Catalogue, Tabual Compendiorum*. **This matter also will be further discussed at the Visitors' Meeting in Mexico.**
14. We discussed a letter from the **Visitors of the Midwest, South and West Provinces of the United States**, outlining their plans for reconfiguration. The three Visitors will come to the General Curia on 26 April in order to discuss this process with the Superior General, the Vicar General and the Treasurer General in greater detail.
15. We received a report from the **Assistant for the Missions**. Among the many things worth mentioning is the good work that he has done in sending articles to missionaries throughout the Congregation, as well as promoting the possibility of participating in various workshops of ongoing formation for missionaries. We would like to recommend, at least for those of the Spanish-speaking world, the book that was published recently by CEME, entitled, *Vincent de Paul and the Mission*, a work by Father Mikel A. Sagastagoitia Calvo, from the Province of Zaragoza, a missionary in Honduras.
16. From the **International Missions**, the Superior General and his council approved the Community Plan presented by the missionary community of El Alto, Bolivia. The possibility of initiating a MISEVI international site in El Alto was discussed. We approved the revised contract between the Catholic Church in the Solomon Islands and the Congregation of the Mission. We

are happy to announce that there will be a new missionary arriving in Papua New Guinea, Father Justin Eke from Nigeria. He will become a member of the seminary staff, freeing Father Homero Marín to move from the seminary staff to become the pastor of a new parish, which has been offered to the Congregation by the Archbishop of Port Moresby. With this new parish, the Congregation will have the opportunity to receive candidates for the Congregation of the Mission. The confreres have received several inquiries in this regard. I take this opportunity to remind confreres that there is still a need for missionaries; parish ministry in the Solomon Islands and seminary ministry in Papua New Guinea are our greatest needs at this moment.

17. From **APVC**, we discussed the second draft of the “APVC Responsibility for the Mission in the Solomon Islands Agreement with the General Curia,” as well as the third draft of the “Memorandum of Understanding Among the Visitors of APVC Regarding the Solomon Islands Mission.”
18. From **CLAPVI**, we received the announcement of its next activity, which will be from 22-28 April in Rio de Janeiro with the theme: *Lectio Divina* and *Vicentina*. The presenters of the topic will be Father Gabriel Naranjo of the Congregation of the Mission and Father Carlo Josafat.
19. From **COVIAM**, we received a copy of the minutes of the Assembly that was held in 2006. Their topics for the formation of formators in 2007 were presented: Saint Vincent de Paul as Formator, Human Development, Intellectual and Theological Formation, and The Five Virtues from the Perspective of Inculturation, given by Father Robert Maloney. The Visitors and Regional Superiors will be gathered for a meeting (1-3 August), at which they will have a workshop on the **Ratio Missionum** from the perspective of Africa. We also had reports from Father Sylvester Peterka on his visits to the Province of Congo and the Region of Cameroon. Father Sy is a confrere from the Eastern Province of the United States and pastor of an African-American parish in Baltimore. He had been proposed to COVIAM by the Superior General and was accepted. Father Sy will attend the annual gathering of the formation of formators in Nairobi. His collaboration is in terms of formation.
20. The Superior General and the General Curia will give a donation to contribute toward the development of a Chair of Frederick Ozanam at the Pontifical Angelicum University in Rome. One of the promoters of this Chair is the Frederick Ozanam Foundation of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Rome.

21. The final item discussed was the team evaluation of the General Council. The dates have been established from now until 2010. This revision of our mission as a General Council is intended to comply with our Council Project, which states: "Evaluate, revise and update this 'Project of the General Council.'"

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

## PROJECT OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL WITH HIS COUNCIL

PERIOD 2006-2010

Convictions, Objectives, and Lines of Action

27 November 2006

### Introduction

In order to understand this Project in its strict sense, it might be advisable to take into account its aims and characteristics.

- It deals with finding inspiration in our Constitutions, enriching ourselves with the abundant development of the Congregation begun after Vatican II and putting into practice the directives of the recent General Assemblies, especially GA 2004.
- It intends to respect and be coherent with the general principles of Vincentian government (C. 96-100).
- It is a project of and by the Superior General with his Council; not for the provinces, nor for the entire Congregation.
- It is selective, establishes priorities and is not exhaustive.
- It is open to greater and further precision. Therefore, it does not describe or exhaust all the details; these depend on the creativity of the respective persons or institutions of the General Curia or those depending on it.
- It is a work project, not a declaration of intentions.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. **SPIRIT, IDENTITY. Encourage the “Vincentian mystic and spirit” of the confreres, helping the Visitors in the animation of the provinces.**

#### Convictions:

- 1) The Constitutions, especially numbers 6, 7, 8 and 9, remind us of some fundamental convictions about our Vincentian spirit. The CM spirit consists of three basic attitudes (C. 6) and expresses itself in the five specific virtues and in a specific spiritual life (prayer, vows, etc.).
- 2) “Our spirit and our ministries ought to nourish one another” (C. 8).

- 3) “The text [of the Constitutions] must now be imprinted on our hearts and lived out in our vocation to preach the gospel to the poor” (cf. Fr. McCULLEN, *Introductory letter to the 1984 Constitutions*).

**Objective**

To help each confrere and the Congregation to deepen and live more intensely our own specific vocation, that is, our Vincentian identity.

**Actions:**

1. Help the provinces promote, with intensity, fidelity and creativity, our Vincentian identity and spirituality and a strong prayer life in accord with our missionary vocation.
  2. Support and stimulate a “general project” for the basic knowledge and systematic study of our Constitutions and Statutes (cf. Final Document of GA 2004, CIF, SIEV Project, USA Visitors, CPAG 2010).
  3. Support the provinces (or the Visitors’ Conferences) so that they might organize initiatives (sessions, seminars, meetings) on the “Vincentian mystic and spirituality.”
2. **MISSION, MINISTRIES. Deepen and develop our identity as a missionary Congregation at the service of the poor.**

**Conviction:**

“Evangelizing is to be considered its [the Congregation of the Mission’s] own grace and vocation, and expresses its deepest identity” (cf. C. 10).

**Objectives:**

- 1) To help the Congregation and the provinces put C. 2 (continual renewal) into practice; 2) To establish and expand, in each confrere, the missionary horizon (cf. JOHN PAUL II, “Message to the Superior General: *Duc in altum*,” 2004 GA).

**Actions:**

4. Continue to develop the service of the Assistant responsible for the missions “ad gentes” (S. 57).
5. Promote the knowledge and study of the *Ratio Missionum* (2002).
6. Promote, especially during visits to the provinces, our missionary identity (awareness, spirituality, missionary apostolates).
7. Strengthen the International Missions presently dependent on the Curia (El Alto, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea) and work so that they might move to dependence on provinces.

8. Continue writing the “Mission Appeal Letter” annually.
9. Open new International Missions, in the event of having steady volunteers.
10. Pay attention to the new dimensions of the mission “ad gentes”: interreligious dialogue, countries “in a state of mission,” etc.
11. Promote the updating and renewal of our ministries related to the formation of the clergy and help to find ways of renewing the “popular missions” and building truly missionary parishes.

3. **COMMUNITY. Encourage the renewal and growth of the community life of the Congregation on its various levels (local, provincial, interprovincial and international community).**

The field of the community is important and far-reaching, so that one can distinguish various levels of it:

- a) the local and provincial community;
- b) the Visitors’ Conferences;
- c) the reconfiguration of provinces.

**Conviction:**

“Community life [is] a special characteristic of the Congregation and its usual way of living” (C. 21, § 1).

**Objectives:**

- 1) To promote in the confreres the “sense of belonging” to the CM (especially among the young confreres and also in the provinces with numerous departures); 2) To promote the internationality of the CM and interprovincial collaboration.

**Actions:**

**A) *The local, provincial and interprovincial community.***

12. Promote among the missionaries, especially among the young, a deep love of the Congregation so that it translates into a true sense of belonging and a real living out of the dynamisms of community life.

13. Promote in the local communities, during our visits to the provinces, the knowledge and realistic use of the *Practical Guide for the Local Superior* (2003).

14. Promote the knowledge and study, especially in initial formation, of the *Instruction on the Vows* (1996).

15. Help the provinces to take care of the elderly and sick missionaries, to accompany the “confreres in difficulty” and to resolve the situations of illegitimately absent confreres.

16. Promote interprovincial collaboration such that it strengthens the weak and poor provinces, contributes to their true autonomy and is a sign of real twinning.

**B) *The Visitors' Conferences***

17. Promote the study of a possible "statute" referring to the Visitors' Conferences.

18. Hold periodic meetings among the General Council and the Presidents of the Visitors' Conferences.

**C) *The reconfiguration of provinces.***

19. Promote the awareness of being a single, international Congregation and encourage a more intense interprovincial collaboration.

20. Promote, in dialogue with the provinces and on the various continents, a presence of the Congregation that, restructuring and expressing better all our resources, strengths and persons, can give better service evangelizing the poor.

**4. FORMATION. Encourage initial and ongoing Vincentian formation.**

**Conviction:**

CM, be what you are! "Initial and ongoing formation is a necessary condition for the CM to continue keeping alive its identity in the Church and in the world of today."

**Objectives:**

1) To foster the actual "general institutions" of Vincentian formation; 2) To support practically the new initiatives of interprovincial collaboration in formation (cf. the School of Spirituality CLAPVI); 3) To stimulate interprovincial collaboration in initial and ongoing formation.

**Actions:**

21. Encourage the provinces to use and put into practice the *Ratio Formationis of the Internal Seminary* and the *Ratio Formationis of the Major Seminary* and, in the course of these years, attempt to renew both of them.

22. Maintain and foster our international formation institutions: CIF (International Formation Center) and SIEV (International Secretariat for Vincentian Studies).

23. Support and stimulate formation initiatives (cf. Vincentian Leadership) and the formation of formators organized by the Visitors' Conferences.

**24.** Promote the “History Project of the CM.”

**25.** Continue the regular “new Visitors” meetings and, in coordination with the Daughters of Charity, the meetings of “new Provincial Directors” of the Daughters of Charity.

**26.** Promote, through SIEV and the Vincentian Months, “specific formation meetings” (for ministries, in coordination with CIF, etc.).

**5. SOLIDARITY. Promote the sharing of goods among the provinces of the Congregation and solidarity with the poor.**

**Conviction:**

We stake, in large part, our Christian and Vincentian credibility on effective solidarity with the needy. “Our temporal goods are for the Church and the poor, are common and missionary” (cf. C. 148, §§ 1 and 2).

**Objectives:**

1) To foster the sharing of goods among the provinces; 2) To take steps to arrive at the “self-financing” of all the provinces; 3) To go to meet the needs of the poor.

**Actions:**

**27.** Maintain the actual Patrimonial Funds being set up. Begin a new Patrimonial Fund Project in favor of the provinces with fewer resources and seek new resources for this project.

**28.** Strengthen the financing institutions already existing in the Congregation, especially the VSO.

**29.** Study the possibility of a CM Office for Development.

**30.** Publish a *Practical Guide for the Provincial Treasurer* (cf. Treasurer General).

**31.** Offer to the Council basic financial information on the provinces: 1) obtain clear and accurate information on the financial situation of all the provinces of the CM (cf. Report of the Treasurer General to the Superior General and also to the Council); 2) revise the list of “poor provinces” and make a list of “poorer provinces” in order to consider them as a priority.

**32.** In visits to the provinces, pay attention to the financial aspect (financial situation, financial commission, management, etc.).

**6. FAMILY. Live and share the Vincentian charism with the VF.**

**Conviction:**

The CM is a branch of the “Vincentian Family,” which recognizes itself inspired and united by the same Founder, a same spirit and charism, and, at the same time, feels itself enriched by the different ways (priestly, consecrated, lay) of living and incarnating such a charism.

**Objectives:**

1) To foster, together with the Vincentian Family, the evangelization, service and promotion of the poor; 2) To deepen our relationships with other branches of the VF.

**Actions:**

**33.** Go more deeply into the study of the significance and the consequences of “sharing the Vincentian charism.”

**34.** Maintain and foster the annual meeting of the representatives of the VF.

**35.** Specify, after a period of reflection, the function of the Delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family.

**36.** Promote, together with other branches of the VF, common initiatives of Vincentian formation.

**37.** Encourage the CM provinces so that some confreres give themselves to accompanying the various branches of the VF (DC, AIC, JMV, SSVF, MISEVI, AMM).

**38.** Support financially, on the international level, the Vincentian branches who are less independent economically (that is, JMV, MISEVI, AMM).

**39.** Establish communication with other “new branches” of the VF.

**7. GENERAL CURIA. Renew and optimize regularly the services of the General Curia.**

**Conviction:**

The General Curia, in its persons and distinct offices, is an instrument at the service of the Superior General and the entire Congregation in each one of its provinces, institutions and persons.

**Objective:**

To improve the departments of the General Curia in order to better serve the Superior General and the Congregation.

**Actions:**

40. Maintain regular communication among the Assistants General and the respective provinces and Visitors' Conferences (reading bulletins, etc.).
41. Promote in the provinces a greater knowledge and use of the offices and international services dependent on the Curia.
42. Improve the General or Historical Archive: giving it more physical space, making progress in its computerization, devoting sufficient financial resources to it.
43. Improve communication between the General Curia and the provinces:
  - 1) using internet as a means of communication;
  - 2) promoting the publications' office (*Vincentiana*, *Nuntia*, Website);
  - 3) developing the website of the Curia within the internet site of the CM.
44. Promote in the provinces: 1) the creation and maintenance of the Provincial Historical Archive; 2) the creation of archives of computerized data that, in the future, could be shared.
45. Evaluate and, if necessary, update the *Job Description Book of the General Curia* (Rome, 2004).
46. Constitute and maintain an Intermediate Archive. Organize, improve and protect the Vincentian Library of the General Curia.
47. Begin, with the help of the provinces and other CM institutions, a "Computerized Vincentian Library" project, which will contain and offer quality Vincentian works and be an easily accessible instrument for our formation.

**8. GENERAL COUNCIL. Promote the identity of the Council of the Superior General, organ of help and advice in government (C. 115), and its "good functioning."**

**Conviction:**

The Council of the Superior General (its members) constitutes a fundamental institution in the government of the CM (C. 115). The General Council, as a "work group" (and community of Vincentian brothers), needs, in order to accomplish its mission, a fraternal climate and a systematic method of working and making decisions.

**Objective:**

To help the members of the Council carry out adequately the mission that our Constitutions and Statutes (C. 102, 108, 115; S. 61, 62, 63) assign to them.

**Actions:**

- 48.** Establish a channel of personal and regular dialogue of the Superior General with the Vicar General, the Assistants General and the officials of the Curia.
- 49.** Evaluate periodically and regularly, in extraordinary sessions of the General Council, the climate of the Council, the work method and the work accomplished. In light of this evaluation, adopt decisions for improving the accomplishment of its mission.
- 50.** Evaluate, revise and update this “Project of the General Council” in the October *tempo forte*.

# FEATURE:

## *Helping the Missionaries to Be Faithful, in All Seasons*

### Presentation

by Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M.

*Director of "Vincentiana"*

Half a year after it took place, *Vincentiana* publishes in print the contents of the Meeting-Workshop about helping confreres in difficulty. The delay in publishing is due to the changes that have taken place in the Curia and to the change in the editor of this magazine. We now present this double issue corresponding to January/February and March/April 2007.

The title does not pretend to be just a pious rendering of the rough expression "confreres in difficulty." It is true that in the very same days of the Meeting-Workshop some voices arose asking that the expression be changed. The Superior General himself, in the closing homily made a reference to that problem, and added that "Yet I think it reflects the reality in which we are living." Nevertheless, the Meeting-Workshop had been planned to help all of us extend a helping hand to those missionaries in especially difficult circumstances. The message was not meant precisely only for the confreres with problems, but for the whole Congregation; the intention was to encourage all of us to face the situation. The meeting then was meant to be of help to all missionaries so as to be faithful to what God demands of them at this moment, both in giving a helping hand to those in especially difficult circumstances, and in

trying to solve the personal difficult situation with the help offered by the Congregation. It is a question then of helping all of us to be faithful. On the other hand, if we take into account the effort necessary to grow in maturity as regards one's personal vocation and the transformation and conversion demanded by our being conformed to the model of Christ, who would dare think to be free from problems and difficulties?

We have followed a logical order in the presentation of the themes. In the first place we present the changes that have taken place in the manner of looking at this problem in the last years, as presented in the introductory experiences. We admit with all sincerity how this reality is affecting our Congregation. We go on exposing the important means that we have to help support our fidelity to our vocation. Then we present the difficult situations which we might have to face.<sup>1</sup> And finally we consider the means offered to us in order to overcome a given difficult situation or to go on being faithful to what the Lord expects from us in the given moment, never forgetting the impact that those situations, which are particularly difficult have on the lives of the missionaries and of their communities. Because there is nothing new under the sun, we have added, to the themes studied in the Meeting-Workshop, an article by Father Vicente de Dios about the help Saint Vincent gave to the missionaries when they found it difficult to be faithful to their vocation.

Among the great helps we have to strengthen the fidelity to our vocation we should no doubt count the process of Ongoing Formation, a point which was solidly exposed at length by Cyril de Souza, S.D.B. *Vincentiana* has decided to publish this exposition in its next issue dedicated to the Visitors' Meeting in Mexico, which was centered precisely on the topic of Ongoing Formation.

*Vincentiana* will thus become a reminder for those who took part in the meeting to help the fidelity of our confreres towards God, as well as an echo full of lessons to all of us who did not have the fortune of being present at the meeting.

The reader should be aware that the articles were done more for a spoken than for a written presentation. Nothing will take the place of the vividness of the oral presentation. Besides, the written version offered here will probably have an added roughness due to the translation.

(JAIME CORERA ANDÍA, C.M., translator)

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<sup>1</sup> These are indicated in the *Practical Guide for the Visitor*.

Rome, 6 October 2006

*To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

On 24 January of this year, I wrote you a long letter in which I invited you to reflect on the actual situation of the absences and departures of confreres. The analysis of this reality led us to establish an International Commission that has worked on the preparation of a formation meeting, which will seek to train confreres of various provinces in the management of absence and departure cases.

Today I am writing to invite you to participate in this formation meeting that will be held in Rome from 10-16 January 2007 (arrival on the 9<sup>th</sup>, departure on the 17<sup>th</sup>). You, as Visitors, are most welcome, but our wish is that you select at least one confrere from your province to be present at the meeting in order that he might assist you in dealing with confreres in difficulty.

During this meeting, we will have some excellent talks, given from the point of view of psychology, spirituality and Canon Law, that will deepen our understanding of the reality of priests in difficulty. The participants will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge by means of workshops, which will follow in the Conferences. Our interest is that the confreres who participate might help the Visitors to assist, with greater attention, those who are absent, or those who need to regularize their situation in the Congregation.

I am attaching a letter from the Preparatory Commission with details for obtaining a visa, in case one is needed, and other aspects.

I trust that this initiative will benefit all the provinces of the Congregation and, in particular, the confreres in difficulty. I hope for the participation of a large group of confreres next year.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." in a cursive script.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

Rome, 10-16 January 2007

MEETING: HELP TO CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY

# Participants

Family Name	First Name	Province	Service
ABBOUD	Antoine	Orient	Visitor
ÁLVAREZ SAGREDO	Félix	Madrid	Translator
ANSIA RODRÍGUEZ	Aser	Barcelona	Delegate
APARECIDO DE PAULA	Aginaldo	Rio de Janeiro	Visitor
ARREOLA MARTÍNEZ	Luis	Mexico	Visitor
BARBOSA DOS SANTOS	Fernando	Fortaleza	Visitor
BECERRA VÁZQUEZ	Alfredo	General Curia	Archivist
BELLEMAKERS	Wiel	Netherlands	Coordinator
BELLISARIO	Andrew	USA - West	Visitor
BENOLO	François	Madagascar	Visitor
BERHANEMESKEL	Keflemariam	Eritrea	Delegate
BORDA MONTES	Rubén Pedro	Peru	Visitor
BORLIK	Daniel	USA - South	Visitor
BURGOS BRISMAN	Faustino	Puerto Rico	Visitor
CARVALHO CHAVES	Sebastião	Rio de Janeiro	Delegate
CASTILLO TORREALBA	Pedro	Venezuela	Delegate
CAWLEY	John	USA - South	Delegate
CERAR	Janez	Slovenia	Delegate
COONEY	Gregory	Australia	Visitor
CUADRADO PÉREZ	Nicolás	Madrid	Delegate
CZAJKOWSKI	Mariusz	Poland	Delegate
DEL CASTILLO FLORES	Fernando	Madrid	Translator
DISU	Bienvenido	Philippines	Delegate
DOMÍNGUEZ GARATACHEA	Pablo	Zaragoza	Delegate
DU TRAN CONG	Gérard	General Curia	Assistant General
EKO PRASETYO WIDODO	Evaristus	Indonesia	Delegate
FONSATTI	José Carlos	Curitiba	Delegate
GAY	G. Gregory	General Curia	Superior General

<b>Family Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Service</b>
GEBREMEDHIN	Markos	Ethiopia	Visitor
GINETE	Manuel	General Curia	Moderator
GOMEZ BARRIO	Eladio	Salamanca	Delegate
GONELLA	Francesco	Turin	Delegate
GONZÁLEZ PRIETO	José Antonio	Colombia	Delegate
GUERRA	Giuseppe	General Curia	Procurator General
HADDAD	Ziad	Orient	Delegate
HAYISH	Hagos	Ethiopia	Delegate
JASPERS	Harrie	Netherlands	Visitor
JOYCE	Michael	USA - Midwest	Coordinator
KANNAMPUZA	Francis	India - North	Delegate
KIEKEN	Noel	Paris	Translator
KUZIA	Anthony	USA - New England	Delegate
LAMERAND	Daniel	Paris	Delegate
LAZO RODRÍGUEZ	José Edilberto	Central America	Delegate
MARTINČEK	Ján	Sts Cyril & Methodius	Delegate
MARTÍNEZ R.	Agustín	Toulouse	Delegate
MARTÍNEZ SALAME	Gonzalo	Ecuador	Delegate
MASSARINI	Bernard	Toulouse	Translator
MATA PÉREZ	Oscar	Costa Rica	Delegate
MENDOZA GARCIA	José Ramón	Central America	Delegate
MONTOYA LOAIZA	Gonzalo	Colombia	Delegate
MOORE	Brian	Ireland	Delegate
NIETO VARAS	José María	General Curia	Assistant General
NOGA	Jozef	Slovakia	Delegate
O'SHEA	Kevin	Ireland	Visitor
PEREIRA	José María	Portugal	Delegate
PERUGACHI CHAMORRO	Segundo	Ecuador	Visitor
PONCETTE	Marion	Puerto Rico	Delegate
PRADO ESTÉVEZ	Manuel	Puerto Rico	Delegate
RAKOTOARISON	Pierrot Martin	Madagascar	Delegate
RALAHIZAFY	Pierre Marie Jérôme	Madagascar	Delegate
ROSALES	Daniel	Argentina	Delegate
RUIZ BARBACIL	Francisco	Mexico	Delegate
SARABIA	Joselito	Philippines	Delegate
SCALLON	Paschal	Ireland	Translator

<b>Family Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Service</b>
SERRA CASANOVA	Javier Antonio	Barcelona	Delegate
SPISLA	Euzébio	Curitiba	Visitor
STEHLIK	Thomas	USA - South	Translator
STROLLO	Charles Patrick	USA - East	Delegate
SWIFT	James	USA - Midwest	Visitor
THOTTAMKARA	Varghese	India - South	Visitor
TUNDU	Félicien	Congo D.R.	Delegate
UBILLÚS LAMADRID	José Antonio	General Curia	Assistant General
UMOREN	Linus	Nigeria	Delegate
WYPYCH	Stanisław	Poland	Delegate
ZAKRETA	Arkadiusz	Poland	Visitor
ZERACRISTOS	Yosief	Eritrea	Visitor



**Rome, 10-16 January 2007**

**MEETING: HELP TO CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY**

# Summary Program

## Wednesday 10

**07:30 Opening Eucharist (in common, in Spanish)**

08:15 Breakfast

**09:00 First session: Introduction**

10:30 Break

**11:00 Second session: Fr. Bartholomew Kiely, SJ**

**Priests and Religious in Difficult Situations in the Church**

12:30 Break

13:00 Lunch and break

**15:30 Third session: Fr. José María Nieto, CM**

**Priests and Brothers in Difficult Situations in the CM**

16:45 Break

**17:15 Fourth session: Work in language groups**

19:30 Evening Prayer (in common)

19:45 Supper

## Thursday 11

06:45 Morning Prayer (in language groups)

**07:30 Eucharist (in common, in French)**

08:15 Breakfast

**09:00 First session: Fr. Amedeo Cencini, FDCC**

**Affective Maturity in Consecrated Life**

10:30 Break

**11:00 Second session: Work in continental groups**

12:30 Break

13:00 Lunch and break

**15:30 Third session: Fr. Cyril de Souza, SDB**  
**“Ongoing Formation of Religious” as a Means to Prevent Problems of Religious in Difficulty**

16:45 Break

**17:15 Fourth session: Work in language groups**

18:45 Work in plenary session

19:30 Evening Prayer (in common)

19:45 Supper

**Friday 12**

06:45 Morning Prayer (in language groups)

**07:30 Eucharist (in common, in English)**

08:15 Breakfast

**09:00 First session: Fr. Wiel Bellemakers, CM**  
**Absences: Legitimate and Illegitimate**

10:30 Break

**11:00 Second session: Work in language groups**

Case study: reading and dialogue

12:00 Discussion of the case in plenary session

12:30 Break

13:00 Lunch and break

**15:30 Third session: Fr. Alberto Vernaschi, CM**  
**Departure by Transfer to Another Institute or Incardination into a Diocese**

16:45 Break

**17:15 Fourth session: Work in language groups**

18:45 Case study: reading and dialogue

19:00 Discussion of the case in plenary session

19:30 Evening Prayer (in common)

19:45 Supper

**Saturday 13**

06:45 Morning Prayer (in language groups)

**07:30 Eucharist (in common, in Italian)**

08:15 Breakfast

**09:00 First session: Fr. Alberto Vernaschi, CM**  
**Canonical Process of Dismissal**

10:30 Break

**11:00 Second session: Work in language groups**

Case study: reading and dialogue

12:00 Discussion of the case in plenary session

12:30 Break

13:00 Lunch and break

**15:00 Third session: Fr. Wiel Bellemakers, CM**  
**Readmission, Reintegration, Offenses and Penalties**

16:30 Free time

19:45 Supper

**Sunday 14: Free Day**

**Monday 15**

06:45 Morning Prayer (in language groups)

**07:30 Eucharist (in common, in Spanish)**

08:15 Breakfast

**09:00 First session: Fr. Ray Dlugos, OSA**  
**Psychological Therapy for Sexual Abusers**

10:30 Break

**11:00 Second session: Fr. Ray Dlugos, OSA, and Fr. Michael Joyce, CM**

**Clerical Sexual Abuse of Minors, An Ecclesial Response**

12:30 Break

13:00 Lunch and break

**15:30 Third session: Fr. Michael Joyce, CM**  
**Canonical Process of Laicization: Voluntary or Imposed.**  
**Distribution of bibliography and materials**

16:45 Break

**17:15 Fourth session: Plenary Session**

Presentation of Documents

Interviewing Process

19:30 Evening Prayer (in common)

19:45 Supper

## **Tuesday 16**

07:30 Morning Prayer (in language groups)

08:15 Breakfast

**09:00 First session: Fr. Alessandro Partini, OFM  
Psychological and Spiritual Accompaniment of Confreres  
in Difficult Situations**

10:30 Break

**11:00 Second session: James E. Swift, CM, and Andrew Bellisario, CM  
Experience of two Visitors**

Work in groups

12:30 Break

13:00 Lunch and break

**15:30 Third session: Plenary Session**

- Explanation of the Compilation of a Case
- Progress of a Case after Submission to the General Curia

16:45 Break

**17:15 Evaluation of the workshop**

Evaluation and conclusion of the week

**17:45 Closing Eucharist. Presided by the Superior General (in English)**

19:45 Supper

Rome, 10-16 January 2007

MEETING: HELP TO CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY

# Homily Opening Eucharist

Wednesday, 10 January 2007

**Readings: Hebrews 2:14-18; Mark 1:29-39**

Brothers,

I want to welcome you to the city of Rome, to this house of the Daughters of Charity, who offer a warm welcome, to this gathering of mutual fraternity and of special service to the Congregation, and most especially to this Eucharist. Thank you for coming and for your participation.

For us ordained to the priesthood, the word of God today presents to us Jesus as priest, as “the only high priest.” Three characteristics define his priesthood.

1. Jesus Christ, the high priest, is the brother of all of humanity. In effect, being the Son of God, Jesus is one with us “in flesh and blood.” As our priest, “he became like his brothers and sisters in all ways”; he was of our same family. Is it possible to be priest and not be brother, to be priest and not listen attentively to the needs and hopes of his brothers and sisters, to be priest and silence the cry of his brother’s blood? John Paul II reminded us about the brotherly and priestly vocation of the Church when he said, “man is the *way* of the Church” (RH 14). This is the same way that Vincent travelled and for which he lamented with great pains when he returned to Paris after having given himself completely in the missions.

2. Jesus Christ, as priest, is compassionate. If from anyone, people expect mercy and compassion from their priests, and they long for it from us. Compassion, understanding, generosity, forgiveness, kindness — the heart and soul of mercy — are the wellsprings of our mission as priests. What good does our apostolic activity do if people, when they meet us as priests, do not feel liberated and full of hope, if they do not feel that they can change their lives and be full of light? Jesus Christ, as priest being compassionate and faithful to God, is the one who “offered himself in expiation for our sins.” Our Constitutions, in describing our apostolic activity, clearly invite us to walk this road and remind us that “the

love of Christ, who had pity on the crowd, is the source of our apostolic activity, and urges us to “make the gospel really effective.”

3. Jesus Christ, the high priest, is the one who has passed the test of suffering. The test and the mystery of pain, at times, make us cry out in protest to God for his saving power. The personal experience of carrying our cross, however, is also an occasion to touch the silent mystery of God, absent and mysteriously present, to draw near to the profound mystery of our own human being, and most of all, to be in communion with the pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters. How can we be in communion with those who are wounded by life, or consumed by sickness, to our brother struggling in his vocation, or who feels burned out in regard to community life or his ministry? Maybe the only way to draw near is with our silent solidarity, reaching out to him with our heart and hands, knowing that in the face of great struggles words seem so small. Maybe our silent solidarity, the outward sign of our personal experience or “the test of suffering” is the only aid that can heal our brother’s wound. As high priest, Jesus has passed the test of suffering and can bring aid to those who are going through it right now. Our priestly ministry will only be of help to our wounded brothers if we ourselves have met our trials and suffering with Christian determination and integrity and we know well their meaning.

4. Here, in Rome, high priest has a ring of “high pontiff.” In ancient Rome, pontiff (*pons - facere*) was the one who took care of and guarded the bridge of the Tiber River; the one who *was* the bridge between the two shores of the river, who made possible communication between those in the heart of the city and those who were on its periphery or margins. In the same way in times of danger the pontiff protected the city by defending the bridge from the hands of the enemy. This original meaning, which only later took on religious significance, today holds for us meaning and offers us a special invitation. We are called to be “pontiffs”: to be bridges for our brothers who today live on the margins of or are absent from the Little Company for various reasons, and at the same time, to defend the life of our city, the life of the Congregation of the Mission as our gift to the Kingdom of God.

Fr. José María Nieto, C.M.

(THOMAS J. STEHLIK, C.M., translator)

**Rome, 10-16 January 2007**

**MEETING: HELP TO CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY**

# Homily Closing Eucharist

Tuesday, 16 January 2007

**Readings: Hebrews 6:10-20; Mark 2:23-28**

In preparing for this Eucharist, I asked myself the question: "In what way might the word of God today, which the Universal Church presents to us, enlighten us as we bring to a close this workshop on how to help confreres in difficult situations?" At the heart of the Gospel, Mark presents us, in his second chapter, the Sabbath controversy. The Sabbath in itself is a good thing. The leaders of God's people, inspired by God's grace, wanted to assure that people would take the opportunity to step away from the busyness of their lives and focus on the most important: he who is the source of all life and all energy. In order to avoid circumstances in which people's lives become so busy and God gets crowded out, the Sabbath was established as that day of rest, as that time in which we are to focus on he who is the source of our very being. It is a day of thanking our Creator for the possibility of participating in his very plan of creation. It is that opportunity, through the grace of God, to be re-created ourselves.

Yet, as time went by, the Sabbath's true meaning began to be obscured by the fundamentalist human instincts of abiding by the law. Rather than the Sabbath being a law of God that helps us to come to know and love him more deeply by resting in his presence, the focus was more on just fulfilling the law and then punitive actions against those who did not fulfill it. In other words, the purpose of the law lost its meaning.

In these days, we too have focused a great deal on the law, the Church's universal law and our own particular law, with regard to confreres in difficult situations. One of the things that struck me throughout the week, in the documentation that we received, in the presentations that were given by different experts in the field, as well as in our own personal reflections and the dialogue among ourselves, was the continual reminder that we are to keep a clear focus on helping our brothers in difficult situations. How many times were we asked to be compassionate and patient with those, who for one

reason or another, stray from living out, in an authentic way, our Vincentian vocation?

We know that many times the temptation is just to follow strictly the law, and perhaps, at times, we are not able to see beyond the law and its purpose in helping one to bring about a change and conversion in his own life. From the very beginning, in the preparations for this workshop, the concern of all those who participated in its development was not only to learn how to deal with those legal situations that many times confront us, when confreres, for one reason or another, have gone astray, but also how to avoid these, so to speak, pitfalls, that often take the individual confrere, as well as the Community, along winding, suffering paths.

Our hope was that we might also be able to discuss how to prevent these situations from occurring, and thus how to help a confrere respond to that first fervor that all of us had and which filled our hearts with a desire to follow Jesus, evangelizing and serving the poor. That Jesus is the Son of Man. He is the Lord of the Sabbath. In and through him we have the experience of divine love and it is in and through our intimacy with Jesus that we have the ability to love God with his own heart and thus be able to love others with the heart of God, as Father Cencini shared with us in his talk on "Affective Maturity in the Consecrated Life."

In reaching out to confreres in difficulty, our hope is to help them to recover their ability to love in an authentic and free way. Many times, in order to bring back our brother, he needs to be reminded or reeducated, which can mean compliance to the rules and regulations that are a help in disciplining ourselves to recover our first fervor, to re-ignite in us that attraction or attractiveness to those who often may be the least lovable, our brothers and sisters who are marginalized and excluded. Many times our confreres, who have gone through difficult situations, being difficult themselves, may even seem to us those who are least lovable. As we reflected in these days how Saint Francis kissed the leper, we too, as members of the Congregation of the Mission, have that call to reach out to each and everyone of our brothers. They are the lepers we are called to kiss.

As we celebrate this Eucharist of thanksgiving, I pray that Jesus might always give us the ability to reflect his love to others and that he might enable us to take the graces that we have received this week to assist our confreres, who find themselves in difficult situations.

Some perhaps feel uncomfortable with the title that we had given to this workshop. I often heard people saying that we have to look for another title. Yet I think it reflects the reality in which we are living. This was made quite clear from the opening conference of Father José María Nieto and the statistics that represent real persons, who, in one way or another, made a commitment to follow Jesus

Christ for their whole lives in the Congregation of the Mission and who, for one reason or another, lost sight of that call. This is our reality. We are called, as brothers, to confront these situations in a way that will best reflect who we are and who Saint Vincent invites us to be: Brothers who love one another.

Those in “trouble,” so to speak, are a small portion of the little Company, among the 3500 of us incorporated. Many confreres are “on the road” and provide for us good example and encouragement in living out our vocation to evangelize the poor. Together we can support those who feel weaker. Let our strength come from our unity in the Eucharist we share.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in dark ink and is centered on the page.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

# Change of Perspective in the Consideration of the Topic

Reflections of a Former Visitor and a Former Judicial Vicar

by Wiel Bellemakers, C.M.

## 1. Impressions about my years of study: 1950-1961

About 1950, as a young seminarian I saw in Panningen the French movie, “Le Défroqué” – “The Defrocked.” The film made a deep impression everywhere and initiated a big theological problem.

A man who had resigned from priesthood was challenged in a pub by tipplers to say the consecration words over a big glass of wine. Being defrocked could he still validly say the consecration words so that wine would change into holy blood? Was he not actually “sacerdos in aeternum,” “a priest forever”? The men kept challenging him until he yielded to their mockery.

He took the full cup of wine and said the consecration words. No sooner had he pronounced those words than his challengers began to challenge him again: “You believe that this is Holy Blood to be sure? You have got to drink this, you defrocked priest.”

That was what happened. The poor man had said the words, he drank and drank and got dead drunk.

A violent theological discussion began among the then important theologians: is such a consecration formula indeed valid? Protagonists and antagonists joined in from everywhere. On one thing they all agreed: a defrocked priest is — remains — a priest forever, even if he is surely a sinner.

There is no doubt about him being, as a defrocked priest, a bad sinner. If he did not convert, he would “go to hell for ever.” As a defrocked priest, an apostate, a sinner, there was no way he could still take part in ordinary ecclesial life. If he died without converting, he would be refused a church burial. He was expelled. Then people thought in that way. Thinking was not all, in most cases all official contacts with the ex-priest were cut.

I remember very well that this was the general opinion. During my seminary years in Panningen you could hear this every time a confrere left; he was a wretched sinner. This meant also: he is lost

forever. If the news made its way into the seminary that a confrere, who had left, now had died, you heard at the same time: May God take pity on this poor sinner.

Books about priests and religious who had left were published and became worldwide sensations in literature. The phenomenon was known the world over. A solution was difficult to be found.

I think that it was only at the end of 1960 — while studying canon law — that I heard that the Pope sometimes laicized priests and allowed them to have a Church marriage. A factor was certainly the tragic leaving by priests who had fought for years during the war. No publications appeared about the subject. That had to wait until Vatican II, when several bishops asked to find a definitive solution for those who had left and cohabited with a woman.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. The years that I myself worked as a formator: 1961-1969**

After my canon law study here in Rome, I was assigned to our major seminary in Panningen. The Vatican Council began. A huge change took place. In the midst of all those ecclesial changes a lot of priests left. Among them, priests who, in the past years, had become well known in our country.

In 1965 the Vincentians, Holy Ghost Fathers, Assumptionists, Norbertinians and Augustinians set up a theological faculty. There were 250 students. After four years there remained 50 students for the five congregations; no new students presented themselves. Some colleagues, teachers, declared that they did not believe in formation. Five colleagues left.

In 1967, now 40 years ago, the last group of students was ordained. Afterwards our province had one more candidate for ordination. This was the situation for us Vincentians, but also for almost all the congregations and dioceses in the Netherlands.

At the same time a new attitude developed toward the priests who left. The bishops had asked emphatically during the Council to arrange measures for the pastoral care of those who were leaving. They were not able or not willing to function anymore as priests, but quite a group remained heart and soul linked to the Church and wanted completely to stay part of it.

The procedures of asking for laicization brought to light that there may be many reasons for a person to leave. It was not only,

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<sup>1</sup> E. LOHSE, "The Origin and Nature of the Suspension *Ad Cautelam* of Article 4 of the 1980 *Normae Procedurales* for Dispensations from Celibacy," in: *Periodica* 94, 2005, pages 647-680; 95, 2006, pages 69-107.

as was said in former days, because someone was a public sinner, unfaithful to his vocation and ideal, unfaithful to his vows. It became clear that completely different factors played a big part, not just sin.

### 3. The years I was at the diocesan tribunal: 1974-2007

During these years, little by little, I discovered a clear parallel ecclesial thinking about those who broke their marriage promise and divorced and those who left the priesthood. During my study, divorced people and priests who had left were all public sinners.

It was forbidden to divorce. If people, notwithstanding that prohibition, still divorced, then they would incur heavy ecclesial punishments. They were not allowed to receive Holy Communion. If they did not repent, Church burial was not allowed either. An ecclesial annulment of a marriage was very rarely possible. At the utmost they could be permitted to be “separated from bed and board.”<sup>2</sup>

For centuries the Church declared that a marriage impediment can block bringing about a marriage. Otherwise little was done with it except the announcement before the marriage that every member of the faithful was obliged to notify the presbytery of marriage impediments, if any. After CIC 1917, the jurisprudence developed more and more under the influence of psychological and psychiatric expertise and large-scale research in the field of the sexual life.

When a new definition of marriage was given by Vatican II, it became still more evident that many candidates for marriage cannot marry validly.

*“The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.”<sup>3</sup>*

There are those who are incapable of contracting this. Thence the number of marriage annulments drastically increased worldwide. At the same time, the thoughts about divorced people changed. It was recognized that many divorced people have the right to get an annulment of their marriage. It was recognized that many among them are entitled to a full place in the Church community.

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<sup>2</sup> CIC/1983 De separationem manente vinculo cc. 1151-1155.

<sup>3</sup> Canon 1055 § 1.

It was recognized that there are divorced people too, who, because of the experience of their purified life and of the growth of their faith, are members of great value in the Church community, and therefore can be admitted in a religious community and even to ordination.

#### 4. Conclusion

There are parallels between the two groups: the religious/priests who left and the persons who divorced.

I want to point out two basic parallels:

1. In judicial procedures we cannot raise the question of guilt;
2. Knowledge about the psychological and psychiatric backgrounds is of essential importance to reach a decision that gives the people concerned their due.

There is still another similarity between both groups.

I have the very strong impression that the people who left and the people who divorced have been approached, for centuries, as: "Them, the sinners." The bystanders — the faithful, the confreres, the sisters in community, the superiors — judged them and passed back to the order of the day, if they did not keep on throwing stones.<sup>4</sup>

These last 50 years, the awareness grew that the ecclesial community itself can be responsible too for a marriage to fail, for religious and priests to leave. I myself, with my colleagues on the diocesan tribunal, have quite often said that we, in our judicial work, do not do anything else than clean up what others (parents, educators, priests and so on) have omitted when these two persons contracted marriage. The matrimonial lawsuits show these omissions and mistakes very clearly.

CIC/1983. Canon 1063 does not say for nothing:

*Pastors of souls are obliged to see to it that their own ecclesial community furnishes the Christian faithful assistance so that the matrimonial state is maintained in a Christian spirit and makes progress toward perfection. This assistance is especially to be furnished through: 1° preaching, catechesis...; 2° personal preparation for entering marriage...; 3° a fruitful liturgical celebration of marriage...; 4° assistance furnished to those already married....*

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<sup>4</sup> John 8:1-11.

## C. 1064:

*It is up to the local ordinary to make provisions that such assistance is duly organised, even after consulting men and women of proven experience and skill...*

These same words can be heard louder and louder these last years about guiding people to vows and ordinations.

We faithful, we religious, we priests and superiors have become aware that we ourselves did not measure up to our task during the years of formation and even afterwards.

The matrimonial lawsuits and the laicization requests show us our shortcomings.

I think this has been said in a masterly way in "A Moment of Reflection," which the then Procurator General, Modesto López, delivered at the Meeting of the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission in Salamanca 5- 15 June 1996.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Vincentiana* (4-5) 1996, pages 360-361:

1. There are individuals who never should have been ordained which, if it can be proven, is the best argument in favor of the dispensation. But how did they go to profession and ordination?

a) Let us remember the formation *en masse* that many received. They could not be known individually. They easily were lost, without committing grave faults, which freed them from expulsion or advice to leave the seminary.

b) Cover-ups on their part, not revealing to their confessors or spiritual directors or other formators, because these never gained their confidence, at times because of fear that if they were honest they would be advised not to continue, and this they could not do, at times because of family pressure or that of people who have helped them to continue their studies in the seminary.

c) Cover-ups on the part of formators themselves. Like that deacon who had an adventure with a young woman who was as a consequence pregnant. He confided the following to a formator, his close friend; if a boy is born, I will become a priest; if it is a girl, I will leave the seminary and ask dispensation from the diaconate. The boy child came and our deacon was ordained a priest. A short time thereafter natural paternity weighed in heavier than spiritual paternity and he left the priesthood. The formator, his good friend, then said: "This is not strange because as a deacon he acted this same way." That was the first time he said what he ought to have revealed previously. An irresponsible companion helping one who never should have been ordained. And this is not a fantasy. Although fewer, there are cases in which at times a bishop or a provincial, against the opinion of the formators, approves a candidate for Holy Orders. Sometimes it is the confessor or the spiritual director who gives little importance to the real problems of a candidate for Holy Orders, and advises him to continue.

d) A lack of stability of formators in their position. On the one hand, some of these do not get enthused for the work confided to them, thinking rather about moving on to dedicate themselves to another ministry perhaps better rewarded in other ways. On the other hand, seminarians do not trust

On the basis of this double-sided life experience in procedures of laicization lawsuits and marriage lawsuits, I want to ask from all of us:

- to speak and judge with gentleness and clemency about those who left our Community;
- to learn to act with great clarity and strict justice when it is necessary;
- with courageous self-criticism ask ourselves if we need not review our life so that this mishap can be prevented; or, as Modest López told us in Salamanca:

*Let us make the cases of reduction to the lay state and expulsions less difficult by reducing as far as possible their number, first of all through a desirable formation, and afterwards a life of community lived in true companionship of prayer, fraternity and work.*<sup>6</sup>

May God in these days inspire and assist us through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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their formators, moving on from order to order to the point where, in the middle of grave doubts, they decide to take that step which never should have been taken: that of receiving (p. 361) priestly ordination. The Sacred Congregation in its letter, *Dilata et compleantur acta*, calls us to make every effort to find a solution, above all in the admission and formation stage, to the formation and selection of both candidates to orders and of their formators.

2. There is another group, probably the majority, of priests who received a formation, perhaps not totally solid but good, who received ordination freely and enthusiastically, who worked ten, 15, even more years with total dedication and with much fruit, but the day comes when they begin to ask themselves questions. Irregularity in the common life of prayer, excessive activism outside, withdrawing within, a critical spirit, bitterness grows. The Community notices all of this but it looks away, it tolerates it at first, it begins to criticize, later to complain, but in the absence or when he is already outside. It is much too late! What could have been done that was not done? A big question, but a confrere has been lost.

Superiors ought to have the necessary courage to remove from formation a subject who evidently causes more damage than good. We need to have a critical judgement about our life as community. Why do a large number of confreres pass to the secular clergy? What do they hope to find away from us that we do not give or that we perhaps deny them? If they seek a better social position, if they seek greater liberty, more independence, this can be a fault in formation, for not having discovered in time that such individuals are not apt for life in community, or certain demands of our community life were not well explained to them. Would that with the new *Instruction on the Vows*, our young men can discover in time what the vow of stability means, which I think has already been spoken about in this meeting.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 362.

# Change of Perspective in the Consideration of the Topic

Initial Thoughts of a Canonist and Formator

by Michael P. Joyce, C.M.

As I begin this presentation, I apologize to the translators for the times when I will wander from this text and from my text next week. Since my abilities in foreign languages are quite limited, I admire your work and am dependent upon it.

When I was the Judicial Vicar of Cardinal Rigali in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, we had a conversation about my work as a Vincentian. Cardinal Rigali is a close friend of our Community and received his initial formation from us, including from our former Superior General, Father James Richardson. Cardinal Rigali asked me how I saw my work as his judicial vicar as part of the Vincentian ministry. Since one of my duties was assisting diocesan priests in seeking dispensations from their obligations arising from ordination, I answered that part of my work was the continuing formation of priests who decided to leave active ordained ministry. I do not know if my response was sufficient for Cardinal Rigali but I do know that I see my work with the Midwest and Southern Provinces of the United States and with several dioceses in the United States in normalizing the status of priests who have left the active ordained ministry as formation work.

Allow me to explain the extreme statement I have just made. Father Bellemakers admirably explained the negative opinion that many in the Catholic Church used to hold toward priests who had left the active ministry. (It is even difficult to find non-judgmental language about these brothers.) The various canonical institutes that we will examine during this workshop to normalize their situations can be viewed simply as ways to release them from our Congregation. However, these men, whether they are our confreres or brothers in the fraternity of the ordained priesthood, are members of the Christian faithful and fellow human beings who have a personal relationship with our God. For them, the process of moving from membership in the Congregation of the Mission and participation in the ordained priesthood of Jesus Christ is much

more than a canonical procedure. It is also a process in their human formation that is at the basis of all other kinds of formation.

In various parts of the world today, people do not necessarily regard priests who find that they must depart from the exercise of the ordained, for whatever reason, with the same kind of negative views as in the past. This change of opinion, I believe, has come from experience. Many of these men may have been ineffective in their pastoral ministry and after they have returned to the lay state are now quite effective and much more satisfied with their lives. We, as people of faith, hope, and love, must ask how this dichotomy is possible. Did not God call them? Did they not respond? Was grace not effective in their process of discernment? I have no definitive answers to these questions.

When I began my studies in law for consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, we studied the canonical procedures for dismissal and laicization. My professor, Father Kevin Seasoltz, OSB, commented during his lecture that he believed that God might call someone to consecrated life and later call that person to another lifestyle. As a recently vowed Vincentian and newly ordained priest, I found that comment rather puzzling. I now believe that Father Seasoltz' observation is quite plausible. As God has informed us, his ways are not our ways. I take this opportunity to make a sales pitch and mention a work that you might find very helpful. It is entitled *Procedural Handbook for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*.<sup>1</sup> This work explains how to go through a variety of procedures that leadership needs to use including excommunication, dismissal, and laicization. This book is available at Pauline Media, close to the Vatican.

Another possibility is that our formation programs are not perfect, nor will they ever be, because they are subject to human limitations. On this point, I recommend to you a series of presentations made to the superiors general entitled, *Promoting Perseverance in the Consecrated Life: Anthropological Challenges to Formation*.<sup>2</sup> You can find this book at the Ancora bookstore on Via della Conciliazione. Our formation programs are characterized by mutuality. The mutuality is between those in formation, the formators, and provincial leadership. There are several instances in which I, as a formator, recommended to provincial leadership that a

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<sup>1</sup> MICHAEL P. JOYCE, CM - CATHERINE DARCY, RSM - ROBERT KASLYN, SJ - MARGARET SULLIVAN, CSJ (editors), *Procedural Handbook for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> UNION OF SUPERIORS GENERAL, *Promoting Perseverance in the Consecrated Life: Anthropological Challenges to Formation*, Rome: Litos, undated.

confrere not be admitted to incorporated membership or ordination. I only made such a recommendation after speaking with the confrere in initial formation. Many times, provincial leadership did not accept my recommendation. There are several instances in which the leadership was correct and these members are now doing outstanding ministry. However, there are other instances in which the confreres have continued to present problems. In some of these instances, I have had to make a recommendation to the Holy See that these confreres be dispensed from their obligations and dismissed from the clerical state and the Congregation. I do not need to go into detail about the variety of situations that were present; you know them from your own experience as formators. A work that I found helpful in synthesizing the various factors that cause someone to depart from the community and the priesthood is: *Fidelity and Abandonment in Today's Consecrated Life*.<sup>3</sup> It is also published by the Union of Superiors General and available at Ancora.

I also will say a few words about an item in your folders titled "Synthesis of the Questionnaires." During the first meeting of the Commission for this workshop, we decided to ask Visitors, formators, and confreres who had left questions about their experiences. On behalf of the Commission, I thank all those who responded to our questions. Those experiences were very valuable as we met a second time to develop further this week in which we are meeting together. There is no one session of the workshop that directly responds to the reports that the Commission received. However, we used those responses to design the workshop. The experiences of those who responded include a wide spectrum. We suggest that you find some time early in the workshop to read the responses of our confreres and former confreres so that they may provide you with a rich background as you journey through the week of this workshop.

Finally I suggest that as we proceed during this workshop, we keep in mind that we are working with and for our confreres to provide ultimately, in a variety of ways, for their salvation, the supreme law of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> UNION OF SUPERIORS GENERAL, *Fidelity and Abandonment in Today's Consecrated Life*, Rome: Litos, undated.

<sup>4</sup> Canon 1752: "... the salvation of souls, which in the Church must always be the supreme law."

# Confreres in Situations of Difficulty in the CM

Absences, Departures, the Actual Situation

by José María Nieto Varas, C.M.

## I. FATHERS AND BROTHERS: CONFRERES

### 1. This is about all of us.

We cannot forget that life, the life of us all, implies difficulties more or less and that when we speak of confreres “in situations of difficulties” in a way we are speaking of us all without exception.

But there are difficulties that can become more serious and that can place in danger, even grave danger, our life, our ability to love and our ability to act. In this reflection I would like to refer to these more serious difficulties.

### 2. This is about “my/our” confreres.

Behind every difficult situation, or any serious difficulty there is a person, a confrere, (or some confreres) who may be suffering and whom we need to do our best to deeply understand.

It can be helpful, in order to deal with the difficult situation and the confrere, to ask ourselves a few questions. What has been the cause or what has led this confrere to this “difficult situation?” What has been his personal story, his formation within and outside of the Congregation, his ministries (especially his first one), his relationship with other confreres of the local community and with both local and provincial authority? What have been his personal ministries, apostolic projects, his hopes, his crises, his struggles, his victories, and his defeats? In this way we are asking about a confrere, his interior life, with some possible understanding of what has been made manifest on the outside.

## **II. THE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

### **II.A. Active Confreres who are enduring or struggling with difficulties**

These confreres are active and integrated in community life and in the apostolate and are going through difficult situations. The types of difficulties are diverse and all of them are difficult to handle. We can group them in the following categories:

#### **a) Personal difficulties**

- Physical illness or sickness
- Psychological, affective, or sexual imbalance
- Difficulties with members of their own family
- Difficulties with the spiritual life
- Difficulties in living the vows of poverty, chastity, stability, and obedience.

#### **b) Difficulties in living community life**

- Struggles in the local community (with the local superior or confreres) of their assignment
- Difficulty in carrying out an internal community ministry (Visitor, Provincial Treasurer, local Superior)
- Difficulty in finding a sense of meaning or belonging in the local community.

#### **c) Difficulties in their ministry**

- Physical exhaustion or excessive work or activity
- Disappointment, burn-out from a particular ministry
- Risk of the ministry itself (some ministries are so difficult as to risk one's life)
- Lack of preparation or qualification to carry out a ministry, whether in the area of formation (seminaries), or in pastoral ministry (popular missions).

I think that our confreres who go through these difficulties and struggle to face and work through them deserve our respect, our solidarity, and our support, so as to help them carry the heavy load.

## **II.B. The “Present but Absent”**

In this group the confreres live in community, but in reality, are spiritually, and to a great extent, physically and/or emotionally, absent from the community. They are assigned to a house, live in it, but are not interested in or committed to the life of the confreres. They are “present but absent” or if you will, only present physically. These confreres are suffering from difficulties, at times serious difficulties, that cause difficulties for the confreres in community, sometimes so difficult as to create other confreres “present but absent.”

If we are honest, we can admit that these confreres exist in every province. We all know who they are and know their history of difficulty. Some are passed from one local community to another. Some provinces even have special houses where confreres are sent where will be less destructive or where their negative impact on others is diluted.

When we speak of statistics, the “present but absent” are invisible and unknown to the international CM. Certainly the Curia has no idea or statistics about this reality. But my fear is that we do not give importance to this evasive group who really present a dangerous threat to the Congregation and who deserve our serious attention.

Sometimes the difficulties stem from past difficulties and other times these are confreres who are on their way to a true absence from the Congregation. Using the image of the iceberg, we can say that the “present but absent” have recognizable problems above the water, but below the surface have serious difficulties that are invisible.

Some of our confreres, “present but absent,” lack honesty and courage to take a leave or seek dispensation from the Community. I am present because I do not have the coherence or the strength to leave. They often conduct their lives that lead to sickness or death of the community. St. Vincent, for sure, had strong words for this type of confrere.

Some situations with respect to these confreres would be:

- Confreres who live in isolation.
- Confreres who live on the margins of the community and the way they want to.
- Confreres who live unaware of their difficulties or of their own behavior.
- In summary, a comfortable situation for the confrere, but uncomfortable for the community.

**II.C. Absences from the Community**

**1. Absences during the last 11 years.**

Year	Total	Priest	Deacon	Brother	Student	Reference
1996	84	82	0	2		VT (1997, 2) p. 77
1997	105	102	0	3		VT (1998, 2) p. 83
1998	100	92	1	7		VT (1999, 2) p. 106
1999	107	103	1	3		VT (2000, 4-5) p. 278
2000	120	118	0	2		VT (2001, 6) p. 498
2001	139	135	0	4		VT (2002, 3) p. 126
2002	171	168	0	3		VT (2003, 3) p. 131
2003	166	162	1	3		VT (2004, 2) p. 78
2004	185	171	10	3	1	VT (2005, 1) p. 25
2005	162	153	8	1		VT (2006, 1-2) p. 33
2006	184					Sec. Gen: 31/12/2006

Since 1996, the number has increased gradually with ups and downs. In the last ten years, the number has increased by more than 100, passing from 84 in 1996 to 184 today. Sometimes it is difficult to count and perhaps, due to this, there are years when the increases and decreases are more pronounced. For example, in the year 2002 the number of absences increased by 31!

**2. How many are actually absent?**

On 12/31/2006, 184 confreres were absent. After checking over the list, I believe that there are likely more, perhaps close to 200 of a total 3391, which is 5.42%. If we think in terms of provinces, the absent confreres would make up the second largest province in the Congregation, second only to Poland (269). The absent confreres are larger than the other largest provinces Paris (174), USA East (168), Colombia (154), USA Midwest (131), Zaragoza and Madrid (124) and the Philippines (100).

**3. Age of the Absent.**

Age	Total	% of 184
20-29	1	0.54%
30-39	52	28.20%
40-49	69	37.50%
50-59	37	20.10%
60-69	12	6.52%
70-79	11	5.97%
80-89	2	1.08%
90-99	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>99.84%</b>

65.7% of the absent confreres or 121 confreres are between the ages of 30 and 49 but most of these are between 35 and 49 years old. There are 49 confreres between the ages of 50 and 60 years of age that make up 26.6%.

**4. Provinces of Origin.**

This phenomenon extends through many of the 52 provinces and vice-provinces, but there are some quantitative distinctions.

There are five Provinces that have ten or more absent confreres which add up to 76 confreres or 41.3% of all those absent from the Congregation.

<b>Colombia</b>	30 absent of 154 total (19.4%)
<b>Mexico</b>	15 absent of 96 total (15.6%)
<b>Poland</b>	11 absent of 269 total ( 4.0%)
<b>Central America</b>	10 absent of 48 total (20.8%)
<b>Philippines</b>	10 absent of 100 total (10.0%)

There are four provinces that have between five and nine absent confreres and make up 28, or 15% of all absent confreres: Ecuador 9/32 (28%), Curitiba 7/72 (9.7%), Rio de Janeiro 6/79 (7.59%), Puerto Rico 6/66 (9.09%).

## 5. Numbers of Absent Confreres by Continent.

Region	Number	% of 184	Total: 3419	CM %
Africa	13	7.06	285	8.33%
Latin America	104	56.52	806	23.57%
Asia + Oceana	11	6.52	371	18.85%
Europe	43	23.36	1503	43.96%
USA	12	6.52	371	10.85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>99.98</b>	<b>3336</b>	

## 6. Type of Absence: legitimate - illegitimate

A closer analysis of the diverse kinds of absences would take much more time. Clearly those absences which are legitimate, that is, granted with conditions by the Visitor or the Superior General, are fewer than the illegitimate ones or those without permission.

Legitimate absences, depending on the permission, are of two kinds:

- Granted with permission by the Visitor for one year (C. 67)
- Granted with permission by the Superior General for three years (C. 70). The Superior General often grants these permissions for one major reason: possible future incardination into a diocese. He does this so that the confrere can work "ad experimentum" in a diocese for a trial period. During this period it is clear that the confrere is still a member of the CM

## 7. A few very personal observations.

I am of the opinion that in the CM we are making use of paragraph 67 of the Constitutions too easily, being somewhat lax in our reading of it in regard to the one-year leave granted by the Visitor. This type of permission should comply with specific requirements: assignment to a house, exercise of the rights and responsibilities as clearly stated in the permission, for a just reason, granted for one year. If the absence is for more than one year, it must be for one of the following reasons: poor health, studies, or an apostolate of the CM.

**67. - § 1. -** *A member who has obtained permission, either from the Superior General or from the provincial with the consent of their respective councils, to live outside a house or community, should be attached to some house or community, so that he enjoys rights and is held to obligations in it according to the norm of the permission granted to him.*

**§ 2. -** *This permission, however, should be granted only for a just reason, and not beyond a year, except to treat an illness, to study, or to serve in an apostolate in the name of our Institute.*

Although legitimate, sometimes the absences, rather than a medicine to address and cure the actual situation, seem to be more of a morphine, to slowly induce the confrere into a kind of euthanasia, or a toboggan shoot towards an illegitimate absence that leads to his permanent separation from the CM. The “legitimate absence” then, seems to be de-legitimized by the one to whom it was granted, because once the permission is given, there is no adequate follow up or a real accompaniment of the confrere.

**II.D. Departures from the Congregation**

1) The term “departure” does not refer to confreres who have left the community to live outside of it, for these confreres continue to belong to the CM but are absent from the community. Departure designates those confreres who have truly left the CM and no longer form a part of it.

2) Letter of the Superior General of 24 January 2006:

“In the last six years (1999-2004) 122 confreres have ceased being members of the Congregation of the Mission. Every year, on the average, some 20 missionaries leave. Some are Brothers or students (13.1%); but the great majority are priests.”

These departures have been granted by dispensation or expulsion:

Type of Departure	Nº	%
Dispensed from vows – brothers and students	16	13.11
Dispensed from vows to incardinate in a diocese or congregation	30	24.60
Dispensed from the obligations of the priestly state (AOO)	26	21.31
Automatic expulsion (generally for civil marriage)	37	30.32
Expulsion from the CM through process	13	10.65
<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>99.99</b>

The motives for the exits vary. Without doing an analysis, we can recognize the influence of different factors of a personal nature, affective, formative, community, apostolic, institutional, socio-cultural, etc.

3) To continue, I will give you the figures of the last 10 years. The annual exits average almost 20 confreres per year.

Year	Exits	Percentage	Median Age
1996	20		949 years; 47.45
1997	20		927 years; 46.35
1998	14		601 years; 42.92
1999	13		
2000	22		
2001	25		
2002	23		
2003	20		
2004	21		898 years; 42.76
2005	17	of 3395 - 0.50%	726 years; 42.70
2006	21		1.057 years; 50.33

4) In *Vincentiana*, Father Modesto López did a four-year study from July 1992 to June 1996. During these years, 124 confreres left the Congregation, with an incredibly high average of 31 confreres per year.

5) I have not verified this extreme situation, but if we carry out the same percentages and the percentages of exits from 2005-2006 it would look like, civil marriage (30), incardination (25), dispensation AOO (21), dispensation from vows by the Superior General (13), expulsion through process (10).

### III. IN THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

What happens to these confreres happens to them being members of the Community, and in a way, it happens to the whole Community. In this third and last part, I would like to point out some aspects of community.

### **1. Confreres in difficulty and communities in difficulty.**

Personal relationship — community, community — person. We have to think of the “confreres with difficulties” by looking at the community in which they reside, where they suffer from difficulties or where they create them. Confreres with difficulties contribute to creating difficult communities and vice versa.

There are difficult confreres that bring about in themselves difficult situations, but there are also communities that provoke these difficulties of the following types: vocational, ministerial, affective, etc. Frequently, our candidates and our young confreres, although they can be inconsequent, prophetically denounce the sins of our communities. It is not uncommon that those who aspire to honestly live the CM vocation become disillusioned and are led into difficulty by a community which is less than exemplar.

### **2. The vocational impact of the “confreres with difficulties” (absences and exits) and of the “community in difficulty.”**

Just as exemplary missionaries and communities inspire new candidates and new vocations, absent missionaries and disbanded communities can not promote vocational growth, instead, they either temporarily or in the long run take the joy out of one’s vocation.

### **3. Rights and responsibilities of a confrere in community.**

The absent confrere has rights which should be respected, as well as obligations with which he must comply. The community, for its part, has obligations towards the confrere, but also has rights which it should not give up, or it may suffer serious consequences. The good of the person, as the center of the universe, is the good to be sought after, but as well the common good of the community should not be placed at risk. Here there is a delicate equilibrium that must be maintained by leaders who accompany confreres in these situations.

### **4. Mutual relationships between the CM and the local Church regarding confreres in difficulty.**

How do we relate with the local Church in the cases of our absent confreres? How do we, who represent the CM, relate to bishops in these cases? I will leave this theme open for a possible dialogue among you.

## 5. What can the CM (local community, province, Congregation) do for these confreres?

1) Preventative action: formation, well-prepared formators and profound initial formation. A good process of accompaniment in the beginning stage of formation, in vocational discernment, during initiation to the community is a base for prevention of many difficult situations.

2) Specific treatment: There exist “basic and general lines” of action, but each person and every situation requires its own specific treatment. Remedies that help one person are not necessarily helpful to another confrere in a different situation, and vice versa.

3) Some basic Vincentian lines are indicated in:

- Constitutions, Community Life 19-27
- Constitutions (65-76)
- Statutes (14, 1) Confreres obligated to live alone because of ministry
- Statutes (14, 2) Confreres who are struggling with problems
- *Practical Guide for the Visitor* (2005), 123-203.
- *Practical Guide for the Local Superior* (2003), 69-73, *Vincentiana* (2003, n. 4, p. 215-216)

4) Prayer. Prayer for Vocations (*Expectatio Israel*) applies not only to new vocations and to candidates, but also to confreres “present but absent,” absent, and to ourselves.

5) Local Community. The local community (the superior and the confreres as well) plays a fundamental role (initial and ongoing) in the accompaniment of confreres with difficulties, inside and outside of community. Let us remember that “absent” confreres should be assigned to and belong to a community (*Guide for the Local Superior*). The local community is the umbilical cord between the confrere and the Congregation.

6) A confrere friend, a tutor, a companion. The province may use the service of a confrere who is a close friend of a confrere who is absent as a bridge between the confrere and the Community. He may perform many functions (frequent visits, dialogue, accompaniment, spiritual help, etc.) and may be very useful on numerous occasions to aid the absent confrere, as well as help the Community.

7) Seriously seek the recovery of the confrere, as soon as possible, and through adequate means, without counting him as a

lost cause. Some means may be: a sabbatical, helpful ongoing formation, medical assistance, psychological therapy, etc.

8) In case he chooses to leave, help him and orient him in the transition process that applies (incardination, petition of dispensation, AOO, etc.) and then on his new life journey (help him to find work, to resituate himself in the Church, in society, etc.).

## 6. What should the CM (local community, province, Congregation), not do with confreres in difficulty?

1) Ignore him or fail to pay attention, not dedicate time to him, not address the situation (look the other way, do nothing, leave him for the next one in charge, allow an indefinite amount of time to go by) by which the situation gets worse and worse. This especially applies to the Visitor.

2) Think of the confrere as “outside” of the CM before he leaves, quickly, and at times, unjustly. The absent confreres can feel (or even desire to be) treated as confreres who no longer belong to the CM. We do not have the right (neither the Visitor, nor the local superior, nor the confreres) to mentally erase these confreres from our common world.

There have been cases where it was preferred to remove a confrere, who had been absent for a while, from the *Catalogue*, rather than face and resolve the situation and, as a consequence, “slam the door closed” and “prefer that he not return” because he will create more problems for me and for the Community.

3) Not anathemize, persecute, or make him a “scapegoat” of our own sins (he is the one who is bad and we are right), nor beatify or sanctify him (we are bad and he is the good one). Let us leave the judgment to the Lord and, meanwhile, work with love and trembling for our own salvation.

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G. GREGORY GAY, “Letter to the Visitors and to the Local Superiors (24 January 2006),” in *Vincentiana* 50, n. 1-2 (2006), 3-8.

**V. REGARDING THE “SYNTHESIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES”**

Questions that would be good to read would be: 2 and 3. Of less importance are questions 1, 13, and 14.

Regarding the second Questionnaire, the most important questions are 21, 22, 25, and 26. It would be good to read the other questions of this questionnaire (19, 20, 23, 24) because they are the voice of our absent confreres and confreres who have left the CM.

(THOMAS J. STEHLIK, C.M., translator)

# Affective Maturity in the Consecrated Life<sup>1</sup>

by Amedeo Cencini, FDCC

## Introduction

When God loves, and precisely because he loves, he calls. The vocation is an expression of love. It is uniquely motivated by the loving will of God and tells of such love. It speaks of the most profound identity of God and, at the same time, the intimate nature of the vocation itself, its origin and its destiny.

A vocation, understood in this way, is the inevitable consequence of the nature God, and of the God who loves. He who cannot but call, because love by its nature communicates itself, to be shared and offered to others. The vocation, all vocations, are precisely that: the call to participate in the love of God, in the eternal celebration of the Holy Trinity, of the Father who loves the Son in the Holy Spirit, in an uninterrupted interchange that seeks to grow outside of the uninterrupted Trinitarian dance.

The result is a unique vocation, the vocation of love, to open oneself to be loved and to love, to announce love and to translate it, as if falling into love, in its gestures of openness, forgiveness, gratitude, gratuity, benevolence, service, self-sacrifice, passion, peace, solidarity, and martyrdom.

Whatever the specific individual vocation be, or whatever path we are called to take, the final destiny of its existence does not change: love, love received and love given. Putting all of what one has received as gift of life (that is, from God) in service of love: mind and heart, external and internal senses, sensitivity and intelligence, body and soul, sexuality and resources and projects, options and renouncements, etc.

As such, the celibate/virgin and the married, both, are called to reach the same objective although through very different paths. And the same objective of maturity is love, the free gift of one's self, the

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<sup>1</sup> This text fundamentally summarizes the first part of my book *When the flesh is weak. Vocational discernment in face of immaturity and pathology of sexual-affective development*, Milan 2005, pp. 3-25.

capacity to witness to love as the only reason to exist, as obedience to that norm that the Creator himself has put in our human nature, mysterious fingerprint evident of our likeness with God: He who is Love.

I believe that there is a lot of wisdom in the popular refrain which says, "One cannot consecrate well, if one could not marry well, and one cannot marry well, if one could not consecrate well."

Thus it is important to discern attentively, during the time of initial formation, the level of consistency and the affective freedom of the call to the presbyterate or the consecrated life by the one who permits the call to captivate him/her as the excellent sign of love that gives love. At the same time, within this attention, it becomes indispensable to identify immediately possible signs of immaturity and any possible pathologies in the affective-sexual development. This occurs within the normative framework that identifies the criteria of growth in the area of affective maturation in general, but also in the specific areas that the roads to priesthood and religious life require.

This is done not because or with the purpose of selectivity only (so as to guarantee non-existent superiority of the species), but because of the demands of truth and charity toward the person directly interested with his/her need to be helped to know him/herself even in the less-than-positive aspects, so as to make a well-thought-out choice, as well as for those who, in the future, will, in some way, have contact with his/her ministerial action and with that love, which all living beings need, of which he/she is the sign.

In the reflection that I now share, I offer some elements to support this discernment. I do so proposing some concrete criteria to verify the authenticity of the evolving path to mature affectivity for those in initial, as well as ongoing, formation.

We are emerging from a very difficult time, a period of darkness, on the worldwide level, in what is referred to as the witness of priestly and religious celibacy. We all know that, in many of the cases that have caused scandal, the defect has been, precisely, in the initial discernment, when the problem was not even identified and, for this reason, it was not possible to keep under control or possibly even "cure it" in the later stages of formation.

To recognize the truth of the situation, which is presented as a call, is not only important and decisive for admission to the educative process, but it is also indispensable to offer, as soon as possible, help to the person: help him/her to understand him/herself; help identify possible therapeutic means or instruments (not necessarily in the clinical sense); help with a personal presence to confront real problems of the individual so as to be able to overcome them, keep

them under control and become more independent; and, finally, help offer criteria to make a good, well-thought-out decision, in time not suspected or adapted for discernment (not on the eve of the diaconate or the perpetual profession, or even the eve of the priesthood). When this type of help is offered to the person *from the beginning* of the educative-formative journey, it is a truly helpful service for one who seeks to identify the proper path of life and it is truly formative, regardless whether the person is or is not admitted to the institute. When this service is not offered or when it is not offered carefully, then ambiguity replaces help and makes discernment over time more difficult and problematic.

In summary, it is not only necessary to propose criteria as punctual elements, before which is placed the dry alternative at the time of entrance (to receive or to reject), but as formative itineraries, along which extend both formation and discernment.

## 1. Scope and criteria of discernment

Above all, it is important to correctly define the scope and the criteria of investigation, that is, the specific and true object, and the necessary criteria of reference to conduct the investigation. To do so makes it concretely possible to confront the person at his/her level of maturity. In other words, it is necessary to define the material and formal object of vocational discernment in relationship to the scope of affective-sexual maturity.

### 1.1. Material Object

The material object is the affective-sexual area and the extensive problematic field related to normal problems of development and, on a more serious level, any specific pathologies.

The material object is also the area encountered *at the center of our intra-psychic geography*<sup>2</sup> and through it, functions frequently as a resonance box for problems that arise in other places, which is to say, more *symptom* than syndrome, but always as a *part* in reference to a whole. In some cases, this area hides itself “chastely” behind other problems or, more simply put, behind fear, shame, or a false preconception of the person. This makes for a much greater scope of the investigation and the material object of discernment. Certainly a general awareness of the behavior is not sufficient, nor is the

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<sup>2</sup> Even an ecclesial document like *Pastores Dabo Vobis* calls to mind: “Affective maturity presupposes an awareness that love has a central role in human life” (44).

adoption of a purely negative criteria (“given that he does not exhibit a certain type of behavior, there are is no problem”; “he can get by, he is serene”), nor the interpretation of silence in this area as a sign of maturity.

The title of our reflection, in fact, invites us to direct our attention to those instances called “difficult cases,” those that present immaturity or even pathologies in the affective-sexual area; those, more exactly, whose vocational discernment is made complex because of specific problems that contaminate, more or less significantly, the very vocational option and the possibility of living an authentic consecration to God in religious life or in the priesthood. To delineate more precisely, these difficult cases require a definition of the *ideal* candidate (the ideal priest-religious as conceived by the Church) and the *nature* of the sexual-affectivity.

In other words, it is advisable to respect the habitual law of integration between the architectural and the hermeneutical perspective and, in the final analysis, between the theological component and the psychological component of the choice that the subject is going to make. This clarification is precisely that which will permit us to understand the formal object of vocational discernment in the area of sexual affectivity.

## 1.2. Formal Object

The criterion for discernment of a call to the ministerial priesthood or to the consecrated life is, by its nature, compound and complex. It does not consist in a list of requirements, even being correctly defined (on the theological or psychological level), that has to be verified in a cold and impersonal manner, perhaps utilizing technical instruments as if to try to verify up close the coincidence or non-coincidence with a certain robotic portrayal (identikit) of a priest, a brother, or a sister; verification that does not allow flexibility or exceptions. On the contrary, this type of discernment is a gesture that is profoundly human, helping a person to know him/herself better, which demands a profound knowledge of the individual on the part of the one who offers this help, demands a great sense of the mystery of the human person and notable knowledge of the two elements that enter constitutively in this theme, the spiritual and psychological, as we have discussed and we will now make more explicit at length.

### 1.2.1. Spiritual-Normative Elements

First, we will attempt to refer to the norms that the Church sets out for admission to orders and religious consecration. Referring to the most recent ecclesial documents,<sup>3</sup> we will synthesize them precisely in terms around these two points. A candidate can be admitted to orders and vows if he, in addition to all the other required qualities of the Church,<sup>4</sup> has acquired (or demonstrated the ability to acquire) in his psycho-sexual development:

1. a solid sexual identity, in accord with his own appropriate sex, that permits him to relate with otherness in the diversity (sexual and not only sexual) of a complementary and fruitful manner. A correct sexual identity normally supposes a sense of self of the “I” strong and positive, that frees the person from diverse conditions in his relation with the same and the other sex (fears, rejections, affective dependencies, with or without erotic connotations, etc.);<sup>5</sup>
2. the possibility and the capacity to fully live celibately the “nuptial meaning” of the human body, “thanks to which a person gives oneself to another and takes the other to oneself”<sup>6</sup> in *disinterested* service of the spiritual good of all

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<sup>3</sup> In particular, CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Potissimum Institutioni, Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, Rome, 1990, 39-40; JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Rome, 1992, 44; CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *The Preparation of Educators in Seminaries. Directive*, Rome, 1994, 33-35; JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, Rome, 1996, 65-71; POVE, *Nuove vocazioni per una nova Europa (New vocations for a new Europe)*, Rome, 1997, 37b; CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference, Episcopal Commission for the Clergy), *Linee comuni per la vita dei nostri seminari (Common lines for the life of our seminaries)*, Nota, Rome, 1999, 9-22; CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*, Rome, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Cf., Canon 1029 (“After all circumstances have been taken into account in the prudent judgment of the proper bishop or the competent major superior, only those should be promoted to orders who have an integral faith, are motivated by a right intention, possess the required knowledge, and enjoy a good reputation, good morals, and proven virtues, and other physical and psychological qualities which are appropriate to the order to be received”).

<sup>5</sup> Cf., *Potissimum institutioni*, 39; *Nuove vocazioni per una nuova Europa*, 37b.

<sup>6</sup> *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 44; cf., also, on the subject of the “weddedness” of the human being, JOHN PAUL II, *Verginità o celibato “per il regno dei cieli” (Virginity or celibacy “for the reign of God”)*, 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of catechesis at the general audiences, Rome, 1982.

- the faithful, without preference or exclusion, with freedom of interaction with the other different from oneself;
3. "a strong, lively and personal love for *Jesus Christ*... which overflows into a dedication to everyone,"<sup>7</sup> within a mature life of faith;
  4. a sufficient and progressive *freedom and affective maturity*, which converts him into a relational man, capable of true pastoral paternity, and makes him conform to the emotions of Son, Servant and Lamb,<sup>8</sup> Shepherd and Spouse,<sup>9</sup> free as he who loves intensely, and is loved properly and purely, never tied as such to anyone, capable of offering religious attention toward the other and of intimate understanding of his/her problems in a lucid perception of his/her true good, rich in human warmth and capable of educating in others an affectivity offered equally devotedly;<sup>10</sup>
  5. *the moral certainty of the power to live celibacy and priestly chastity*, confronting with determination and prudence the difficulty of *renouncing* the exercise of an instinct profoundly rooted in every man and woman, without resorting to defensive or selective relational styles in dealing with one or the other sex.<sup>11</sup>

These criteria indicate the itineraries that constitute the arrival point of priestly and religious formation under the aspect of sexual-affective maturity. But in a certain way, they also indicate the reference point or the general background of *initial* discernment, of *first* admission, and, by contraposition, the cases of those not suitable for admission because the objective is not prudently within their reach.

### 1.2.2. Hermeneutical-Psychological Elements

The hermeneutical elements, as the very word indicates, are those that allow us to specify better the ideal proposed by the ecclesial norm, and, as such, also permit us to clarify the components of this ideal or the human conditions that make possible the achievement of this norm. In this sense, psychology can help us a lot in the area of hermeneutical science, which by definition makes it

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<sup>7</sup> Cf., *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 44.

<sup>8</sup> Cf., *Vita Consecrata*, 65-69.

<sup>9</sup> Canon 1029.

<sup>10</sup> *The Preparation of Educators in Seminaries*, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Cf., *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 44.

possible to explain the intimate, inner, psychic mechanism of man as a sexual being and called to love even in the case that he chooses virginity, or capable of leading us at least to the threshold of the mystery of sexuality, of love, and of virginity for the kingdom, and to make us understand how it “functions” or how all should function.

It is important, as such, to remember that there exists an *ordo* (= a rule) relative to these three realities (sexuality, love, virginity) and it is psychology, or a certain psychology in dialogue with the spiritual perspective, and even before that with philosophical-theological reflection, that can help us to understand a certain intrinsic structure of the reality of sexuality, of love and of the very virginal option in that it is structurally connected to the other two realities.

## 2. Rule and Grammar of Life

Such a *rule*, ultimately, refers to that “grammar” written by the Creator in the heart of the creature and that is fundamental to right living and right judging, as Benedict XVI recently wrote.<sup>12</sup>

If such a *rule*, or intrinsic structure, exists, then everything is converted by man in interest rather than in duty, to obey such an order or to give precedence to the objectivity of the norm over one’s subjectivity. In any case, it is only the notion of the *rule* that can make us understand the idea of disorder. In relation to our reflection, it will be sufficient to note quickly the three indications in outline form.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1. Ordo sexualitatis

Sexuality has its one internal code, a species of DNA that reveals its nature and its functions. According to psychological analysis designed for this type of investigation, sexuality is:

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<sup>12</sup> Cf., BENEDICT XVI, *The Human Person, the Heart of Peace*, Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2007: Thus is the text of paragraph 3: “The transcendent ‘grammar,’ that is to say the body of rules for individual action and the reciprocal relationships of persons in accordance with justice and solidarity, is inscribed on human consciences, in which the wise plan of God is reflected. As I recently had occasion to reaffirm: ‘We believe that at the beginning of everything is the Eternal Word, Reason and not Unreason’ [*Homily* at Islinger Feld, Regensburg, 12 September 2006]. Peace is thus also a task demanding of everyone a personal response consistent with God’s plan. The criterion inspiring this response can only be *respect for the ‘grammar’ written on human hearts by the divine Creator.*”

<sup>13</sup> I treated this subject at length in my *Verginità e celibato oggi. Per una sessualità pasquale (Virginity and Celibacy Today. For a Paschal Sexuality)*, Bologna, 2006.

1. *dynamism*, it is not only datum of a biological or psychological act that imposes itself or imposes necessarily a certain exercise of the genital instinct, but it is also and above all a *becoming*, or rather educable reality that immediately calls up the freedom and responsibility of man, that must be integrated in the whole or put into action.
2. but is itself a *composite* reality, fruit of divers components or “acts” of:
  - *genitality*: of organs predisposed to a relationship and of a fertile, fruitful relationship that already evidences the receptive capacity and offering of the human being, in addition to the unitive-relational one;
  - *bodyness*: all of the body is sexual in all of its components and is gifted with a precise genus identity (masculine or feminine); such belonging is the base of attraction of the sex to the other and also the capacity of relationship with the diverse-other;
  - *affectivity*: sexuality acquires true human quality only if it is oriented, elevated and integrated by love; it grows and becomes only in freedom to accept love and to give of oneself;
  - *spirituality*: sexuality is also spirit, spirit as a synthesis of extremes and capacity of interpretation of those components to understand them in a mysterious truth, the truth of human life which is made evident in life and written in the body.<sup>14</sup> The sexualized body, in that it is “witness to love as a fundamental gift”;<sup>15</sup>
  - reveals *man*, his coming *from another* and his going toward *the Other*, his radically dialogical nucleus;

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<sup>14</sup> Such distinction of 4 components of sexuality is taken up again in substance in 4 structural levels that the geneticist A. Serra recognizes in the human subject: the *biological* level (as a structure already given, different from subject to subject and that is carried out gradually), the *psychological* level (that immense world of sensations, perceptions, images, memories, etc., which structures itself in a highly flexible way, continuously molded and shaped, and nevertheless strictly characteristic of the individual), the *mental* level (as the universe of intuitions, ideas, thoughts, etc., which enriches itself without stop through observation and reflection), and the *spiritual* level (with the function of bearing structure, that gives a sense to all the rest and puts into relationship and ties the person with the Transcendent). Cf., A. SERRA, “Sessualità: scienza, sapienza, società (Sexuality: Science, Wisdom, Society),” in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 3687 (2004), 221-222.

<sup>15</sup> JOHN PAUL II, General Audience 9 January 1980, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II (Teachings of John Paul II)*, III-I, 1980, p. 90, n. 4.

- helps to comprehend *the meaning of life*, gift received that tends, by its nature, to become a good that is given;
  - “contributes to revealing *God and his creative love*”<sup>16</sup> who loved man so as to make him capable of a love which gives life, which makes him in the likeness of God himself.
3. the *mysterious* nature of sexuality then appears evident, not only in that which escapes any banal or superficial reading of it, but in the most profound sense of the idea of mystery, a point of encounter or place of composition and integration of apparently contradictory extremes, in the interior and exterior of the individual.
  4. sexuality, in fact, as has been said, is *memory* written even in the human body, of its coming from the other (*ab alio*) and together *energy* that opens towards the other (*ad alium*), so it is at the same time need (deficit) and potential (resource), well received and well given, divine invention and reality most human, autonomy and belonging, eros and agape, self-transcendence and falling in love, spontaneous exuberance and law that is rooted in one’s being, gratitude and gratuity, paschal lightning<sup>17</sup> and human instinct, etc.: sexuality makes it possible to integrate these tensions without excluding any of the two poles; precisely because of this it is rich in energy.
  5. sexuality is that place, in particular, that typifies the genus of belonging, place where the identity encounters a concrete point of reference (until it is biologically founded) and in that otherness which reaches its most evident point. The difference between the sexes shows the radical diversity. It is the symbol of excellence of human differences, is almost the school to learn to respect and value the you, each you, in your diversity, uniqueness, and beauty, going beyond all temptation to homonogize the other and only establish relationships with one the same as you. Sexual identity is the fruit of this *relational complementarity*, and is much more firm and sure when it is more unconditionally open towards the other different from self.
  6. then, when the identity puts itself in dialogue with the otherness, the interpersonal relationship becomes fertile

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<sup>16</sup> CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Educational Guidance in Human Love. Outlines for sex education*, Rome 1983, 23.

<sup>17</sup> Cf., CENCINI, *Verginità*, 54-56.

and of a fruitfulness in various directions: on the level of the I and the you, of the we and the other: especially because it affirms and strengthens ever more the very sense of one's identity and of the other's, then later because the relational dimension of the human being grows in such a way as constitutive of man, and finally, because the relationship thus lived does not close itself on the two, but regularly opens itself in favor of a third, such as children in a marriage, or the good of others, of many others, to whom one is more tempted not to feel him/herself particularly pleasant and is, on the contrary, reached by a love that welcomes. At this point, sexuality has reached its natural object and perhaps its most qualified: *total fruitfulness*.

7. once and for all, then, to have a solid sexual identity means:
  - to integrate the four *components* and the diverse *poles* of sexuality, around that fundamental truth written in the same sexuality: human life is good received that tends, by its nature, to become a good given,
  - to leave oneself and be capable of *relationship* with the other different from self, with the diversity as such,
  - and of *fruitful* relationship on three levels: the I and the you, the we, and the other.

## 2.2. Ordo amoris

Saint Augustine was the first to speak of an *ordo amoris*, of an internal structure or of an objective order to which love "obeys" or should obey.

1. Such a *rule* reaffirms the ascendant structure of the being (and of the good) with which every being is kind in relation with the fullness and quality of the being possessed. For this reason, for example, a rock is less kind than an animal that, as such, is less kind than a human being, where as at the top of the scale is God, the Being most kind and desirable, the only and true desire of the human heart, although at times one is unconscious of it.
2. This ascendant structure of being not only indicates, in a progressive line, the material object of human love, but rather it says and reveals the possibilities and capacities of human nature to be able to experience love, that which is divine, that is not limited to simple benevolence, but that arrives at the point of making the creature *capable of*

*loving in the way of the Creator.* This is the central and culminating point of the *ordo amoris*.

3. In this sense the *ordinata dilectio*, *ordered* for this divine potential present in every human heart, imprints a rule on reality, an inventive and disciplined rule, that comes precisely from the certainty of God's love ("poured out into our hearts") and which consists fundamentally in loving with the heart of God: in a selfless way, freely given, accepting the other unconditionally and touching the radical positiveness of the I so as to want the good, learning to receive and not only to give, to do things for love and to observe the rule not by obligation but freely, to love God with one's whole heart so as to love with the heart of God all of creation.
4. However, at the same time, the *ordinata dilectio* always is being attacked by its contrary, by the *dis-ordine*, by *chaos* or by ingenious pretension that the heart follows spontaneously a certain rule in loving and letting oneself be loved. The affectivity is an area that manifests a certain existential restlessness, a deep down ambivalence, a contrary attraction or a certain *cupidity* that is converted apparently in movement towards the other, loved or "used" preferably to cover the very need to feel loved. As such, a certain *cleansing and discipline* of the heart and of the emotions are indispensable.
5. The arrival point on this path of purification and growth is *affective freedom*. This comes from *two certitudes*: having been loved, always and forever, and capable of loving forever. This allows a person to surrender him/herself totally to the other and accept the other unconditionally (= *falling in love*); and in virtue of such a concentration of love which permits a person to express the maximum amount of his/her own affective capacity, loving *much* and loving *many*, especially the person who is most tempted to feel unlovable.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.3. Ordo virginitatis

Here the analysis becomes much more interdisciplinary and explicitly more open to the spiritual; like a road that, while we can use some of the preceding road markers, opens to a unprecedented journey.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-178.

1. Virginity is the *particular and mysterious actualization* of the *ordo amoris* or of the ascending structure of being, where God is the vertex of the loving tension of humanity, because it indicates the possibility that God becomes, in some way, the “*exclusive*” object of human love, a love that does not exclude other loves, but on the contrary, excites the affective capacity of the virgin.
2. For the kingdom, the virgin chooses *to love God with all* of his/her heart, mind, and strength or with all his/her being (= above all other loves, including the natural and desirable love of a woman/man, to the point of renouncing him/herself) so as *to love* all creatures *with the heart of God* (= loving all intensely without being tied to anyone or excluding anyone).
3. In the measure that God is the “exclusive” object of love, the divine love becomes even more the *loving way* of the virgin (love makes the beloved in its image, or the material object is transformed into the formal object).
4. The virginal option can never be privatized or interpreted as the striving for one’s own personal perfection: rather it is fundamentally a *proclamation of the truth of the human heart* created by God, and, as such, oriented toward God or “called” to encounter only in God the complete fulfillment, no matter what might be his/her state of life.<sup>19</sup>
5. The *ordo virginitatis* becomes fundamentally a way to express the loving way of God, and thus, the centrality of God in human love. It is the style:
  - of the one who *never puts him/herself in the center* of the relationship, because the center belongs to God;
  - of the one who “*lightly touches*” the other so as *not to invade him/her*, because the body is neither the place, nor the motive of personal encounter in the life of the celibate;
  - of the one who knows to *intelligently renounce the exercise of genital physicality* in order to seek and find with creativity the thousands of other expressions of true love;
  - of the one who *says no to the face of the most beautiful and attractive* to love the one humanly unattractive (as

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<sup>19</sup> On this interpretation of virginity as a universal vocation, see A. CENCINI, *Un Dio da amare. La vocazione per tutti alla verginità (A God to Love. The Vocation to Virginity for All)*, Milan, 2002.

the leper for Francis or the dying embraced by Mother Teresa), and the one who feels unlovable.<sup>20</sup>

Obviously this rule or discipline can not be marginated and is to be respected in its deepest implications and in the specific consequences of the different vocational states. Always we will be able to speak in general of immaturity and pathology when the person does not seem capable of expressing and realizing in his/her life a level of maturity in his/her sexual affectivity and virginity (in the case of having received the gift and chosen it as his/her life's vocation) in line with these indications.

(THOMAS J. STEHLIK, C.M., translator)

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<sup>20</sup> On the relational style of the virgin, see A. CENCINI, *I sentimenti del figlio. Il cammino formativo nella vita consacrata (The Sentiments of the Son. The Formative Journey in the Consecrated Life)*, Bologna, 2001, pp. 207-211; and *Verginità, op. cit.*, 183-193.

# A Practical Guide for the Visitor (Rome 2005)

Province Members with Difficulty:<sup>1</sup>  
Legitimate and Illegitimate Absences (n. 123-134);  
Departure from the Congregation with Dispensation from Vows  
(n. 135-136)

by Wiel Bellemakers, C.M.

*"We should strive with brotherly and timely concern to help confreres who are struggling with problems," as mandated in article 14 § 2 of the Statutes. What they ask of everyone goes especially for the Visitor because generally he has at his disposal the greatest means to help the confrere who is in difficulty.*

*Approaching the confrere, speaking with him, and reflecting upon his situation will indicate just what kind of help is needed. This might be spiritual, psychological, medical assistance, or rest, or a leave of absence. What is most important is that the good of the confrere be of foremost concern because that will accrue to the good of the Congregation and the province.*

The first words of this article are extremely important. They summon all the confreres to take care of each other, to be interested in one another's lives, to undertake activities together when free, just to ask questions about work or about problems, if any. Brotherly interest in each other is sought. After all, we are confreres.

It is very important that we entertain a right relationship, not intrusive, not inquisitive, but simply because my confrere, our confreres are very near our hearts. There are confreres who are excellent at this. There are also confreres, maybe a majority, maybe

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<sup>1</sup> Note 140: For the situations dealt with here, cf. MODESTO LÓPEZ QUINTAS, "Difficult Cases, Dispensations, A.O.O., Dismissals, etc.," in *Vincentiana* (1996) 353-362.

we too as we are here together, who still have a lot to learn in this field.

Among the confreres, a superior has a special task. The atmosphere in a house can be determined by him. He is the principal standard-bearer of the sense of being colleagues and confreres. However, a superior is only human and has his own limitations. It is marvelous for confreres, it is even a special God-given grace, if the superior is really for every single confrere and for the community as a whole a sympathizing, cordial and inspiring person.

Moreover, let us not forget that all of us, because we are getting older, tend to develop into specimens: persons with very peculiar and specific characteristics and with sometimes even very strange tricks. In such a situation keeping the community together is easier said than done. Furthermore, it may happen that we, getting older, have not completely in hand our own psychological development.

In the last place — or, if you want, in the first place — comes the Visitor. About him the introduction says:

*Approaching the confrere, speaking with him, and reflecting upon his situation will indicate just what kind of help is needed. This might be spiritual, psychological, medical assistance, or rest, or a leave of absence. What is most important is that the good of the confrere be of foremost concern because that will accrue to the good of the Congregation and the province.*

Everything that is said there is true. And it becomes a reality when the Visitor is someone who knows how to listen, who has a way of asking for advice and who has the courage to make decisions in difficult situations.

### **Asking for advice**

I do not think here only of asking for advice from the members in his council, but also from fellow-Visitors, from diocesan vicars who are responsible for personnel management, and, if at all possible, even from priests, religious people and laypeople, from all those who professionally deal with people who have got into problems.

Please do remember here that a Visitor is tied both to the rules of canon law and to the regulations of the Constitutions and Statutes of our Congregation. These rules exist to help people to make good decisions. These rules exist too in order to protect both the confrere and the Visitor.

## Courage to make decisions

I myself was permitted, during my term of office as a Visitor, to learn that in difficult situations you not only can ask for advice from the members of your council, but also that they can make you aware of a sometimes difficult task at hand, and that, if need be, they send you with words like, "That is what you have to do and know that we stand by you all the way."

## 1<sup>o</sup> Legitimate and Illegitimate Absences

### An Introduction

The Constitutions teach us that, according to Saint Vincent's intent, we are a society of confreres who live as a community in order to carry out, in this community, our common task.<sup>2</sup>

That is the rule. It means that, if you take our *Catalogue* and make a study of the houses, you ought to conclude that they all live in a community. It is good to tend towards this goal. It is good that every confrere longs for it but....

You all know that life is stronger than theory. You also know that every rule has its exceptions that might be either felicitous or less fortunate, but nevertheless necessary.

I think of the many confreres who live outside a house of the Congregation, but stay connected to the Congregation with every fibre of their being. I think of all those confreres who, because of exceptional qualities, have been called in the Church to a task that entails living outside daily life in a community.<sup>3</sup>

Without any doubt, to this group belong by far most of the confreres who in the *Catalogue* have their own address. I share Cecil Parres' and other canonists' opinion that these confreres do not come under the heading "absentes a domo."<sup>4</sup> Many of them realize, as you

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<sup>2</sup> *Sanctus Vincentius sodales in Ecclesia adunavit, qui, novam communitaria vivendi forma, evangelizandi pauperibus incumberent. Communitas enim vincetiana ordinatur ad activitatem apostolicam praeparandam, eamque constanter fovendam atque adiuvandam. Itaque omnes et singuli sodales, in communitate fraterna constituti, assidua renovatione ad missionem communem implendam contendunt.* Cf. CIC canon 665.

<sup>3</sup> Stat. 14 § 1: Confratres qui soli vivere coguntur, in muneribus a Congregatione sibi concreditus....

<sup>4</sup> Cecil L. Parres, C.M.: "Living apart from a house or community to which a member belongs, for reasons determined by proper law, while exceptional, should not be seen as living outside the society. The latter involves a temporary separation from a society, which is provided for in C. 745" in *A Handbook on Canons 573-746*, p. 300.

can see, what the Statutes say in article 14: “... *curabunt aliquas partes temporis in communi impendere, ut bonum communitatis experiantur.*” For the confreres who live in a house, the same article adds: “*Nos vero eis propinqui erimus ad eorum solitudinem sublevandam eosque sollicitè invitabimus ut aliquoties vitam fraternam et apostolicam simul dividamus.*”

Therefore “absence” means positioning oneself further away: living a life that in the Congregation is rather an exception.

Let us follow now the outline of *A Practical Guide for the Visitor*. We can find there first of all the legal absence that may last three years. The permission for it can be granted by the Superior General.

### **a) Legitimate absence from the Congregation**

*123. The Superior General can give permission for a lawful leave of absence from the Congregation. The conditions for the leave are: that there be a grave cause, that the obligations which are compatible with his new way of life remain, and that the leave not exceed three years. In order for the Superior to study this petition, and, if possible, grant permission to the one who requested it, he must receive:*

- 1° A letter from the confrere making the petition, giving the reasons for it.*
- 2° A letter from the Visitor expressing his point of view and that of his council.*
- 3° If it concerns a cleric, the consent of the Ordinary of the place in which he is to live is also required.<sup>5</sup>*

Very clearly it is stated that the Superior General can give this permission, this favor. In other words, he is not obliged and may refuse this favor that has been requested. Now, of course, a Superior General and his council must also remain reasonable. He must have good reasons to say: “I am not going to grant this request.”

In order to arrive at a fair, balanced judgment, he must be able to evaluate the gravity of the reason and the possibility of bringing the new, requested lifestyle into agreement with the obligations he has as a member of the community — and, if such is the case, — as a priest.

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<sup>5</sup> Note 141: Cf. C 70. CIC canon 745: *The supreme moderator with the consent of the council can grant to a definitively incorporated member an indult of living outside the society...*

### How does the Superior General reach his judgment?

He does so on the basis of the three letters that he receives from the confrere involved, from the Visitor and, if necessary, from the Ordinary of the place.

Examples:

1. A confrere — without any assignment of the Congregation — wants to devote himself to studies about trade-union activities and serve on the executive committee of a trade union. To do so he has to live in a town where the Congregation has no house. The trade-union activities may bring him in conflict with other societal groupings.

2. A confrere wants to go back to his parents' house to look after his sick parents and his younger brothers and sisters. He is going to take up the management of his parents' business.

3. An old confrere, who has had problems with community life all his life, has been admitted to the medical center of the Congregation. He grumbles and growls the whole day at everything: the food, the bed, the sun and the moon, the rain and the snow, the caretakers and the confreres. It makes him depressive. He wants to go to a home for the elderly in his hometown "where everything is much better" and to die there quietly. Everybody knows that after some time the same problems will begin again there because he never found peace anywhere in his whole life.

4. A confrere is highly displeased with the line of action his superiors in the Mission take. He is in favor of another option. His Visitor, however, does not allow him to follow his idea. A bishop agrees to take him up on it; the confrere wants to work for this bishop.

*124. The effect of a legitimate leave from the Congregation is: loss of active and passive voice; the confrere remains under the jurisdiction of the superiors of the Congregation. If the confrere is a cleric, he remains also under the care of the Ordinary of the diocese where he lives and depends upon him.<sup>6</sup>*

With the Superior General's permission, this confrere will be on the margin of the Congregation. He does not live in a community anymore and does not participate in common apostolic activities.

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<sup>6</sup> Note 142: Cf. C 70. CIC, canon 745: The supreme moderator with the consent of the council can grant to a definitively incorporated member an indult of living outside the society, not however beyond three years, with the rights and obligations which are not suitable for the new condition being suspended; the member remains however under the care of the moderator. If it is a question of a cleric there is required in addition the permission of the ordinary of the place in which he must dwell, under whose care and dependency he also remains.

He goes “his own way,” maybe with very sound reasons, which nevertheless do not fit in with the policy of the Congregation.

He remains under the jurisdiction of the superiors of the Congregation. In the decree to live outside the Congregation will be noted the rights and the obligations of the confrere. It is, however, evident that “*rights and obligations not compatible with the new condition, i.e., living outside the society, are suspended.*”<sup>7</sup>

Contrary to the provisions of canons 665 and 745, active and passive right to vote will be taken away in our Congregation. We may wonder if a mistake was made when the Statutes were drawn up.

The ecclesiastical lawmaker himself obviously sees a clear difference between:

- on one hand, those religious and members of Societies of Apostolic Life who, living at a distance from the Congregation for three years, remain in contact with the Congregation and under the supervision and control of the superiors of the Congregation;
- and, on the other hand, the confreres who apply for exclaustation.<sup>8</sup>

The first still remain under the full jurisdiction of their superiors.

For a cleric, priest or deacon, permission of the Ordinary of the place where he must live and under whose care and dependence he remains, is also required.<sup>9</sup>

*125. The role of the Visitor in these cases is to help the Superior General in fulfilling the conditions of Canon Law and the Constitutions.*

This means that the Visitor must try to outline the situation of the confrere as honestly and objectively as possible. It may have, as a consequence, that the Visitor must criticize sometimes his own actions or actions of his predecessors/confreres: “If at that time this confrere had been treated in a different way, this situation might not

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<sup>7</sup> CECIL L. PARRES, C.M., in *op. cit.*, p. 304.

<sup>8</sup> JORDAN HITE, T.O.R., in *A Handbook on Canons 573-746*, p. 176: “Permission to be absent in no way places the religious in a special category or implies an absence from the institute, as does an exclaustation. Absence does not take away active or passive voice, but exclaustation does. See CIC canon 686. CECIL L. PARRES, C.M., *op. cit.*, p. 304: “What obligations and rights are suspended should be delineated in the proper law of a society and incorporated into the text of the indult. Further terms of the permission to live outside the society could be specified in a written agreement signed by the major superior and the member.”

<sup>9</sup> CECIL L. PARRES, C.M., *op. cit.*, p. 304.

have cropped up.” He will outline too what the repercussions will be in and outside the province.

*126. It also pertains to the Visitor, either personally or through another confrere of the province, to accompany a confrere on a leave of absence, to show him personal closeness, to assure his union with the Congregation, to support his faithfulness to his commitments, to work to resolve the causes of his petition for a leave of absence, and to welcome him warmly as a brother.*

A Visitor cannot do everything. The physical distance between him and the absent confrere alone can already make it difficult to have personal contact. He can ask one of the members of the council or another confrere to support him. It certainly is important that one regularly evaluates how all this develops “in order that the confrere does not go on swimming.”

Finally, I wondered whether this way has ever been followed in the CM. In the Dutch province I know of no example.

**b) *Legitimate absence from the house or the local community***

*127. The Visitor can grant permission to live outside the house or the community to which the confrere is assigned. The reason for this permission must be just and the leave cannot last more than a year unless it is because of illness, studies or an apostolate exercised in the name of the Congregation. The permission must be in writing and should establish the rights and obligations of both the absent confrere and the community or province during the length of his absence.<sup>10</sup>*

Actually this is in keeping with what as been said before, on pages 3 and 4; only here it is formalized and times are fixed. Permission to be absent need not always be explicit. It may be implied in the very nature of the assignment given to a confrere. For example, in many provinces the C.M. staffs small mission churches where there can be no community of confreres and this work requires extended periods of time living apart from a house of the community; this is of the nature of the ministry and apostolate of the Congregation.

There is some contradiction in these 5 articles.

Art. 127 concerns two groups of confreres:

1. those who, with a good reason, ask to live outside the Congregation for a period of time;

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<sup>10</sup> Note 143: Cf. C 67 § 2; CIC canon 665.

2. those who are sent by the Visitor:

2.1\* because of an illness that cannot be treated satisfactorily in a house of the Congregation (mental and physical illnesses);

2.2\* in order to get further education — formation in an institution where no house of the Congregation is nearby, e.g., study at the Catholic University of Nairobi, Kenya;

2.3\* to apply oneself in the name of the Congregation to some apostolate for which one needs to live outside the community, e.g., rector in a house of the DC.

If the request is made by the confrere, the permission may be given only for one year. If he wants to stay away for a longer time, one has to think about the possibility that exclaustation might be better, according to canon 686.

In the three situations where the Visitor sends somebody, the time limit may be exceeded. There is even no time limit. How would you go about setting a time limit if a confrere has to be treated somewhere because of psychiatric reasons?

In both these cases — the confrere asks and the Visitor sends — canon law does not say “leave of absence” but “permission to live outside the house.” This implies that the confrere remains absolutely a full member of the Congregation!<sup>11</sup>

In art. 128 attention is paid only to the confrere who himself asked to live outside a house. That article, contrary to canon 665, mentions “absence.” I do not think this is correct. *The confrere who receives permission of absence should be attached to a house or a community so that he enjoys the rights and is held to the obligations in it according to the norm of the permission granted to him.*<sup>12</sup>

The confrere indeed does what he got permission for: to live outside a house but still as a member of the Congregation.

That such a situation can happen only by dialoguing among the Visitor, the confrere and the members of the community, is what art. 129 says: *The best method for carrying out all these arrangements is for the Visitor to dialogue with the person and with the members of the community house to which he will be assigned. These conversations will always be guided by the spirit of these arrangements....*

The words that follow then raise questions: *and by the greater good of the one who seeks a leave from the community and province.* Whether these words always hold good for the confrere who for “a

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<sup>11</sup> Cf., DAVID F. O’CONNOR, S.T., in *A Handbook on Canons 573-746*, p. 176; “Moreover, it should be noted that the expression ‘leave of absence’ is not used in the canon because it may imply something that is not intended.”

<sup>12</sup> Note 144: Cf., C 67 § 1.

*just reason*” asks for a form of apostolate which has as a consequence “to live outside the house or the community” is disputable.<sup>13</sup>

Art. 130 treats the three groups of confreres who are sent by the Visitor.

*The length of the absence is easy to determine in the case of study and the apostolate. It is not as easy in the case of illness. Therefore it is necessary in these cases to determine the length of the absence, always weighing what is best for the person and the community. As much as possible one should avoid tension between the members of the community and the province, especially if the tension will be ongoing.*

These tensions can happen when a confrere, who has been requested to do some special apostolate, begins, because of this request, to lead a life that is quite different from the sober, and even poor, community life.<sup>14</sup>

The last article in the row, art. 131, treats again of “temporary leave of absence.”

*Courtesy demands that the Ordinary of the place in which the confrere will live be advised of the temporary leave of absence, and informed about the pastoral ministries which the confrere may exercise.*

It remains a question whether the article here is about “a temporary leave of absence” or “a permission to live outside the house.”

If a confrere is going to accomplish a pastoral task outside the Congregation, contact with the Ordinary of the place is always necessary. The article wants to make the Visitor aware that he has to get in touch with the Ordinary:

- when a confrere will be admitted to a nursing-home and there may still be a little priestly work he can do (celebrate the Eucharist);
- when a confrere is going to study in a place where, besides his studies, he also can fulfill priestly tasks;
- when a confrere takes a sabbatical year without doing any pastoral work.

He will depend on the Ordinary of the place for the exercise of orders and the manner of life of his new condition.

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<sup>13</sup> E.g., Think of the confreres who — upon the request of the Superior General — are teachers now in Mainland China.

<sup>14</sup> I think here of the Dutch naval chaplains both before and after WW II. They were high-ranking officers.

In the preceding situations, there is still deliberation going on between the confrere and his Visitor. They are “on speaking terms.”

Now we will have a look at situations where the Visitor has actually been kept out of everything. All kinds of things have already been decided or are happening before he gets to know about them.

### **c) *Illegitimate absence***

*132. It is possible that an incorporated confrere may leave the Congregation and walk away from its jurisdiction. In this case, the Visitor or a delegated confrere must seek out the confrere in order to help him for his own sake and to preserve his vocation.*<sup>15</sup>

The first reaction of the superior should not be a punitive one, but a pastoral act of attempting reconciliation. There are as many reasons as there are confreres unlawfully leaving the Community. Therefore, the immediate response of superiors is to help the confrere resolve whatever problem may be present.

If there is a vocation crisis involved, the superior possibly might grant permission for a temporary absence for an extended spiritual retreat.

If there is a psychological crisis, the superior might look for help from persons who regularly assist priests and religious in crisis situations.

If there was a personality clash within the house, which he has left, he can help the confrere in a different way.

The first thing needed is to get in contact with the confrere. The Visitor can ask the help of the Ordinary or the parish priest of the place where the confrere now is living; he can ask the help of confreres and good friends; he can appoint a delegate confrere.

He can try himself to make contact or — very wisely — let others do it, who are not vested with power and authority.

There is no way we can say beforehand how long this may last. As long as there is contact and that there is the conviction that people are looking honestly for a good solution, the Visitor waits calmly to take further measures. The points at issue are, in the first place, the confrere's happiness and salvation; if there are deep wounds, healing may take a very long time.

However, if there is no response or the absent confrere has rejected all such solicitude, if it is clear that the confrere has the

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<sup>15</sup> Note 145: Cf. C 72; see CIC canon 665 § 2.

intention of removing himself effectively from obedience to his superiors, then the Visitor can move toward formal dismissal of the confrere after he is absent for six months.

Article 133. *If six months pass and the confrere does not return, he loses active and passive voice and can be dismissed. The process for the dismissal of a confrere unlawfully absent from the community after six months is found in numbers 175 and 176 of this document.*<sup>16</sup>

Very often these cases are really painful because they start at an unexpected moment. Nearly always it is the end of a long history. Sometimes it is an explosion, an outburst with a very tragic psychological background.<sup>17</sup>

Article 134 says much in a few words and we have to be very cautious in adapting these words.

*It is important that there be a definitive closure to these cases; but wisely has been added: and that they not be forgotten.*

No one can say how long you have to wait before you may close the case. If there is no fear that the confrere will act against the obligations of celibacy, if there is no fear of scandal, if he is in contact with a parish priest, if he wants to follow all happenings in the Congregation and stays in contact with a confrere, and if there is hope that all will finish in the best way for the confrere himself and for the community, let us take time and be as patient as our Father who is waiting day and night.

Of course the following rules are of great interest: *It is also important to notify the bishop of the place where the person is residing, if it is known.*

The bishop can ask the help of a parish priest to stay in contact.

*It should be determined whether or not his name be kept in the Catalogue of the Congregation.*

<sup>16</sup> Note 146: Cf., nn. 175 and 176.

<sup>17</sup> I still remember a religious priest who left his parish house in the middle of the night because he was obliged to preach. He was not a preacher, not at all. For 25 years he helped gypsies and many persons of a very low social standard. He did well and was esteemed. However, he could not preach and was nearly crazed as he had to give a sermon in the parish church. One of the chaplains got a new appointment. There were only three priests in that big parish and the superior told him that he now had to preach too. The day before his first sermon he flew out of the parish house and was gone. He had a nervous breakdown and a fear to go to any house of his Congregation. It took three or four years before he was able to do some work in the office of a parish. Only after 30 more years was he able to say Mass in a church and then, as a man of 85 years, he had the courage to give a sermon out of his wounded heart. He remained a member of his institute throughout the whole ordeal.

Of course, with the same patience as was needed some lines ahead, do not act too quickly and do not act too lazily. That is all that has to be said. May the virtue of prudence be our guide.

## 2º Departure from the Congregation with Dispensation from Vows

*135. For serious reasons, the Superior General with the consent of his council may give permission to leave the Community and to be dispensed from vows. In order for the Superior General to study the case and, possibly, grant the dispensation from vows, the following letters must be sent to him:*

- 1º A letter from the confrere requesting the dispensation and giving the reason for his petition.*
- 2º A letter from the Visitor manifesting his point of view and that of his council.*
- 3º If the one who desires to leave the Congregation is a cleric, the dispensation of vows, according to what is established in canons 743 and 693, will not be granted unless the bishop writes to the Superior General indicating the bishop's intention to incardinate the confrere definitively and immediately.<sup>18</sup>*

One must rely on the Ordinary of the place where the departing confrere wishes to exercise his ministry, as explicitly stated in canons 743 and 693.<sup>19</sup>

### **It is a voluntary departure<sup>20</sup>**

Permission to permanently depart from the Congregation is granted through an indult (to which, strictly speaking, one does not have a right) by the competent authority, the Superior General with

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<sup>18</sup> Note 147: To transfer to another Institute, cf., nn. 137-144 and to transfer to a diocese, cf. nn. 145-154.

<sup>19</sup> Note 148: Cf., C 71. Canon 693: *If the member is a cleric, the indult is not granted before he finds a bishop who will incardinate him into a diocese or at least receive him experimentally. If he is received experimentally, he is incardinated into the diocese by the law itself after five years have passed, unless the bishop has refused him. Canon 743: A member definitively incorporated can obtain an indult of departure from the society from the supreme moderator with the consent of the council...; the rights and obligations flowing from incorporation cease, with due regard for the prescription of can. 693.*

<sup>20</sup> ELIZABETH McDONOUGH, O.P., in *A Handbook on Canons 573-746*, pp. 245-252; CECIL L. PARRIS, C.M., *op. cit.*, p. 303.

the consent of his council, who responds to the petition in the form of a written reply or rescript. Rescripts constitute administrative acts granting some favor to one who has requested it and is not impeded by law from making the request (CIC, canons 59-60).

This indult of departure takes effect upon notification which means that its content is inoperative prior to communication of the rescript to the confrere who has made the request. The confrere must refuse the indult in the act of notification in order to render the indult subsequently inoperative. Notification and rejection, if the indult is rejected, should be in writing.

Canon 691 § 1 starts with the words: *One who is professed in perpetual vows is not to seek an indult to leave the institute without very grave reasons weighed before the Lord.*

The wording is phrased in the negative and uses superlatives in order to communicate the seriousness of the matter at hand.<sup>21</sup>

The confrere requesting the indult must relate in brief and concrete detail the specific, not merely generic or vague, reasons motivating the request. Mere declarations of fact about the intent to depart are not acceptable and explanations of motives are required.

The request should indicate what spiritual, psychological, and medical means have been used to resolve his present difficulties. It should also contain a curriculum vitae of the confrere's employments, occupations, and community experiences, as well as an evaluation of these.

The Visitor and council should add an objective evaluation of the circumstances of the request as well as their approval or disapproval *to help the Superior General carry out his obligations as easily as possible* (art. 136).

If the Visitor and his council wish that the option of rejection not be available to the confrere seeking the indult, they make the reasons for this known in the opinion required when the request is submitted to the Superior General in accord with canon 691 § 1. Then, according to the judgement of the competent granting authority, specifications concerning the non-possibility of rejection could be included in the rescript containing the indult of departure.<sup>22</sup>

The indult carries with it cessation of all rights and obligations he had from incorporation.

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<sup>21</sup> ACTA COMMISSIONIS, *Comm* 13 (1981) 334.

<sup>22</sup> ELIZABETH McDONOUGH, O.P., *op. cit.*, note 18, p. 271. Rescripts in response to requests for indults of departure may refuse the request, suggest other possibilities (such as exlaustration) to alleviate the situation, grant the request as submitted, or grant it with imposition of certain qualifications (such as the non-possibility of rejection).

The application of canon 693, mentioned in canon 743, means that a cleric incardinated into our Congregation cannot be granted an indult of departure until he finds a bishop to incardinate him into a diocese or at least who will receive him into a diocese on an experimental basis. In the latter case, incardination into the diocese becomes effective by law after five years, unless the bishop has refused him.

Article 135 3° declares: *the dispensation of vows, according to what is established in canons 743 and 693, will not be granted unless the bishop writes to the Superior General indicating the bishop's intention to incardinate the confrere definitively and immediately.*

Most probably, a bishop will admit the confrere into his diocese, but on probation (article 151). In this case, the Superior General may grant the confrere permission to work in the diocese where he wishes to be incardinated until obtaining the definitive incardination (article 152). The dispensation from vows granted by the Superior General will not be effective until the incardination has taken place (article 153).

Upon receipt of the indult it should be communicated to the member without delay with any qualifications contained therein, as well as the member's right of rejection, being clearly indicated to him at the time of the notification.

### **Some special questions<sup>23</sup>**

*What if a member rejects the indult in the process of notification and then changes his mind?*

Rejection of the indult upon notification renders it inoperative. Such rejection should be noted to the Superior General as soon as possible and the rescript should be revoked by him. Once the rescript has been rejected, the confrere should resubmit a request if he has a change of mind or heart.

*What if the member does not reject the indult in the act of notification and subsequently changes his mind wishing to remain in the Congregation?*

If the rescript is not rejected in the act of notification, subsequently changing one's mind does not alter the legal consequences of the completed juridic act. Such legal consequences and the significance of rejection and non-rejection of the indult should be clearly and carefully explained to the member in the early stages of the process of requesting the indult of departure.

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<sup>23</sup> ELIZABETH McDONOUGH, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 251.

# A Practical Guide for the Visitor (Rome 2005)

Separation from the Congregation:  
By Joining Another Society of Apostolic Life (n. 137-144);  
Or by Incardination into a Diocese (n. 145-154)

by Alberto Vernaschi, C.M.

## Premises

1. In Chapter 2 of the *Guide* titled “The Visitor and the Members of the Province,” article 9 deals with members of the province in difficulty. Obviously, not all difficulties are of the same importance, nature and complexity. It is one thing for a confrere in difficulty to commit an offense or behave in ways clearly in conflict with the very identity of consecrated life and, by doing so, have to face disciplinary procedures that may have external consequences (even expulsion); and quite another for him to experience difficulty in living the charism, or in his ministry, or in community life, for which he does not seek to leave the state of consecrated life or the priestly ministry, but instead asks to join another Institute (of Consecrated Life or another Apostolic Society) or to be incardinated in a particular diocese. The problems here are as different as are the measures to be taken and the procedures to be followed. Tomorrow we will look at the canonical process of expulsion; here today we will take up the theme of separation from the Congregation through two different means, as they are similar:

- Transfer to an Apostolic Society or an Institute of Consecrated Life,
- Incardination into a diocese.

2. However, before going into the details of these two tracks, it seems important to me to call your attention to some observations made in articles 135, 140, 146, 154 of the *Guide*.

a) Above all, it is the task of the Visitor to help the confrere in difficulty through a real, honest process of accompanying him and to assist him to discern seriously his situation. In fact the *Guide* says, “only a good process of discernment will make it clear if the desire to

move to another Institute is worthy to be attended to or not.” Along these lines, the Visitor is to help the confrere to:

- Avoid making precipitous decisions, perhaps prompted by his emotive and immediate reactions to specific situations that are causing him discomfort.
- Take into account all of the elements so as to reflect carefully, remembering the importance of the commitments he made to God and to the Congregation, in particular the vow of stability.
- Perhaps take advantage of an appropriate opportunity for spiritual growth, through ongoing formation or perhaps another environment to help him alleviate the causes of the problems.

b) Transfer to another Society of Apostolic Life or to an Institute of Consecrated Life, or to seek incardination into a diocese does not constitute in itself a right of the confrere. For this reason, on the one hand, the petition should not be granted easily. But, on the other hand, it should not be denied excessively.

c) In the case that the petition of the confrere is accepted, the Visitor is called to actively collaborate with the Superior General in correctly following the prescribed steps so that the undertaken process would achieve the intended results. It is necessary to proceed according to the Code of Canon Law (as the *Guide* reminds us in art. 146).

d) Although the *Guide* speaks of the proposed procedures of incardination of the confrere into a diocese, I believe that what is stated in art. 154 applies to both cases, as in other such circumstances. The need to pay close attention to all of the necessary steps cannot be overemphasized, as well as the need to keep scrupulous, written, documentation in the provincial and general files.

## The two tracks

### 1. Joining another Society of Apostolic Life or Institute of Consecrated Life

a) In the case of an incorporated confrere, be he cleric or lay, who wants to leave the Congregation, which is a Society of Apostolic Life, to join another Institute of Consecrated life, permission is required of the Apostolic See and it is necessary to comply with its prescribed orders.

b) On the contrary, in the case of an incorporated confrere going to another Society, according to Canon 744 §1, the Supreme

Moderator, with the consent of his Council, may grant such permission. However, two observations are noted.

- The rights and obligations that the confrere has with and to the Congregation are suspended.
- The right to return to the Congregation is maintained until definitive incorporation into the new Society as precisely stated in Canon 744 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, as in the *Guide*, art. 147. As such, as long as the confrere is not incorporated in the new Society, he remains a member of the Congregation. The Visitor, then, should take an interest in him and care for him, keeping the Superior General apprised of his progress.

c) It is clear that moving from one Society to another happens gradually and not suddenly. For this it is foreseen:

- That the Visitor should grant permission for a one-year leave in the other Institute the confrere desires to enter (C 67, §2).
- That the Superior General grants permission for any longer duration (cf. C 70).

This is all clearly indicated in the *Guide* art. 141.

d) So that the Superior General can study the petition of the confrere to leave the CM and join another Society or Institute the following are necessary:

- A petition in writing by the confrere, that is, a letter in which the confrere explains his reasons for the petition.
- A letter in which the Visitor of the confrere offers his opinion and that of his Council.
- A letter of the Major Superior of the Institute which the confrere wishes to join manifesting a clear intention to receive the confrere definitively and immediately or at least “ad experimentum.”

Also this procedure is found clearly described in the *Guide* (art. 141). These three letters are indispensable in order for the Superior General to be able to proceed to dispense a confrere from vows.

e) Another possibility is that a confrere from another Institute desires to enter our Congregation. In this case, if the Superior General admits him, he may require him, as well as the Apostolic See may require him, to make the normal Internal Seminary (novitiate) (C 54; S 20 and S 43) or a special Novitiate, as the Statutes permit the Visitor to do (*Guide* 143).

For the emission of Good Purposes and vows we must comply with the Constitutions and Statutes, unless the Apostolic See says that the vows must be taken immediately after finishing the Internal Seminary.

## **2. Incardination into a Diocese**

a) Above all, we must be clear on terminology. One thing is incorporation into the Congregation and another is incardination into the Congregation. According to Canon 265 of the Code of Canon Law, "Every cleric must be incardinated into some particular church or personal prelature or into an institute of consecrated life or society endowed with this faculty, so that unattached or transient clerics are not allowed at all." To be more precise:

- Incardination affects all clerics and normally occurs with reception to Sacred Orders of the Diaconate. A cleric not incardinated can not exist.
- Incorporation affects all members of Institutes and Societies and occurs with the emission of vows.

b) An example is the case of an incorporated confrere, who is incardinated in the Congregation and who asks to join a diocese. This is possible in the same way that a cleric can transfer from one diocese to another (cf., Code of Canon Law, canon 267).

c) The procedures to follow are correctly laid out in and described in the *Guide* (143-154).

In practice the confrere relates his problem to the Visitor. If he persists in his decision, he also speaks to the bishop of the diocese in which he seeks incardination, who then writes the Superior General manifesting his willingness to incardinate him "ad experimentum" or in a definitive manner.

The Superior General, foreseeing the future incardination of the confrere, should dispense him from his vows. To do so he must have three letters in hand:

- A letter from the confrere manifesting his desire to join the diocese;
- A letter from the Visitor indicating his view and that of his council in relation to dispensing the confrere from his vows;
- A letter from the bishop who will receive the confrere. Naturally, in order to dispense him from vows, the bishop should express his desire to incardinate the confrere immediately and definitively (art 149). The dispensation

from vows only takes effect at the moment of incardination (art. 153).

It is possible that the bishop decides to incardinate the confrere immediately into his diocese. In such case, the Superior General grants the excardination from the Congregation and notifies the bishop (art. 150).

But it is more common that incardination into a diocese is achieved gradually over a period of time “ad experimentum.” Canon 268 § 1 is applied. This period of time can be extended up to five years. The Superior General grants the confrere permission to work in the diocese in which he desires incardination until incardination is definitive.

Once the five years is up, incardination is automatic, unless the bishop or Superior General takes a contrary position (art. 152).

Up to now we have been talking of cases in which a good relationship exists between the confrere, his superiors and the bishop; our discussion would not apply to those cases where the presence of a confrere in the territory of a diocese is against the will of his superiors or of the bishop.

## **Conclusion**

The separation of a confrere from the Congregation is an event that is always sad and painful for the confrere as well as for the Congregation. Through the process of discernment and separation, it is necessary to keep in mind not only the good and interest of the Congregation, but over all, the true good of the confrere, whose good should be at the center of all the decisions and deliberations.

# A Practical Guide for the Visitor (Rome 2005)

## Canonical Process of Expulsion: Brief Canonical Procedure, Long Procedure, *Ipsa Facto*; Dismissal from the Congregation (n. 165-190)

by Alberto Vernaschi, C.M.

### Premises

The theme of this gathering is rather complex and one that is most complicated, and, just as other aspects of it are complex, so too is the part of Canon Law that applies to the processes and codes. It is not my intention to, nor can I go into great detail here. I limit myself to some principal points, indicating a few premises for consideration.

a) The beginning of the Canonical procedure of expulsion presupposes that beforehand all possible solutions to the problem have been exhausted, that all other avenues have been trod, that the confrere in difficulty has been offered fraternal, opportune help as prescribed by article 14 § 2 of the Statutes, convinced that the greatest good of the Congregation is the confreres (*A Practical Guide for the Visitor*, art. 8). The expulsion of a member of the Congregation, in fact, should constitute an extreme situation.

b) Whoever is entrusted with the authority to carry out this service should have a good knowledge of the universal Code of Canon Law, as well as the particular law governing the Congregation. However, even though familiar with the law, one should not presume to know everything. In some cases it is necessary to obtain the help of experts and to seek guidance from the General Curia, especially before beginning such procedures as expressly stated in the *Guide*. In fact, it is necessary not only to understand the abstract norm but also to be apprised of the practice followed by the Dicasteries of the Apostolic See.

c) Even in cases where things seem obvious and simple, it is necessary to follow the procedures of universal law in a precise manner, as well as the particular law, so as not to incur irregularities that may have repercussions as to the validity of the procedures in question. You must be attentive to write and gather the necessary documentation with recourse to witnesses when required.

## Canonical Process of Expulsion

With this in mind, then, let us now proceed to various points in reference to the process of Canonical Expulsion of a confrere of the Congregation.

**1. The General principle** formulated in article 68 of the Constitutions defers to Universal Law. In fact, the articles found in the Constitutions are an application of what it says in Universal Law.

The casuistry is simple when it deals with members who are admitted members (*Guide*, nn. 166-167).

- Admitted members are free to leave the Congregation by manifesting the desire to do so to their Superiors.
- The Superior General or Visitor can expulse admitted members for a just cause, after having heard his council and the applicable directors of formation.
- No norm, neither universal nor particular, obliges that reasons for expulsion be communicated; however, to do so is reasonable and respectful of the person, although there may be reasons not to do so.

The casuistry is more complicated when it comes to incorporated members (*Guide*, nn. 168-181). The *Guide* clearly distinguishes diverse situations and methods.

**2. “Ipso facto” Expulsion (*Guide*, nn. 169-171).** The Major Superior does not expulse a confrere, instead he declares that he has expulsed himself by an action that he has incurred, in one of two situations (cases) foreseen by canon 694, § 2. In practice, it is said that the expulsion occurred the moment the act was committed.

The situations (cases) foreseen are both obligatory:

- Notorious apostasy of the Catholic Faith. The concept of apostasy refers to heresies and schisms, notoriety can be of law (after a judicial sentence or by confession of the subject himself) or by act (if the action is publicly known and it is not possible to conceal or excuse).
- Matrimony contracted or the intent to contract marriage, even if only civil: this norm includes effectively having contracted a valid marriage as well as the intent to contract matrimony, even though the objective was not achieved because of some obstacle.

In these cases, once proof has been gathered (certificates, declarations, testimonies) the Major Superior should issue, without any delay, a declaration of the fact so that the expulsion would be juridically adequate.

**3. Obligatory expulsion “ab homine” by brief procedure (*Guide*, nn. 172-177).** When a confrere is encountered who has committed specific offenses that are expressly stated in canon 695 § 1.

Expulsion is obligatory, except when it is accomplished as seen in the same canon 695, § 1 for offenses that are referred to in canon 1395 § 2.

The norm in canon 695 refers to specific acts that have well-defined characteristics. It is necessary, as such, to refer to the cited canons: 1397 (homicide, kidnapping, or violent or fraudulent detention, mutilation or grave injury); 1398 (abortion); 1395 (concupinage or other grave acts against the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment of the Decalogue).

The procedures require that:

- The Major Superior gathers evidence of the acts and their imputability.
- The accused can defend himself.
- The signed documents by the Major Superior and notary and the responses given to the accusations, signed by the confrere, are transferred to the Superior General.
- The Superior General weighs the evidence and collegially together with his council, in a secret vote, redacts a decree expounding the motives of law and the facts.
- The decree must be communicated to the accused so that, if he desires, he can appeal within the ten-day time limit.

It must be specified that recourse has a suspending effect and, for the time being, it is necessary to await a response from the authority to which the recourse has been sent and, in all cases, await the confirmation from the Apostolic See, which also must transmit a decree with specified response (minutes).

The *Guide* makes two precise observations:

- Article 175 recalls what I highlighted in the Premises, regarding the need to use pastoral care and prudence before beginning this process.
- Article 177 advises that although the procedures of the process are clear in theory, difficulties may arise due to the specific acts or the interpretation of the law.

**4. Non-obligatory expulsion “ab homine” with longer process (*Guide*, nn. 178-181).** According to the mandate in canon 696 § 1, it must be observed:

- Expulsion is not obligatory — the law offers the possibility of a “quasi” process that can be followed, but is not required;

- The causes should be grave, external, public, imputable, and juridically proven; such characteristics should exist together and simultaneously and not in isolation from one another;
- The link of the causes is definitive (as treated by universal law) and exemplary — similarly the particular law may determine other grave causes.

The *Guide* describes in detail and with great precision the stages that must be covered in the case that the Major Superior decides to undertake the means to expulse the confrere. Although some elements have already been indicated, it is recommended to pay close attention to the instructions in the *Guide* in number 181.

5. The *Guide* then speaks of the immediate expulsion from the house without process (*Guide*, nn. 182-187), in accordance with article 74 § 3 of the Constitutions that repeats canon 703 which states “In the case of serious exterior scandal or very grave imminent harm to the institute...”

- two diverse cases are referred to and each one of them is sufficient for expulsion. The weight is even greater, if it can be determined that both exist.
- The nature of immediate expulsion from the house is especially grave. It is not sufficient to act based on suppositions, hypothesis, calculated probability; the terms in canon 703 are precise.
- Once immediate expulsion is determined — the process of expulsion should be followed immediately as prescribed in canons 697-698.

6. Finally, the *Guide* talks about the **effects of expulsion** (*Guide*, nn. 188-190). It is important to read attentively the instructions offered in the *Guide*.

## Conclusion

It is worth highlighting, as is often referred to in the *Guide*, that extreme prudence, precaution, and precision is to be used in these cases, never forgetting to follow the prescribed steps and carefully document everything step by step.

However, prudence is not the equivalent of doing nothing or infinite waiting. Respect for the person of the confrere in difficulty and for his needs should not prejudice the rights of other confreres, the Community, and the People of God.

# A Practical Guide for the Visitor (Rome 2005)

Readmission and Reintegration:  
Readmission (n. 196-198); Reintegration (n. 199);  
Offences and Punishments (n. 200-203)

by Wiel Bellemakers, C.M.

## Article 10.

### Readmission and Reintegration (nn. 196-199)

*The example of the Good Shepherd, the most inspirational image for the government of the Company, suggests the stance of opening the door to those who left for whatever reasons. More significantly, another evangelic parable, that of the Merciful Father, is appropriate. Naturally, readmission and, above all, reintegration, should be done with the guarantee that it is good for the Church, the Congregation and, of course, the confrere himself.*

Three conditions are given for readmission and reintegration:

- **The readmission and reintegration must be good for the Church.**

Here we can think of confreres who left and whose re-entering may be a blessing for the Church community. The experience of their chastened life, the acquired wisdom of life, and, at the same time, the awareness of their mistakes and lapses, if any, can be highly profitable in their contact with people. They know about being merciful and charitable. They know about being weak and picking themselves up. I know some religious who 30, 40 years ago “during the wild 60s and 70s” left, were laicized, married, and became widowers. They asked to be allowed to serve again as priests.

- **It must be good for the Congregation.**

It happened several times that a Dutch confrere who had been incardinated in a diocese asked to be allowed to come back to the Congregation; once a brother asked to be allowed to come back. In some instances this brought about violent protests among the

confreres who remembered their leaving. Hard, bitter, unjust reproaches spoken at that time by the leavers had not been forgotten. It was found unacceptable that they should come back now “to be well cared for in their old age.”

– **It must be good for the confrere.**

The Congregation is not anymore what it had been 20 or 30 years ago. There are other people in the community, there are new practices, and there is a younger history. Someone wanted to return to the atmosphere of the former seminary when we celebrated the Christmas and Easter liturgies for hours in an almost mystical world. Another one still was singing from the Boyer volume the French hymns he had learned in the apostolic school in Wernhoutsburg. This is all gone. In the same way, many old stories about former days have vanished into thin air. Both would have been seriously disappointed if they had come back permanently. Indeed their old world does not exist anymore. Alluding to a biblical story one could say that the Egyptian jars have been empty for quite some time. There might be also psychological factors because of which one must advise someone for his own good against coming back.

In this matter good advice comes not only from the abovementioned mercy but also from wisdom. Only open conversations can lead to a good result.

**1° Readmission<sup>1</sup>**

196. *The Visitor, after having heard his council, has the authority to admit to the province all those admitted members who left or were dismissed. He does not have the authority to admit incorporated members. The Superior General, however, has authority to admit everyone except those who obtained a dispensation from priesthood.*<sup>2</sup>

197. *Canon 690, which is obligatory for Institutes of Consecrated Life, can serve as a guideline: “A person who lawfully leaves the institute after completing the novitiate or after profession, can be readmitted by the supreme Moderator, with the consent of his council, without the obligation of*

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<sup>1</sup> As far as I know there was only one confrere who has been readmitted after he left the Internal Seminary.

<sup>2</sup> Note 184: S 35 Auctoritas denuo admittendi aliquem in Congregationem pertinet:

1° ad Superiorem Generalem, audito suo Consilio, pro omnibus;

2° ad Visitatorem, auditis suo Consilio et Visitatore Provinciae a qua sodalis egressus vel dimissus est, pro iis qui nondum Congregationi incorporati sunt.

*repeating the novitiate. The same Moderator is to determine an appropriate probation prior to temporary profession... in accordance with the norms of canons 655 and 657.”<sup>3</sup>*

Legitimate departure includes departure

- (a) at the completion of the novitiate according to canon 653 § 2;
- (b) at the expiration of temporary profession according to canon 688 § 1;
- (c) by an indult granted to a religious in temporary profession according to canon 688 § 2;
- (d) by exclusion from subsequent profession according to canon 689 § 1 and § 2;
- (e) by an indult granted to a perpetually professed religious according to canon 691;
- (f) by dismissal according to the various categories and procedures of canons 694-703.

Whether or not a confrere, who had legitimately departed in these various categories, would actually be admitted again to the Congregation depends on the type of departure, the present condition of the person involved, and the judgment of the competent authority of the Congregation, but all those, who fulfil the requirements for any legitimate departure listed, fall under the norm of canon 690.

The admission referred to in this canon is to the same institute to which one previously belonged or in which the novitiate was made.

The right to readmit admitted members, who left or were dismissed, pertains to the Visitor after he has heard his council and the Visitor of the province to which the member belonged.

<sup>3</sup> Note 185: Canons 655 and 657 refer to profession of temporary vows, their renewal, and perpetual profession.

Canon 655: Temporary profession is to be made for the period defined by the institute's own law. This period may not be less than three years nor longer than six years.

Canon 657 § 1: When the period of time for which the profession was made has been completed, a religious who freely asks, and is judged suitable, is to be admitted to a renewal of profession or to perpetual profession; otherwise, the religious is to leave.

§ 2: If it seems opportune the period of temporary profession can be extended by the competent superior, according to proper law, but in such a way that the entire time in which the member is bound by temporary vows does not exceed nine years.

§ 3: Perpetual profession can be anticipated for a just cause, but not by more than three months.

The right to readmit admitted and incorporated members, who left or were dismissed, is reserved to the Superior General *audito suo consilio* for the whole Congregation; reserved to the Visitor for his province, except those who obtained a dispensation from priesthood.

198. *It is not necessary to repeat the internal seminary. The Visitor should help the returning confrere update himself on Vincentian spirituality. What is to be done depends upon whatever the Visitor, having heard his council and consulted with the moderators, decides to do.*

In our Congregation the Superior General leaves the decision about the suitable probation to the Visitor. Repetition of the internal seminary could be required as the suitable probation, but the intention of the canon is certainly that the Visitor and the formators may judge a new novitiate as not necessary upon re-entrance.

There is no time specification for the duration of probation prior to temporary profession. The time in temporary profession prior to perpetual profession must be within the limits specified in canons 655 and 657.<sup>4</sup>

In case readmission to the same institute is requested, all original admission and departure records should be available to the institute in question. Additional information could be requested of the applicant in keeping with the current admission procedures of the institute.<sup>5</sup>

## 2<sup>o</sup> Reintegration

199. *There is nothing in the law about reintegration. This is the case of the confrere who, having received dispensation from the obligation of the priesthood from the Holy Father, wishes to return to the Congregation. The situations may vary greatly, with special circumstances existing on the human, moral and canonical levels.*

What path to tread will be indicated clearly in the following points.

- 1<sup>o</sup> In principle, the door should not be closed to anyone. But there is also no obligation to open it without sufficient discernment.

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<sup>4</sup> ELIZABETH McDONOUGH, O.P., in *A Handbook on Canons 573-746*, pp. 241-242.

<sup>5</sup> ELIZABETH McDONOUGH O.P., *ibid.*, p 243.

- 2° Because the dispensation from priestly obligations was given by the Holy Father, the case should be presented to the Holy See and its recommendations followed.
- 3° Before going to the Holy See, it should be clear that the confrere requesting reintegration does not have any children. If he has children, he must present proof that they are provided for. If this is not clear and sure, he should not be reintegrated.
- 4° A document attesting to his free state must also be provided. This document is absolutely necessary. If this document is missing, the confrere cannot be reintegrated.
- 5° If after attentively studying the situation, and having listened to his council, the Visitor decides that the confrere should be reintegrated, he shall express to the Superior General his willingness to receive him.
- 6° The Superior General, at least having heard his council, should clearly state his opinion on the confrere's reintegration.
- 7° The confrere should request dispensation of irregularity and permission to be received into the Community.
- 8° The Superior General might indicate some conditions about how much time should elapse before the return to vows and the exercise of ministry.
- 9° Once the entire process of reintegration is completed, the fact of reintegration, along with all the documentation gathered in the case, should be sent to the Holy See, if the Holy See demands it.
- 10° The Holy See has the final word.

In my province no laicized confrere ever asked to be allowed to come back. In other Dutch congregations I know of only one case. A religious was incardinated in a diocese after the ecclesiastical nullification of his marriage. Beforehand the bishop had been in touch with the priest's ex-spouse in order to ask her opinion. The two children were already of age.

Another religious-priest left 35 years ago. After he had received laicization. He married, but separated after four years. The last years he was active in a big city-parish. People asked that he function again as a priest. After conversations with the ex-spouse the request was blocked. Rightly? wrongly? she still was bitterly disposed towards her ex-husband.

I know laicized priests of other congregations who, after their spouse passed away, either went back to their congregation or became members of the diocesan clergy.

Most important in this question seems to me that we know that it is possible to reintegrate a confrere after his receiving laicization. It will always be an exceptional event. Modesto López told us during the Meeting of the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission, Salamanca 5-15 June 1996:

“These cases are also difficult but... are rare and joyful ones:

1. Rare in the sense that there are so few of these cases in which a confrere has left the community and has married civilly, and asks to be reincorporated into the community and into priestly ministry. In these last years we have only had one case of this kind, a confrere who at the age of 38 left the community and priestly ministry and married civilly. Seven years later he obtained a civil divorce and expressed his desire to return to the community and exercise of ministry. A period of gradual reintegration into the community began even before petitioning the Holy See. For more than a year he lived in a house of the Congregation and with a favorable vote from the Provincial and his Council, he presented a petition to Father General and his Council and from there to the Congregation of Religious. This Congregation of Religious allowed Father General the faculty of readmitting him to the community and at the time of readmission the Roman dicastery dispensed him from the irregularity so that he could exercise priesthood. He died two months later of a malignant cancer but did so within the Community and exercising priesthood.
2. Different from the cases of dispensation and expulsion these are cases producing joy, like the joy brought about in the heart of a father for the return of his prodigal son.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Article 11.**

#### **Offences and Punishments (nn. 200-203)**

*The goal of penalties in the Church is not only the rule of justice, but also to guarantee order and stimulate repentance in the one who committed the offence. There exists, first of all, censures which primarily seek to correct and move to*

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<sup>6</sup> *Vincentiana* 40, 1996, p. 358.

repentance.<sup>7</sup> There exist expiatory penalties which try to repair the damage, but without forgetting the supernatural dimension of the Church.<sup>8</sup> Then come penal remedies which serve to prevent offences and avoid or substitute penalties.<sup>9</sup> There never has been a code of penalties in the Congregation.

From the comments on criminal law of the Church, I bring to the forefront two considerations that are immensely important for all of us.

## 1. Is the Church allowed to impose punishments? Has the Church got *ius puniendi*?

At Vatican Council II the fathers declared: "... man's response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will.... It is therefore completely in

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<sup>7</sup> Note 186: These censures are found in canons 1331-1333. Canon 1331: excommunication. Canon 1332: interdict. Canon 1333: suspension.

<sup>8</sup> Note 187: Expiatory Penalties are found in canon 1336, but others may be applied.

Canon 1336 § 1: Besides others penalties which the law may establish, the following are expiatory penalties which can punish an offender in perpetuity, for a prescribed time or for an indeterminate time:

1° a prohibition or an order concerning living in a certain place or territory;

2° deprivation of power, office, function, right, privilege, faculty, favour, title or insignia, even merely honorary;

3° a prohibition against exercising those things mentioned in n. 2 or a prohibition against exercising them in a certain place or outside a certain place; which prohibitions are never under pain of nullity;

4° a penal transfer to another office;

5° dismissal from the clerical state.

§ 2: The only expiatory penalties which can be automatic (*latae sententiae*) are these enumerated in § 1, n. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Note 188. Cf. CIC, canons 1339-1340. Canon 1339 § 1. An Ordinary, personally or through another, can warn a person who is in the proximate occasion of committing a delict or upon whom, after investigation, grave suspicion of having committed a delict has fallen.

§ 2. He can also rebuke a person whose behavior causes scandal or a grave disturbance of order, in a manner accommodated to the special conditions of the person and the deed.

§ 3. The warning or rebuke must always be established, at least by some document which is to be kept in the secret archive of the curia.

C. 1340. § 1. A penance, which can be imposed in the external forum, is the performance of some work of religion, piety, or charity. § 2. A public penance is never to be imposed for an occult transgression. § 3. According to his own prudent judgement, an Ordinary can add penances to the penal remedy of warning or rebuke.

accord with the nature of faith that in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of men should be excluded.”<sup>10</sup> This means that the ecclesiastical authorities ought to go quite easy on coercing by punishments. Only in this way constraint will be avoided and Christ’s way with people and sinners will be followed, as the Council described it.<sup>11</sup>

In this way we return altogether to Gratianus’s old wisdom where he says: “The good ones must put up with the bad ones”<sup>12</sup> and that “for peace in the Church the bad ones must be put up with.”<sup>13</sup>

He is convinced that it is better not to punish, but to patiently suffer. “Look, criminals must be punished, when they can be hit, the peace in the Church being preserved; in this discernment must be used. Indeed we have sometimes to wait for a long time until a lot of bad people convert: we must sometimes punish a few, so that because of their example the others will be scared and incited to conversion.”<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Is penal law indeed relevant and applicable?

In order to apply penal law it is necessary:

- that in dioceses and religious institutions there is knowledge of penal law and of the rules of a judicial penal process;
- that there are trained ecclesiastical promoters of justice and judges.

The Codex of 1917 decreed that ecclesiastical punishments could be imposed or declared only through a judicial penal process. The years that followed made it clear that, in point of fact, the decrees of CIC 1917 were impracticable because of lack of the required canonical knowledge. Outside the Roman Curia hardly any instances were able to follow the rules of an judicial penal process.

The Codex of 1983 met this problem by giving the ecclesiastical superior the possibility to make a choice. The superior or the bishop can now choose (canon 1718) for a **judicial penal process** or for an

<sup>10</sup> *Dignitatis humanae* (1965) n. 10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, cf., n. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Quod mali sunt tollerandi a bonis, in Causa 23 quaestio 4 caput 2.

<sup>13</sup> Pro pace ecclesiae mali sunt tollerandi, in C. 23 q. 4 cc. 3 en 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ecce, quod crimina sunt punienda, quando salva pace ecclesiae feriri possunt; in quo tamen discretio adhibenda est. Aliquando enim deliquentium multitudo diu ad patientiam est expectanda: aliquando in paucis punienda, ut eorum exemplo ceteri terreantur, et ad penitentiam provocentur. In C. 12 q. 4 dictum post caput 25.

**extra-judicial decree** outside court. Major disadvantages adhere also to this solution.

The disadvantage of an **extra-judicial decree** is that in this way the suspect has less chance to defend himself and so to have a fair lawsuit. The reason is that the promoter of justice, the leader of the investigation is the same person as the decision-maker.

Moreover we can wonder whether the Church really can conduct **a penal process**.

The codex prescribes that for dismissing from the clerical status a judicial penal process is always necessary. The majority of the bishops and religious superiors prefer to look for another solution because they have so much difficulty with this method.

What to do in all those other situations where a judicial penal process is prescribed?<sup>15</sup>

If lots of canonists come up with so many objections against punishing in whatever way, then the very greatest prudence is strictly de rigueur.

One must avoid everything that can harm:

- a person who has not enough resources to defend himself;
- the person who imposes a punishment because of his possible impolitic, imprudent acting or a mixing of functions;
- the ecclesial community which also becomes a victim because of unjust acting.

The application of this prudence can be found in the following rules:

200. *The Visitor may warn through sanction with determined penalties, except perpetual expiatory ones. He may only impose sanctions after diligent reflection, in case of need, and for very serious offences.<sup>16</sup> He should seek advise from experts and rely on the advise of the Superior General.*

201. *It is not easy to impose, declare and apply penalties. On the other hand, the effectiveness of punishing with penalties is not certain. The Visitor should use those pastoral means that are within his reach to accomplish the same results as a penalty. He should make use of admonition and charitable and fraternal correction, according to canon 1339.*

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<sup>15</sup> O.a. Delicta graviora Congregationi pro Doctrina Fidei reservata, nonnisi in processu iudiciali persequenda sunt.

<sup>16</sup> Note 189: Cf., CIC, canon 1319.

202. *One can impose a penance in the external forum. This would consist of performing works of charity, religion or piety. One should never impose a public penalty for an occult transgression.*

203. *Regarding admonitions or corrections that are made and the punishments that are imposed, these should be recorded in some document stored in the provincial archives.*

# Clerical Sexual Abuse of Minors: An Ecclesial Response

by Raymond F. Dlugos, O.S.A., Ph.D.  
and Michael P. Joyce, C.M.

## Thoughts on Clerical Sexual Abuse

by Michael P. Joyce, C.M.

### 1) Historical Development of Conscientiousness in the Church

- a) In U.S. began in 1984
- b) American bishops addressed it and came to particular law in 1994
- c) Prior to 2002, priests sent to psychological treatment were frequently assessed to be able to return to public ministry and were reinstated by their ordinary
- d) Reached apex in Boston in 2002 with allegations against bishops of “cover up”
- e) Outcry from Christian faithful about the assignment of offending clergy
- f) Meeting of American bishops in Dallas, June 2002, resulting in *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (revised 2005)
- g) *Charter* followed by *Essential Norms*: particular law for the Church in the U.S. effective for three years in 2003

### 2) Penal law for clerics who sexually abuse minors

- a) *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*: universal law for violations of the Eucharist, the sacrament of penance, and sexual abuse of minors
- b) *Essential Norms* promulgated as particular law indefinitely in 2006
- c) This use of penal procedures is new and being developed, “making it up as we go along”
- d) Responses (or reactions) different by bishops and by superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

### 3) Some challenges

- a) Distinction between sexual abuse of pre-pubescent children (*Pedophilia*) and sexual abuse of adolescent minors (*Ephebophilia*)
- b) Seriousness of offense related not only to violation of natural law, but also to psychological and emotional harm done to victim
- c) John Paul's statement to American cardinals in 2002 that there is no room in the priesthood or religious life for sexual abusers of children
- d) Finding useful employment for those who have been accused
- e) "One strike, you're out"
- f) A priest is regarded as guilty when accused, even if he later is found to be innocent

### 4) Distinction between scandal and crisis

- a) **Scandal** caused by sexual misconduct of clerics and religious
- b) **Crisis** caused by the way that religious leadership (i.e., bishops, chancery officials, provincials) addressed the sexual misconduct
- c) In USA, scandal is now moving to the administration of temporal goods
- d) Different directions must be taken for the treatment of the scandal and the resolution of the crisis

### 5) Forgiveness

- a) Beyond canonical procedures
- b) Gospel response

## Talking Points for Ray Dlugos

by Raymond F. Dlugos, O.S.A., Ph.D.

### 6) Issues needing to be addressed in the internal life of the Church

- 1. Addressing and acknowledging the shadow realities always present in the life of an Institution, with enormous power over others, charged with a sacred trust.
  - a) The Church, at every level of its life (Universal, Institutional, Local, Parochial, Community, and Individual) has an equal capacity for sin as for holiness.

- i. "Pride lurks even in good works, seeking to destroy them" (*Rule of St. Augustine*).
  - ii. It is not possible to eliminate the shadow realities, but they can be effectively integrated and redeemed, if they are acknowledged with rigorous honesty and not just lip service.
  - iii. Addressing and integrating shadow realities does not require structural change (which seems to terrify the Church), but does require a change in the self-understanding of the Church as safe, good, powerful, and holy.
  - iv. Address the reality that the cause of abuse of any kind at any level is enormous power in the hands of extremely immature persons.
    1. Be realistic in acknowledging the power inherent in Church ministry, especially priesthood.
    2. Develop the idea of human formation in priestly formation and find ways to integrate it in every aspect of initial and ongoing formation.
2. Withdraw from all tendencies to scapegoat individuals or groups as the ones responsible for this scandal.
    - a) There should be no distinction between "good and holy priests" and "perverts, predators, and pedophiles."
    - b) Scapegoating never leads to healing and conversion.
    - c) The elimination of offending individuals from the community will not bring healing and holiness to the community.
  3. Develop systems of accountability and transparency at every level of the life of the Church.
    - a) Shadow realities exert their power most effectively in darkness and in secret.
    - b) Systems of accountability and transparency for individuals require huge cultural shifts in clerical and religious life.
    - c) Ministerial supervision that increases priest's self-awareness and awareness of his impact on those he serves (provide forum for accurate interpersonal feedback).
  4. Deal honestly and realistically with all of the complex aspects of human sexuality and sexual maturity.
    - a) Too much darkness in which shadow realities can thrive.
    - b) Explore how the mission of the Church has been derailed by its acceptance of society's desire for it to be the regulator of marriage and procreation.
    - c) Broaden and deepen the sacramental nature of sexuality; normalize and sanctify the genuinely holy nature of sexuality.

## **7) Responses by the Church to the External Realities of Clergy Sexual Abuse**

5. Creatively and prayerfully engage the tension between the call to be responsible stewards and the demands of justice and compassion for the victims.
  - a) Listen to the Gospel as much as to the advice of lawyers, accountants, and insurance agents.
  - b) Be less concerned about being victimized by false accusations and more concerned about repenting and redressing the wrongs for which we are guilty.
  - c) Find ways for the stories of victims to be told and heard by the Church community without expectation of receiving forgiveness.
  - d) Open the possibility of reconciliation only for the sake of the victim and on the terms of the victim rather than for the easing of distress for the Church or its ministers.
6. Find prophetic and responsible ways to include offending priests within the community of the Church rather than expel them.
  - a) Mennonite Response to criminal sexual abusers whose prison terms have ended: Circles of Accountability and Transparency.
    - i. Include the laity in the process but do not force offending priests on anyone.
7. Proclaim God's outrage toward the epidemic of sexual abuse, child trafficking and slavery, the degradation of women and children through pornography and prostitution, etc.
  - a) Sexual Abuse is an inherent shadow reality of Patriarchal societies, where children and women are viewed as the property of men to be used for the purposes of men.
  - b) Find a way for a Patriarchal Church to challenge the shadow reality of Patriarchy.
  - c) Repentance is only repentance when it leads to conversion of ways.

# Psychological Treatment for Sexual Abusers: What is Sexual Abuse, Intensive Therapy, and Aftercare

by Raymond F. Dlugos, O.S.A., Ph.D.

## **What is sexual abuse?**

Sexual abuse occurs when any sexual act is performed on another person without his/her consent or in circumstances where consent cannot be freely given. Forcibly raping a person by overpowering them with violence may be the clearest example of sexual abuse but less dramatic forms can be equally harmful.

What makes sexual abuse abusive is the use of power of any kind to gain access to sexual activity with another person. Power comes in many forms including physical strength, psychological manipulation, seduction, and holding a position of legal, spiritual, or moral authority over another. Sexual abuse is about the misuse of power to gratify one's own needs without the free consent of another person far more than about sexual urges or proclivities. Simply put, sexual abuse is more about power than about sex. It is most often performed by a person who possesses great power in the eyes of others, especially others who are clearly weaker than he, but who experiences himself internally to be quite powerless. Consequently, he experiences relief from utter powerlessness by assuming a position of power over more vulnerable others.

The ability to give consent to a sexual act is really determined by the person's freedom to say "no" rather than his/her freedom to say "yes." In an equal, mutual relationship, expressed sexual interest that continues after the other person has said or implied a no becomes sexual harassment and may become sexual abuse if the perpetrating party uses any kind of force to evoke apparent consent for the sexual activity. Sexual abuse occurs in circumstances in which there is no possibility that a person has the freedom or the capacity to refuse the sexual encounter. These circumstances include differences in age and developmental maturity, moments of increased vulnerability due to trauma, loss, shock, or emotional instability, diminished mental capacity of any kind, and any difference in power as a result of the position a person holds in the other's life.

The law talks about relationships of Fiduciary Trust. These relationships define a power differential arising from the role a person holds rather than his own personal psychology. Despite the psychological reality that a priest may be woefully underdeveloped and sexually immature, because he holds a position of trust within the community, he is considered to be the one with the power, the authority, and the maturity to be worthy of the trust placed in him by virtue of his position. The violation of trust and the loss of any reasonable sense of safety, even in the presence of those who are supposed to be protectors, is what makes sexual abuse such an egregious moral problem. The violation of that trust profoundly damages the soul and spirit of the victim at the most core level possible. Consequently, any sexual activity that occurs between a priest and anyone else that occurs within a ministerial context (pretty much whenever the other knows that a priest is a priest) would fall into the general category of sexual abuse and be subject to criminal or civil liability.

This includes any situation in which a priest might claim to have been seduced by another person. While that may, in fact, be the psychological truth, the legal truth is that because a priest has a role with significant power over others, he is responsible to maintain the fiduciary trust at all times. In other words, it is always the responsibility of the priest to appropriately maintain his own boundaries. It is not the responsibility of those to whom a priest ministers to maintain those boundaries.

#### Sexually Abusive Behaviors

- Sexual Intercourse or any form of sexual penetration
- Sexual Fondling or touching of a genital area
- Sexual kissing and hugging
- Exposure of genitals of either perpetrator or victim
- Nudity of either perpetrator or victim
- Inappropriate sexualized language
- Viewing pornography in the presence of a vulnerable other
- Viewing pornographic images of minors
- Massage when not a Registered Massage Therapist
- Medical Examinations when not a Health-Care Professional

It is impossible to determine what impact any sexualized action will have on the victim and so it is very dangerous to say that one form of sexual activity is not as harmful as another form. Sexual Abuse, because it is without the consent of the victim, is a serious violation of the person's sense of safety, personal integrity, and spiritual dignity.

### Forms of Clergy Sexual Abuse

Sexual Activity of any kind with minors irregardless of the relationship, apparent mutuality, consent, or even initiation on the part of the minor. This is usually a criminal offense and carries serious civil liability as well.

Sexuality Activity of any kind with vulnerable adults. Vulnerable adults include anyone whose capacity to give free consent is diminished. Depending on the kind of vulnerability at play, this may be criminal but it is certainly subject to civil litigation.

Sexual Activity with anyone with whom you have an explicit or implied pastoral relationship. Rather than be classified as sexual abuse, this is often referred to as sexual misconduct in violation of ministerial boundaries. So far, this is generally subjected to civil liability.

In addition to inappropriate sexual activity, priests need to be cautious about any type of professional boundary violation that entails using the power inherent in the ministerial role to gratify one's own needs rather than offering the most appropriate care to another person.

Sexual Activity by someone with a vow or a promise of celibate chastity, that is not either sexual abuse or a boundary violation, is behavior in violation of a vow of chastity. There is no criminal or civil liability for this but it indicates a potentially serious lack of integrity that may well be evidence of a psychological disorder.

### Psychological Disorders that may underlie sexually abusive behavior by clergy.

#### **Personality Disorders**

Personality Disorders in general are patterns of behavior that were at one time essential for survival and protection against perceived external or internal threats but that now cause severe impairment in social and occupational functioning.

*Antisocial Personality Disorder:* Persons with little or no regard for the impact of their actions on others to the extent that they seem to have no conscience whatsoever. Persons with this disorder have little or no ability to experience empathy for others and appear to act according to their own whims and desires for self-gratification. May arise from the belief that the only way to be safe is to hurt others before they hurt you.

*Narcissistic Personality Disorder:* Narcissists display an overly inflated sense of their own value that is actually masking deep insecurity and shame. In order to keep the shame at bay, they require constant admiration, validation, affirmation, and worship from

others and will be highly manipulative in order to receive this. Having vulnerable people worshipping them and expressing it sexually is a way of fuelling their Narcissist energy.

*Dependent and Avoidant Personality Disorders:* These disorders render a person very vulnerable to becoming enmeshed in inappropriate relationships that may easily become sexualized. Their desire for closeness combined with their belief that they are not lovable invites them to respond to anyone showing them affection without awareness of the power inherent in their role and appropriate boundaries.

## **Addictions**

*Substance Abuse and Dependence:* Always impairs judgment!

*Sexual Addiction:* The adrenalin rush of the pursuit of sexual activity is intoxicating and often requires more and more dangerous sexual pursuits to feed the addiction.

## **Sexual Disorders**

*Unintegrated Sexuality:* A lack of attention to the realities of one's sexual nature that prevents including sexuality in one's self-concept. It often arises from shame-filled attitudes toward sex, and especially what might be thought of as any sexual deviance, such as homosexuality. Deliberate efforts are made to deny or repress sexual urges and feelings to the extent that they are not allowed into consciousness. Consequently, sexuality becomes compartmentalized and will be acted out without any check from the rest of a person's self-understanding.

*Pedophilia and Ephebophilia:* Pedophilia is diagnosed for persons whose primary sexual interest in is prepubescent children. Ephebophilia is an inordinate or exclusive sexual interest in adolescence. Pedophilia, in particular, is likely an organic dysfunction in the brain rather than an actual choice. That dysfunction could be caused by pre-natal or post-natal trauma, including the experience of being a victim of sexual abuse. Ephebophilia is more likely due to arrested development in the process of sexual maturity.

It is important to note that finding adolescents and even children sexually attractive is normal for human beings. Finding them exclusively attractive is abnormal. Acting on those urges, natural though they may be, is criminally dangerous because of the harm such behavior causes to the victim. Analogously, it is normal for human beings to have aggressive and violent urges even to the point of murder. Acting on those urges is problematic.

Consequently, the real psychological difficulty related to those who perpetrate sexual abuse is their capacity to regulate their behavior — not their desires, or impulses, or interests — with effective controls. Ideally these are internal controls, generated from within the person, in accord with his conscience, socially responsible values, and his personal integrity. However, internal controls are rarely, if ever, sufficient to regulate the behavior of any human being driven by the powerful forces of sexuality or aggression. We all need some external control to reinforce our internal controls, but some of us need more than others in every situation, some need more than others in particular situations, and society needs to exercise external controls over those who are utterly uninterested in exerting any control over themselves.

### **Intensive Treatment of Sexual Abusers**

Sound treatment of any psychological or behavioral difficulty first requires a thorough evaluation of the person's psychological functioning. Such an evaluation would locate the existence of any psychopathology such as depression, anxiety, a thought disorder, substance abuse, and the experience of trauma in a person's history. The presence of any of these weakens a person's capacity to exercise proper judgment about his behavior and the internal controls necessary to act appropriately. It would also explore the relational dynamics within his upbringing, the process of his sexual development, medical problems, and his spirituality and religious values all of which will tell us something about his capacity to behave in an integrated fashion.

It is possible to administer a test of sexual interest to see if a person has abnormally high interest in children or adolescents but this is not foolproof by any extent.

It is a myth that sexual abuse as a behavior arises from the same disorder in everyone who engages in that behavior and so a one-size-fits-all treatment is not appropriate. To treat the problematic behavior through punishment or attempts at extinction or the raising of consciousness about its harmful or sinful nature is inadequate without treating the underlying causes that prevent a person from exercising appropriate internal control over his actions.

As is clear from the above list of disorders underlying sexually abusive behavior, work on the personality organization of perpetrators of sexual abuse is foundational. The bad news about this is that such work is very difficult and takes quite a bit of time. There is no quick fix to a personality disorder as those patterns of behavior are well-entrenched and are likely to resurface under times of stress. The most amenable personality disorders to treat are the Dependent and Avoidant Disorders, while Narcissistic and, especially, Antisocial

Personality Disorders are very difficult to treat because, by their very nature, these disorders make accurate self-awareness very difficult.

Effective treatment for sexual abusers needs to be holistic and approach the person's behavioral control difficulties by treating psychiatric illnesses with appropriate medication and therapy, establishing a solid plan of recovery from addictive processes, assisting a person to integrate his traumatic experiences appropriately, and considerable work on his overall personality functioning. This requires being in a controlled setting where he receives heavy doses of feedback from others about what it is like to be in his presence and the impact that his actions have on others. It requires an environment in which new behaviors can be practiced and reinforced.

Like most dangerous behavior, a proclivity to sexual abuse thrives in isolation and secrecy. Consequently, a large part of the treatment of sexual abusers involves encouragement to "come clean" with their entire sexual history and history of abuse, not just the incidents where they may have been caught. This kind of transparency is essential to building a system of accountability and support that will minimize the possibility of offense in the future. A growing sense of awareness of their impact on others, despite how contrary this usually is to their general understanding of themselves is also an essential part of therapy. At Southdown we have the rather unique therapeutic opportunity to almost always have perpetrators of sexual abuse in therapy groups with victims of sexual abuse. Hearing the stories of the suffering undergone by the victims has a way of breaking through the denial or minimization of harm that perpetrators naturally use to protect themselves from knowing the truth about them.

The goal of treatment is to maximize as much as possible whatever capacity for internal controls a perpetrator may have. There is no such thing as a cure. There is no such thing as declaring a person to be "safe." There is no such thing as "low risk." There will be at best, after a course of treatment, some better assessment of where, when, and why a person will need external controls to augment his internal controls in order to behave safely and appropriately. A successful treatment, in my view, occurs when a person acknowledges and accepts the need to have external monitoring of his behavior and is willing to be accountable to that external monitoring. That is not easy to accomplish. One rule of thumb that I follow is that I will consider a person dangerous until he considers himself dangerous enough to acknowledge his need for restrictions, accountability, and monitoring to be safe. The more a man tries to convince me that he is now safe because he has done well in treatment, the less I would trust him.

## **Aftercare**

As no one is ever cured (and this is actually true of any psychological or behavioral disorder) from being a perpetrator of sexual abuse, it necessary to assume that aftercare will last a lifetime and that external control of his behavior will be constantly essential to maintain his safety and the safety of others.

Certainly aftercare needs to minimize the possibility that he will be in situations of risk of any kind for him. These situations range from very high risk (e.g., taking teenagers camping without any other adult supervision) to situations of lower risk (e.g., participating in a semi-public community celebration). Risky situations will vary from individual to individual and have everything to do with his patterns of behavior, especially those behaviors he has engaged in without the knowledge of anyone else. They should include even those situations that we generally consider to be “off-limits,” like vacations and family visits.

A safety plan can be developed that is detailed according to the situations of risk but should also include more ordinary and everyday situations. A system of accountability regarding one’s activities and whereabouts needs to be established that includes proactive questioning on the part of the “supervisor.”

This type of supervision is extremely countercultural for most clergy and religious, especially for those charged with the work of supervising and calling a confrere to accountability. For it to be effective, it requires a real sea change in our culture regarding transparency and privacy.

Continued attention to psychiatric care, psychotherapy, participation in 12-step recovery groups is essential to mitigating the possibility of re-offense. Here again, trusting a perpetrator to carry this out on his own is not okay. It sounds harsh, but any tendency toward secrecy and isolation is a danger sign. Neglecting his continued therapeutic work is a genuine cause for concern as it will be the primary way of maintaining whatever capacity for internal control he may have. Group therapy is likely to be very helpful in continuing to provide a check on his own overconfidence regarding his safety.

An enormous challenge in the effort to maintain safety for perpetrators of sexual abuse is to find meaningful activity with which to fill their days. At best, their opportunity for ministry will be very restricted and it is likely that public ministry of any kind will not be allowed. There is only so much work to do in the province archives and so finding ways for these men or women to be gainfully employed and safe at the same time is difficult. Many are unwilling

to accept jobs that they consider beneath their dignity, but finding a job consistent with their perception of their worth is not likely. But jobs are available that are well supervised and contribute to the service of the world and the upkeep of the common good. Once again, the willingness of a man to accept a somewhat menial job rather than refuse to do anything less than full-time unrestricted ministry is a positive sign.

# Psychological and Spiritual Accompaniment of Confreres in Difficulty

by Alessandro Partini, O.F.M.

## Introduction

The theme we are treating is situated in a *delicate area* because of the problems entailed, because of the difficulty in helping people, because of its repercussions on the entire Congregation and beyond it. To face it requires an *holistic, integrated approach*, with an *interdisciplinary* vision, to the person and situation. Due to the brevity of the treatment, I will give only a few signs, limiting myself to the dimension of *psychological and spiritual accompaniment*.

Above all, it seems opportune to remind you how these two types of accompaniment are both important and, in a certain way, influence each other: to eliminate one for the sake of simplification could result in an inappropriate reductionism. Also, the two dimensions are not separated, but neither confused, with regard to the two distinct aspects of the person. For us as Christians the model which we can refer to after all is the person of *Jesus, Man-God*, in whom the human dimension and the divine-spiritual dimension are perfectly united, yet still distinct; neither confused, nor separated.<sup>1</sup> This is the *law of the incarnation!*

This model can help us understand another fundamental aspect of the topic, which, at times, can risk being put in parenthesis. We could, in fact, ask ourselves: “Is a confrere in difficulty only a *problem* or is he also a “*gift*”? Is he a *difficulty* and that is all or is he also a new *possibility*? In *light of the resurrection* we must affirm that the two dimensions of death and resurrection are both present: if a gift that God made to the Congregation of the Mission is to seek his face in the *poor*, where can he be found if not in these confreres who are, beyond a doubt, the *nearest* among the poor and who are sometimes among the *poorest*, at least in the moral or spiritual sense.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf., Formulation of the Council of Chalcedon.

In this sense, we place ourselves, before all else, in *the view of "helping"* the person before that of *defending* him before the institution or others, etc. I am not suggesting here that we be imprudent, but rather, that the intention be to place at the center our interest for the confrere in difficulty, without neglecting others who are affected.

### **A word about prevention**

It is said that "*an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*" Perhaps nowhere is this so true as in this area. Unattended problems in the past, even small ones, can become a wellspring of serious trouble.

Therefore, it is very important to provide the *appropriate help*, whether it be personal or group support, at critical moments in religious life:

- *initial discernment*
- *initial formation*
- *ongoing formation.*

For example, frequently, the most serious difficulties could have been prevented by giving more attention to the process of initial discernment, whereby, with the help of trained professionals, potential problem areas can be detected. Here either formation offers the concrete possibility to deal with difficulties or it is not right or honest to receive the candidate into the religious community.

### **Preliminaries of accompaniment**

A critical question for the process of accompaniment is the will of the person. *If the person with difficulty asks for help*, this simplifies things a lot: certainly the road will not be an easy one, but at least it can be traveled. *On the contrary, if help is not sought*, it will be necessary to assist the confrere to become aware of his need for help. Depending on the case, this will be done in a more or less energetic way, more welcoming and maternal — so to speak — or more decisive and paternal.

In fact, the *one who suffers* because of his situation usually wants to change, for which there is greater possibility of progress. On the contrary, *the one who does not suffer*, is often content as he is: according to him, it is others who must change! It is common to resort to pure lies to deny the problem to the bitter end, especially in certain areas (alcohol abuse, pedophilia, etc.). Particularly in these last instances the pedagogical and/or juridical usefulness of possible

“sanctions” could arise, once the real existence of the difficulty has been demonstrated.

In every case, the superiors responsible must be certain that they:

- do not shut their eyes in the face of concrete problems, nor try to cover them up under a pious veil (or an impious one): in this way the problem grows ever sharper and at times becomes almost irresolvable;
- give the person hope: hope is based on the possibility of appropriate help and finds fertile ground, especially when the person is open to it — and often the person really *wants* to change.

Nevertheless, it continues to hold true that “*if someone does not want...*,” things are anything but easy!

### Lines of spiritual accompaniment

Some might come up with the question: “*Why a spiritual accompaniment?* This person is no longer in initial formation! What is more, it is not right to meddle in the private life of the person.”

It would require more time to respond to these questions, about which much has been written. I will briefly mention a few thoughts.

Saint Basil the Great says that, in respect to the spiritual guide, a person should not “hide from him any secret movement of the soul, nor utter any uncontrolled word.”<sup>2</sup> This is a double principle that, even though it is anything but easy to carry out fully, is, of course, a powerful factor in both spiritual and human growth. In this sense, the spiritual accompaniment can be very helpful both in formation as in the process of recuperation.

In his classic work, *Spiritual Friendship*,<sup>3</sup> Aelred of Rievaulx, writes that to the friend “you confide as to another self, you hide nothing from him and fear nothing from him.” Even if the terminology is a little different (guide - friend)<sup>4</sup>, the substance of the dialogue is very similar.

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in E. ANCILLI, “Direzione spirituale,” in *Dizionario degli Istituti de perfezione*, vol. III, Paoline, Rome, 1973, p. 533.

<sup>3</sup> AELRED OF RIEVAULX, *L'amicizia spirituale*, Paoline, Milan 2004, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> I will not go into the distinction of the terms among “friend” and “father,” or “accompanier” and “guide” or “director,” etc. At the end of this presentation it is sufficient to highlight the importance of having at one’s side a person to whom one can say everything about oneself and who presents to us the truth as it is, without diluting it to make us happy.

It is also said that “a friend is someone to whom you can tell everything about yourself without fear or shame.... One who accepts you, but does not judge you.... One who calls forth the best from within you and is not scandalized by anything.... One who does not trick you and who knows how to call both good and evil by name....” To have at one’s side the spiritual help of such a person is obviously a great gift and an opportunity that should not be squandered.

In the itinerary of spiritual accompaniment, which is logically adapted to the individual person, some themes can be particularly helpful:

- for example, to recall faith in *the love of God*, who is the origin of both the baptismal and religious vocation;
- or carrying out with dedication *the will of God*, as a way of responding to his love and thanking him;
- *brotherly love*, as a concrete response to God’s design;
- and *mutual love*, which is the fulfillment of love;
- or, finally, the love of *Jesus crucified and risen*, “Way” for every journey in God and the concretization of all human love.

These are only a few of many possible themes that, it seems to me however, are fundamental, given their close relationship with some of the general dynamics for human growth.<sup>5</sup> For example, faith in the love of God and in seeking his will — if lived well — can help the processes that lead to consolidating the identity and the authentic fulfillment of the person; while the dimension of love of others and reciprocal charity are important to stimulate getting out of one’s own immature narcissism; final, the paschal dynamic of “losing in order to find again” is at the heart of every spiritual development journey.

It is clear that, especially in difficult situations, the person is called to live these dimensions more as a goal towards which to tend with constancy, than as an attained objective. There are many styles and possible ways of spiritual accompaniment. But, especially in the case of confreres with difficulties, it is particularly important to make witness precede the “word”: above all, living personally that which one wishes to communicate to the other. Consequently, it is necessary, as far as possible, to establish with the other a relationship of profound empathy, made up especially of much listening and “few words.” Much more could be said, given that the literature on

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<sup>5</sup> Cf., C. LUBICH, “Lezione per la laurea Honoris Causa,” in “Lettere” (Psicologia), in *Nuova Umanità*, 122 (1999/2), 177-189 (particularly, 185-188).

spiritual accompaniment is very rich, but here it is impossible to go any further into this subject, even briefly.<sup>6</sup>

One could ask the question: “*Is spiritual accompaniment sufficient to help a confrere in difficulty?*” Experience tells us “No!”, especially in serious cases. Even *theoretical reflection* says no, based on the principle of the law of the incarnation: one cannot, with spirituality and prayer alone, *normally* cure difficulties whose roots are sunk in psychological problems. This then gives rise to the need for psychological help and, in particular, for a *psycho-spiritual integration*. At this point the question arises: to *what kind of psychology and/or psychotherapy* should one turn? *What professional is most suited* to treat difficult cases in consecrated life?

Without wishing to make the undeserved exclusions in the area, it seems to me important to remember that, among others, a fundamental characteristic is that the background of the professional — beyond the type of school or current psychology in which he was formed — must be compatible with a Christian anthropology, with the vision of humanity that Jesus Christ presents us. Two characteristics are essential:

- Openness to transcendence
- Awareness that there are “limits” to the person’s freedom.<sup>7</sup>

This is in conformity with the concept of *Christian personalism*, in that the person is the center of interest and, at the same time, has, as his or her priority, *reference to the God of Jesus Christ*. It is also important to consider the personal experience of the psychotherapist, especially in respect to the following dimensions:

- integration of his own value system,
- acceptance and respect of the Christian values of the person helped,
- human maturity,
- professional competency,
- respect for the person helped.

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<sup>6</sup> A good, clear and comprehensive synthesis in Italian is found in the text of M. COSTA, *Direzione spirituale e discernimento*, Edizioni ADP, Rome 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Cf., *Guadium et Spes*, 10.

## Lines of psychological accompaniment

Psychological accompaniment consists in personal psychotherapy and — eventually — group psychotherapy. This is the very field of the professional; as such, I will go into very few specifics here. There are many techniques and methods of therapy used in different times and life situations that various therapists use with diverse clients.

However, it seems to me, that among others, some fundamental dimensions may be mentioned here:

- The therapy should be *rather demanding*, with regard to the frequency, duration, and kinds of sessions employed: more intense, when the difficulty is more serious. Generally, a few sessions or a few months are not sufficient.
- It is important to distinguish between “*symptom*” and “*gravity*.” A striking symptom does not always indicate a grave situation. And vice versa, symptoms which are apparently light may come from a personality gravely immature.
- Consequently, it would be necessary to attempt, where possible, a profound personality *restructuring* and not be satisfied with settling for the “disappearance of a symptom”; this, in fact, does not exclude, and even often is a prelude to the successive appearance of other types of symptoms.
- In addition the possibility of *interacting with other helping agencies* would be important (see below).

In relation to the therapy in the strict sense, it is important to carefully evaluate some opportunities.

- Of first importance is to evaluate the opportunity of guaranteeing the person residential context. This can be useful for a variety of reasons: the need to leave, for the time being, the institutional environment or to distance oneself from the daily routine, or to avoid some of the occasional “triggers” that cause problems (alcohol, drugs, pedophilia, as well as others).
- The opportunity for the therapist to have a point of reference with superiors, those responsible for the institution, can also be decisive.
  - \* or the *superior* himself
  - \* or his *delegate* (who has his trust and that of the one immediately interested)

- In some cases, it is helpful to have the opportunity to establish a relationship among the therapist and other possible professionals, particularly:
  - \* when there is a *professional responsible for the therapeutic process*, that is, a coordinator of the different types of assistance, who has contact with the person's superiors (at times it is the therapist himself)
  - \* *the one in charge of the residence* (sometimes it is that same professional responsible for the therapeutic process)
  - \* *the group therapist*
  - \* *the spiritual companion*

It is important to clarify, in the "initial contract" with the interested person, that all communication with the therapist and the other professionals, always marked by a simple essentialness, is *preceded by his consent and should take place with respect to the various types of "secret" to which the different professionals are held* (confessional, professional, etc.). It is also important to try to come to consensus, as far as possible, with the confrere.

### Observations about the residence

A variety of residential institutions exist to treat priests and religious in difficulties:

- Ranging from the very "*programmed*" models, where each hour of the day is structured with an activity (the prestigious *St. Luke Institute* in Maryland, USA), to the more "*freely*" structured (*Oasi Perfetta Letizia* in Cotignola, near Bologna, Italy).
- Ranging from the more "*closed*," where practically all of life is lived in the residence (the *Venturini Fathers* in Trent, Italy), to the more "*open*" (*Comunità Agape* in Rome, Italy), where space is also given for "*external activities*."
- Whenever possible, and based on the concrete circumstances of the situation, one seeks a type of residence in which the interested person has *the best opportunities to mature*: for this a prior "*diagnosis*" is needed with a successive "*plan of intervention*."
- Also of notable importance is the question of financial costs. For example, the services offered at *St. Luke Institute* are very expensive, whereas other communities base their fees, for the most part, on a voluntary qualification and may reduce their costs almost completely (e.g., in the *Comunità Agape*).

### The role of superiors (or their delegates)

Another very important dimension of help is carried out by superiors directly and/or through other confreres, delegated by them. Their role is to take both an *active and discreet interest*.

Things that a superior (or delegate) should **not** do:

- consider the confrere to be a “*parcel post package*,” who is “dropped off” with the experts or at the recovery center, without showing any further interest in him.
- turn over, in a similar manner, the “*problem to be resolved*” by the experts.
- show, on the contrary, an inappropriate, over-involved interest in the confrere with excessive “*intrusion*” during the process of therapy.
- seek a “*quick fix*,” possibly in a short amount of time.

The person in difficulty needs, on the contrary, a *discreet reference*, who is *sincerely interested* in his situation, who is *available to dialogue* with him and, where possible and necessary, with the other “re-educating” agents:

- the professional responsible for the process,
- the person responsible at the residential institute,
- the individual and/or group therapist,
- the spiritual companion.

### The relationship among the “agents”: the TEAM

This is an *especially delicate area*: with regard to *privacy*, to professional or sacramental secrecy, etc. From the beginning, there should be a clear distinction made regarding issues that are in the “internal” and “external” forum. Nevertheless, especially in the most serious cases, coordination among the various health professionals is necessary, so that they work together as a **team**. The modalities of therapy are diverse according to the kinds of rehabilitation centers.

Collaboration among the following persons is useful (it goes without saying that all these “formative figures” are not always present and/or necessary).

- *Professional responsible for the process – psychotherapist – reference person in the residential community*: working together to formulate a process to follow, varying for the individual cases.
- *Professional responsible for the process – reference person of the religious Institute* (superior or his delegate): the communication can concern the plan and the evaluation

of the rehab process; the necessary steps to take, the stages to follow, if it will be helpful to change the atmosphere, etc.

- Occasionally, *psychotherapist – reference person of the religious Institute*: can dialogue especially on “how to manage” the situation, even from the point of view of the responsibilities connected to religious obedience (a type of religious community may not be suited for a given person); or to complete the information that the interested person provides to the psychotherapist (often the person “filters” and refers to the professional only that which suits him and is more or less acceptable, as frequently happens in the cases of pedophilia, etc.).
- *Psychotherapist – spiritual companion*: it is helpful to have a dialogue so as not to “row the boat in opposite directions;” but to sustain one another in the respective journeys; in fact, some people with problems have an extraordinary ability to “put people at odds with each other,” so that, if one is not attentive, the opinions of the therapist and the spiritual companion (or other helping professionals) can diverge even to the point of opposing one another.
- *Professional responsible for the process – spiritual companion*: (see above) to agree on the necessary steps to recuperation.
- Eventually *spiritual companion – reference person of the religious Institute*: in general this is less necessary.

Even if it is not necessary to consult frequently among the different members of this team, *the plan* is agreed upon together: the *pivot* around which the other formative figures turn is normally the one responsible for the rehabilitation process. Times of common meetings are helpful, especially in *key moments*: for example, at the time of insertion into the residential community, or during particular “turning points” on the journey, or during reinsertion into activity or in the community of origin, etc.

### **An example: the “Agape” community**

I would like now to present, in summary form, an example of a welcome center for priests and religious in difficulty, which functions here in Rome, and in which I have worked for a number of years. *The “Agape” community* aims, in addition to what was expressed previously, to build a *self-help* community among the people who are welcomed. Thus, the individuals are responsible to help each other and become a cooperator in the maturation process of the other.

In this way, the person is encouraged to *act as an adult*: even though he/she has difficulties to face — and certainly these are taken into account — each person is called to join forces in order to support the journey of the entire community.

Now I would like to propose *a few areas of attention regarding the residential community*, which are basically typical of all communities, but which become even more important in a self-help community. I will not treat every single aspect here — other meetings would be necessary — but present only a list of things to keep in mind:

- *The relationships within* the residential community:
  - \* among equals, that is the guests in residence,
  - \* with those responsible for the institution
- *Outside relationships* — through the apostolate or other — to manage the process of recuperation: here it is necessary to be careful about the temptation to avoid facing the true problems or even the “acting out,” that is, for example, relapses.
- *Spirituality and prayer life* — personal and community — continue to be an important dimension that the person is called to develop in conformity with personal growth.
- *Health in general*: to take care of the rhythms and hygiene of life, physical exercise, bodily health, etc.
- *Attention given to vital atmosphere*, which expresses itself:
  - \* in the mutual welcoming among the persons,
  - \* in concrete, even manual, work
- *Study*: dedication to study, especially in a few areas, can cooperate in the therapeutic work; paying attention, however, to some risks (see “outside relationships”).
- *Outside communication*, for example, with family members, friends and acquaintances are managed in a different way in each case. In any case, they are reduced, so as not to avoid the work on oneself. Whatever helps this work is good; the rest is postponed (like what is lived in contexts like the “novitiate,” or the so-called “rites of passage,” etc.).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to say that what has been said is little and there is much more to be said. For example, we need to reflect about the enormous change in sensitivity in various parts of the world on the way of living with this problem. In particular, *attention* must be paid to *some extremes* due to the culture, for example:

- in some contexts, a person's problem is considered as a *strictly "private" fact*, in which one should not intervene too much; but in reality, at least the Congregation and also the Church must be involved;
- in other contexts, on the contrary, a "rough" intrusion is made in the life of the person, which does not respect his dignity, his difficulties, and his patterns of growth.

*Or again*, we know that in the *relationships with authority*, which have a large share in the management of the difficulties of the confreres, the *"father" figure* is very important. It would then be helpful to ask oneself:

- what model of "father" has the person had *in his own family*? Frequently the problems originate in the family, where relational models among the people are unclear: for example, either too rigid or excessively confused, or inexistent, etc.
- what model of "father" exists *in the religious family* or in its local communities? Does this perpetuate the difficulties of the person or help him to overcome them?
- what model and *conception exist of religious obedience*? Does it promote healthy energies in the person and help him to keep under control his immature tendencies? Or does it not help in this?

We return then to the question posed at the beginning: Is the confrere in difficulty *problem or provocation? Trouble or stimulus to change? Condemnation or grace?* Aside from metaphor: Is it possible that the difficulty of the confrere is, at least in part, *the symptom of a community difficulty*, which reveals, for example, an underlying *problem in the community structure*?

To deal with these questions in an adequate way it is now necessary to turn to a *systematic approach*, which not only concentrates on the individual persons and their problems, but also on the kinds of relationships that exist among the persons and in the community structure in general.

Then the difficulty of a member will be useful, because it will make emerge the *possibility of new questions for the structure*. Without this bringing about *undeserved guilt feelings*, it can nevertheless be a *positive stimulus for improving* the structure.

Along these lines, for example, the Magisterium has made repeated interventions about growth in a deeper and generous assimilation of a **"spirituality of communion"**<sup>8</sup> at every level of the

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43-45.

ecclesial fabric: "To think of our brothers and sisters... as 'those who are a part of me.' This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship... to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God... to 'make room' for our brothers and sisters, bearing 'each other's burdens' and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy."

Is not all this a journey on which our ecclesial institutions still have far to go? Can the difficulties of certain confreres not be seen as a demanding call toward the realization of such ideals? In many situations, if the needs of others had been addressed in a timely fashion, even as a usual way of acting on the journey of religious life, perhaps they would not have ended up experiencing some difficulties. Why, then, not take up decisively a new effort in this direction?

(THOMAS J. STEHLIK, C.M., translator)

# Impact of Difficult Behavior on the Province, on the Local Communities and on the Missionaries

Reflections of the Visitor of the Midwest Province USA

by James E. Swift, C.M.

## Introduction

Thank you for allowing me to share a few reflections on how dealing with difficult confreres impacts others, especially the confreres of the province and the Visitor himself.

There are so many considerations when dealing with difficult confreres, including civil and canonical considerations. Sometimes we forget that the rest of the province — especially the local house — is also affected, and, of course, it is most easy to forget the impact such cases have on the Visitor of the province.

I hope that these reflections, which arise solely from my own experiences as Visitor, will be of help and support to you.

My reflections are divided into two parts: Part one: how dealing with difficult confreres impacts the rest of the province, especially the local house; and Part Two: how dealing with difficult confreres impacts the Visitor.

## **Part One:**

### **The impact of such cases on the province as a whole and on the local house in particular**

In just the last four and a half years, the confreres of the Midwest Province have become aware of the following misconduct cases: a case in which a confrere embezzled money from a parish and was publicly reprimanded and assigned to make restitution; a case in which a lay advisor to the province misappropriated province funds leading to his prosecution in civil court; a case in which a confrere posted contact information on a public homosexual internet site; a case in which a confrere forged ecclesiastical documents; about a dozen cases of various confreres, either deceased or gone

from the Congregation, being accused of sexual abuse of minors; five cases of sexual abuse of minors in which the confreres are still living with us and have been removed from public ministry and placed on strict supervision plans within certain houses of the province; and, finally, a confrere found guilty in federal court of possession of internet child pornography and now serving a seven-year sentence in federal prison.

Let me mention three challenges — and there are many more — which these public cases have had on the rest of the province.

**(1) First is the challenge of learning to be public and appropriately transparent about these cases**

This has been a dramatic shift from an approach where secrecy and confidentiality were the hallmarks of these cases known only to the Visitor and his council to an approach where the province is appropriately informed of the cases. In many instances, because of litigation, the names of confreres have become public through agencies outside the province. In some cases where the offense is public and restitution needs also to be public, I have revealed the names in order to avoid the idle gossip, which would result from a confrere suddenly leaving an apostolate or house. Of course, doing so involves a delicate balance in canon law always respecting the right of the confrere to his good name.

This dramatic shift challenged the province to answer the questions: “Can we as a ‘family’ learn to talk openly and appropriately about ‘family’ problems? Can we do so, keeping the conversation within just the Community and not sharing it also with externs, friends or those to whom we minister? Can we learn to speak the truth but always in charity?”

Since confreres cannot always do this without help and since this was a new experience for many in Community, I found it helpful to visit all the regions and houses in person, to spend time explaining why we had to learn a new way — a more public and transparent way — of dealing with these cases. In my words and actions, I tried to mirror how to speak respectfully, yet openly, about these cases, and I worked with the local superiors to help them learn to do the same.

Over the years, the results have been positive and humbling. I especially am struck by the lack of idle gossip among the confreres and how sharing this new information has not demoralized the confreres of the province. There have been difficult moments in learning this new way of communicating, but overall the province seems to appreciate this approach of appropriate and charitable disclosure and transparency.

**(2) Second is the challenge of living with and even supervising confreres removed from ministry**

It is one thing to know that a confrere is accused or guilty of serious misconduct, especially sexual abuse of a minor. It is another thing to live in the same house with this confrere.

As I already mentioned, in most cases of sexual abuse of minors, the offending confrere is dead or has left the ministry and Community. But there were five such confreres still among us who had to be removed from ministry and placed under a strict supervision plan (called a “safety plan”). A house of the province had to be identified as the place where these men would be assigned to live. A special superior capable of supervising had to be appointed. A team of supervisors to assist him had to be assigned and trained. The restrictions on these guilty confreres were not just removal from ministry but also restrictions on their comings and goings, their needing to sign in and sign out and get permission to leave the property, their not being allowed to have access to the internet without supervision, in some cases restriction of telephone access, no family visits or vacations without a supervising confrere present, and more. Finding confreres willing to do and capable of doing this kind of supervision is not easy.

Meanwhile, there was the issue of how to live common life, day-in and day-out, with these confreres when the rest of the house knew why they had been removed from ministry and were being asked to assist the supervisors by keeping an eye on them. The challenge facing our house of supervision was whether it is possible to live in any kind of ordinary fashion with such confreres under such circumstances.

Again, I am happy to report that over time the confreres under supervision and the rest of the house confreres have been able to find some “normalcy” in common life, especially through prayers together, including daily Mass, through common recreation, and through shared meals.

In particular, I want to mention the most helpful role of the senior members of the house. The senior confreres have led the way in reaching out to the confreres under supervision and keeping them integrated in the common life of the house.

**(3) Third is the challenge of using these sad occasions to review our own lives**

Each misconduct case also challenges all the members of the province to examine our own lives and our fidelity to our Vincentian vocation and our vows. When a confrere embezzles money, each of us needs to reflect on our use of temporal goods and our simplicity of

lifestyle. When a confrere is guilty of sexual misconduct, each of us needs to reflect on our integrity in living chastity. When a confrere forges documents in order to obtain some special favors, each of us needs to reflect on the role of obedience in our lives.

One of the most difficult cases in the Midwest Province has been that of the confrere who has been sent to prison for possessing child pornography on the internet. I have encouraged each of us in the province to look at our own use of the internet which is both a blessing and a potential curse. For all the good it can do and the helpful services it can provide, it also can become a means for illicit, sinful, and even illegal activity. It can become addictive and a substitute for living in the real world.

Unfortunately, pornography is readily available through the internet. Using such for our sexual arousal and gratification — regardless of our orientation — is gravely sinful, a violation of our promise of celibate chastity. Using such in any way and for any purpose contributes to the growing pornography industry in the USA, an industry which, in no small measure, is at the heart of the continuing destruction of our moral fibre as a country.

We cannot let misconduct cases be just about “the confreres in trouble.” Each case made public calls us to examine our own lives as men of the Gospel.

## **Part Two:**

### **The impact of such cases on the Visitor**

Thankfully, many misconduct cases should not and do not become public. They remain cases which the Visitor with his council must address privately. Doing so can have a significant impact on the Visitor. Again, let me highlight three challenges.

#### **(1) First is the challenge of accepting that this really is part of the ministry of being Visitor**

In the early months and even years of addressing misconduct cases, I tended to think of the time and energy spent on these cases as a distraction from what I considered to be my “real work” as Visitor. Eventually and with the assistance of other provincial superiors in the same situation, I came to understand and accept that dealing with these cases is very much part of my job as Visitor.

In fact, it is a central part of my ministry as Visitor. By dealing with these cases directly and investing so much time and energy in them, I allow the rest of the confreres of the province to stay focused on the mission. Hopefully I can help bring some measure of healing

to those whom we have injured and restore justice where it has been violated. And perhaps I can assist the confreres who are guilty to re-examine their lives and make amends.

The temptation to downplay and underestimate these cases and not to give them the time and energy they demand is a powerful temptation. Accepting that dealing with these cases is part of my ministry has helped me persist in addressing these cases.

## **(2) Second is the challenge of how to deal with confreres who are accused or guilty**

For me personally, this is the most difficult challenge, that is, relating to the confrere himself. It is difficult since so much of my understanding of the role of Visitor is connected to animating and supporting confreres, and doing this is very challenging when dealing with confreres guilty or accused of serious misconduct.

When the misconduct is internal to the Community and does not involve civil law, I find it easier — I say easier, not easy — to admonish and reprimand a confrere. I do so not in order to be punishing, but in order to call the confrere to repentance and change.

When the misconduct involves civil legal processes or canonical investigations, as in cases of alleged sexual misconduct of minors, my role as Visitor is very, very difficult. How can I balance my desire to be pastoral and caring for the confrere with my obligation to make sure justice is served? How can I listen to the confrere's story and remain neutral, realizing that he may or may not be telling me the truth, that he may not be guilty as he claims or that he may be very guilty?

During the time of investigating the allegation, the Visitor can appear or seem to be uncaring or emotionless as he strives to remain neutral. And if, thankfully, the allegation proves false, it can be very difficult to reconnect with the confrere who may harbor bad feelings towards the Visitor for pursuing the investigation and not just believing the confrere when he claimed innocence.

It is no easier when the confrere is found guilty. Then the Visitor must impose sanctions, perhaps seek dismissal from the Community or ministry, and probably place the confrere on a safety plan of strict supervision. Again, the relationship between the Visitor and his confrere is likely to be strained and may even be hostile.

I have found no easy formulas for dealing with accused or guilty confreres. One action I always take is to appoint another confrere — perhaps the superior of the confrere in trouble or a confrere friend of his — to represent me pastorally. At least this way, the confrere in trouble can still feel connected to the province and even to me as

Visitor. Asking someone else to do what I feel is the proper role of the Visitor is not easy and certainly not ideal, but often it is the only answer and the only way to care for the confrere in trouble.

### **(3) Third is the personal challenge to the Visitor**

Dealing with difficult confreres is draining on the Visitor, and the more serious the misconduct by the confrere the more draining it can be for the Visitor. When cases are multiplied in number and intensity, the Visitor can experience serious challenges to his own spiritual, mental and physical health and to his ability to fulfill the other obligations of his office.

Spiritually, I have found myself losing perspective and becoming disillusioned with the priesthood and with our Vincentian vocation. I have found myself asking, "Is everything up for grabs? Do the vows mean nothing?" In working through canonical processes, I sometimes have become very frustrated with Church bureaucracy and asked myself, "Is this really the way Christ wants his Church to function?" Mentally I have had to fight off depression, while physically I often have found myself too tired to exercise or eat wisely.

My ability to lead the province has suffered. I sometimes forget how much good is being done by the majority of confreres. I forget that I am called to address misconduct so that the rest of the province can be free to do this good. Caught up in the endless details of civil and canon law, I forget that the rest of the province needs me to call them to the mission and to inspire and animate them.

After four and half years of all this, I do not claim to have found the formula for how best to deal with this challenge. But I have learned the hard way a number of important lessons. Most important among them is to let others support me, and I am richly blessed with and surrounded by wonderful people who can and do support me. My Assistant Provincial has walked this journey with me; like Simon of Cyrene, he has not hesitated to help carry this cross. Certain superiors of the province, especially the superior charged with supervising confreres removed from ministry, have been great helps. My spiritual director and a therapist with whom I share what is happening and how I am feeling have kept me going. Last, but not least, I have found my fellow Visitors in the National Conference of Visitors to be the only ones who really understand what is happening and how I am feeling. We have formed an informal but very important support group. Talking over the phone with them and gathering together a few times a year, when we each share from the heart, have been a source of strength and hope.

### **Conclusion**

I have mentioned six challenges: the challenge of learning to be public and appropriately transparent about these cases, the challenge of living with and even supervising confreres removed from ministry, the challenge of using these sad occasions to review our own lives, the challenge of accepting that this really is part of the ministry of being Visitor, the challenge of how to deal with confreres who are accused or guilty, and the personal challenge to the Visitor. Sadly, many more challenges could be named.

Fortunately, there are many graces for helping us address these challenges. The helps include professional insights and skills such as we are addressing at this workshop. The helps also include the many confreres and other people willing to support us professionally and personally. And most grace-filled of all is our faith by which we come to place these difficult situations within the Paschal Mystery trusting in God even in the darkest hours.

I hope that my sharing some of what I have experienced in the Midwest Province and how it impacts the rest of the province and me will be of some assistance and support to you. Thank you.

# Brothers in Difficulty in Saint Vincent's Time

by Vicente de Dios Toribio, C.M.

*Province of Mexico*

*The History of the Congregation of the Mission*<sup>1</sup> tells us that, during Saint Vincent's lifetime, there were 614 aspirants, of which 425 were clerics and 189 coadjutor brothers. However, the total number of active members must never have passed 250. There is a notable difference between 614 and 250: 364.

Why did so many fall by the wayside? We are also informed that:

- some never finished their time of formation
- many others left after some years of study or work
- others through death — life was short in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and some ministries dangerous.<sup>2</sup>

While writing this article on *brothers in difficulty in the time of Saint Vincent* we will refer to priests in difficulty, but above all to the aspirants, those in formation.

In the beginning, as is natural, the formation of the aspirants lacked proper structures. The first missionaries came from the diocesan priesthood for the most part and not all with the idea of joining a new congregation, but rather associating themselves with Saint Vincent for the work of missions and retreats for the ordinands. Little by little the number of aspirants attracted by the aura of the new institute increased.

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<sup>1</sup> *Historia de la Congregación*, CEME 1992; LUIGI MEZZADRI - JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *Histoire de la Congrégation de la Mission*, Desclée de Brouver, Paris, 1994. José María Román supplies these numbers. They are slightly different from those that Luigi Mezzadri provides (426 priests for 196 coadjutor brothers), cf., pp. 34 and 88 in the Spanish edition and p. 65 in the French version.

<sup>2</sup> LUIGI MEZZADRI - JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *Histoire de la Congrégation de la Mission*, Desclée de Brouver, Paris, 1994, p. 65.

For this reason, in 1637, the novitiate was inaugurated, called the Internal Seminary by Saint Vincent to avoid any flavor of a religious order. Before the Internal Seminary, for ten or 12 years, Saint Vincent himself was the *formator* by means of direct personal contact, his conversations, conferences and repetitions of prayer and his letters. We can find here the origins of so many extraordinary missionaries, who carried out magnificently the work of the saint. As first director of the Internal Seminary he named Jean de la Salle, one of the original members, whom he sent to prepare himself at the Jesuit novitiate and who, unfortunately, could only have been in charge of the seminary for scarcely a year, since he died in 1639. Other equally valuable directors followed him, but Saint Vincent always kept a close eye on the seminary.<sup>3</sup> Later he would write to Father Guillaume Delville: *The two years of testing are not to see if they have the required dispositions, since it is necessary to have recognized them before this, but rather to strengthen them in these dispositions and so that on this foundation they can construct the building of the virtues, which constitute a good missionary.*<sup>4</sup>

Something that strikes everyone as strange is Saint Vincent's allergy to the theme of vocational promotion. In the beginning his opposition to any type of recruitment was absolute. The only means for attracting vocations, according to him, were prayer and good example. *We have as our maxim not to urge anyone to embrace our state. It belongs to God to choose those whom he wishes to call and we are certain that a missionary given by his paternal hand will by himself do more than many others who do not have a pure vocation. Our part is to pray that he send good workers to the harvest and to live so well that by our example we give more enticement than obstacles so they might work with us.*<sup>5</sup>

Later his opposition softened quite a bit. In a letter to Father Blatiron, superior of Genoa, the saint explains these two moments: *I give thanks to God for the acts of extraordinary devotion that you do to ask God, through the intercession of Saint Joseph, for the propagation of the Company. I have spent more than 20 years without daring to ask this of God, believing that, since the Congregation was his work, the care for its preservation and growth should be left to his providence. But, being forced to think about the recommendation he gives us in the gospels to ask that he send workers to the harvest, has convinced me of the importance and usefulness of these acts of devotion.*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *Saint Vincent de Paul-Biographie*, Editions Alzani, Paris, 2004, pp. 325-358.

<sup>4</sup> SV VI, 155.

<sup>5</sup> SV VIII, 287.

<sup>6</sup> SV V, 462.

We remember that phrase of the saint in a letter to Father Portail: *The number of those who have joined us since your departure is six. How I fear, sir, large numbers and vocational promotion. And how many reasons do we have to praise God because he allows us to honor the small number of his Son's disciples.*<sup>7</sup> Man of faith that he was, if the number had been 60 or 600, he would also have found reasons for praising God. And perhaps with even more joy.

Few or many, he never doubted, and affirmed many times, that the Congregation had to be purged of its useless and harmful members. *Purge* is the verb he uses almost always, a verb undoubtedly adequate in that time in which, for any sickness, purgation was used. Examples? There are some to choose from: concerning the incorrigible and unruly: *You tell me that we have to put up with these people at the beginning, while the Company needs men, and that in a little while the Company can be purged of them. It's true, Father, that the Company needs men, but it's better to have few than many of these unruly men and of those of that kind. Ten good men will do more good for God than a hundred of these people.*<sup>8</sup> Later it seems that the saint softened his opinion: *It would be an injustice to the Company to stop cutting off its gangrenous members. But, since we have to have all of the virtues, let us exercise patience, long-suffering and even charity with the desire that they change.... Only at the end do we finally expel them, when there's no other remedy.*<sup>9</sup> Remember the saint's comment to a bishop in whose presence a community was praised for never expelling anyone: *Poor community! You don't tend to perfection since people of every type are good enough for you. Saint Vincent adds: Not all of the trees that are planted are lush; nor do all of the seeds planted by the sower sprout. The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a net which is thrown into the sea and catches good fish and bad fish. The fisherman keeps the good ones and throws the others back into the sea.*<sup>10</sup>

At that time there was no Canon Law which governed the process for the expulsion of a member. Not even the bull *Salvatoris Nostri* did so: *The government established in the pontifical approval is a government very centered on the person of the Superior General. He has full authority over discipline and direction over the local superiors, houses, persons, goods, etc. His authority is only limited with regard to the apostolate. He becomes the source of the internal law. He can give any norm he considers opportune, change it or modify it. The obvious*

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<sup>7</sup> SV I, 311.

<sup>8</sup> SV II, 380.

<sup>9</sup> SV IV, 36.

<sup>10</sup> SV VI, 69.

*precautions exist. That means that they not contradict the sacred canons, decrees of Trent or pontifical decisions.*<sup>11</sup>

Since things were that way, we should not be surprised that when the time came to purge the community of a member or two, the word of the Superior General was enough. It was presumed, clearly, and in Saint Vincent's case it is evident, that the Superior General was not going to act capriciously and without having dialogued with the interested person, or at least with his superior and companions. Since we are going to talk about particular cases, which were not few in number, it might occur to us that the Congregation of the Mission was a body which needed abundant purges. That was not the case. The *brothers in difficulties* who were expelled were few, almost the exception, compared with the number of missionaries fully integrated into the community, favorably disposed to work and suffer sickness and even martyrdom when necessary. It is interesting that, many times, when Saint Vincent told about the expulsion of a member, he continued with the details of the good state of the Company and of its seminarians and students. For example, in Saint Lazare *we are all well, thanks be to God. Some of our people are giving missions in different dioceses and the others are preparing for ordination. Our seminary is well populated. Father Berthe is the director. We also have a good number of students, some of whom study theology with Father Watebled and the others philosophy with Father Eveillard. The College of Bons-Enfants, under Father Dehorgny, is also full and the Seminary of Saint Charles is growing with the help of Father Talec.*<sup>12</sup>

Let us look briefly at some particular cases.

Four: *I have asked Father Lambert to expel Fathers Perceval, Le Noir, du Chastel and Le Roy. We have also purged again and again our seminary. Thirty, who behave very well, have remained, thanks be to God.* This expulsion of four missionaries is unsettling, but, judging by the short biographical notes at the bottom of letter 768, they must have been in the Internal Seminary, at least the last three, and did not meet the requirements of the saint.<sup>13</sup>

Three or More: Sometimes they were not expelled, but left on their own. *Father Louistre and Father Fourdim have left the Company, also Father Lescuyer and the other cleric, as well as two or three others who we have expelled.... You can imagine the pain I feel, not so much for the departure of each one, as for the victory which nature has*

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<sup>11</sup> PÉREZ FLORES MIGUEL, *Historia del Derecho de la Congregación de la Misión*, CEME, 2005, p. 121; cf., LUIGI MEZZADRI - JOSÉ MARIA ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>12</sup> SV VI, 138.

<sup>13</sup> SV II, 489.

obtained in these souls because there was no way to renew the devotion of their spirit.<sup>14</sup> It is very interesting that the saint continues by writing as an expression of his attitude and feelings: *I spent a half hour at the feet of one them trying to convince him without achieving anything.*

Two: Father Fondimare and Brother Doutrelet also left. *We have to imitate the acceptance of God's will that we find in our Lord, upon seeing himself abandoned by the divine company of his Father... and that according to his will, he conducts everything for his glory and the good of the persons involved. So, then, we have to view these departures as a blessing for the Company and perhaps for them as well.*<sup>15</sup>

One by One. There are many cases: some with difficulties that they could not overcome, others with problems which they were able to conquer. Among the former were the Deacon Duhamel,<sup>16</sup> Philippe Vageot,<sup>17</sup> the Polish confrere Zelazewski,<sup>18</sup> Father Liebe,<sup>19</sup> etc. Included in the latter group were the cleric Jean de Fricourt,<sup>20</sup> Father Jacques de la Fosse,<sup>21</sup> Father Jacques Tholard,<sup>22</sup> Father Etienne Bienvenu,<sup>23</sup> a missionary,<sup>24</sup> etc. It is admirable how Saint Vincent continues to encourage all of them, putting his heart and soul in every line he writes to them. Reading these letters can be encouraging for everyone, those of the past, the present and those to come.

Sometimes it can be a little shocking to see the apparent double standard with which each case is handled: some with honey and others with vinegar. We cannot always guess why, but without a doubt the saint was aware of his own reasons. What he tells Father Rivet about his superior Father Vageot who *left without saying good-bye* is terrible: *I don't recognize him as a superior, or even a missionary!* (Letter 1913). To a confrere who left and asked him for a parish, he gave the appointment to another, reasoning that if he had left to do good he could have done the same in the Congregation (letter 1922). To another who, to be readmitted, said that he had saved his life (we do not know how), the saint wrote this sentence:

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<sup>14</sup> SV II, 287.

<sup>15</sup> SV III, 378.

<sup>16</sup> SV I, 608.

<sup>17</sup> SV V, 419.

<sup>18</sup> SV V, 104.

<sup>19</sup> SV VII, 368.

<sup>20</sup> SV VIII, 111.

<sup>21</sup> SV VII, 292.

<sup>22</sup> SV VII, 293.

<sup>23</sup> SV VII, 315; VII, 372.

<sup>24</sup> SV V, 255-256.

*Come, Father, we will receive you with open arms* (Letter 2004). Letter 2920 is another example: *Let Father Caron leave, but not the young man, Chiavari, who complains about his head and stomach... nor Brother Minveille* (a long letter, worth reading).

What Saint Vincent could never tolerate was duplicity, yes and no at the same time, as he wrote to Father Almeras about the young cleric, Michel Doutrelet, in Rome, who went back and forth between staying and leaving: *If his conversion is genuine and so intense that it includes the desire to die in his vocation and to live it according to our rules with a total submission to the superiors and an indifference about places and appointments and finally with a desire to strive untiringly to acquire virtue, if after all that it seems to you that he has the necessary firmness, then I give permission to keep him or that you try him for a time. If he decides to leave, I have nothing against it in God's name; but if he continues to go back and forth between the two extremes, playing with God and the Company, being inside with only one foot, trying to do one thing and not the other.... I think we should not wait any longer and you should kindly ask him to leave....*<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, despite other appearances, Saint Vincent was very understanding of differences in community. *A house cannot always be without faults, but as long as there are no complaints or scandals, you have to decide to support each other, doing all you can, however, to lessen the quantity and degree of these defects. After a conversion, as complete as it might be, there always remain some imperfections in the works of sinners, as happened to the apostles of Jesus Christ, who, nevertheless, had many things worthy of criticism. I see no other remedy for the general faults, which, by the grace of God, are not too big, than public or private warnings, together with prayer and patience.*<sup>26</sup>

Let us enter more directly into what we call initial formation. Theoretically Saint Vincent seems to us to exaggerate when he writes about the qualities that an aspirant to the seminary should have. But as with all true love, the saint took care to be demanding and understanding. As a sign of the former, he tells Father Dupont not to send postulants without testing them himself first: *During this testing you should indicate to us his name, age, condition, studies, if he has parents, if they are poor or well off, if he has a degree or means to achieve one, if he has lived virtuously before or led a disordered life, what reasons does he have for leaving the world and becoming a missionary, if he has common sense, if he has a healthy body, if he speaks correctly, if he looks well, finally if he is disposed to do everything and suffer anything, to go to any place for the service of God*

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<sup>25</sup> SV III, 515.

<sup>26</sup> SV VIII, 331.

*as holy obedience might indicate. You have to ask about everything.*<sup>27</sup> There are many other letters like this one with the same demands, beginning with the one about the aspirants coming with a desire for martyrdom.

Sometimes he relaxed his hand and the pen: *Nevertheless it is enough that they have good health, a convenient spirit and good intention, although nothing extraordinary, nor much talent for preaching. We have so many things to do that, thanks be to God, no one who wishes to work with us can remain idle; on the contrary, simple workers and the most common ones are ordinarily the most suitable for us and the most useful for the poor people.... If the missionaries are really humble, obedient, mortified, zealous and full of confidence in God, his divine goodness will be served by them in every place and will supply the qualities they lack.*<sup>28</sup>

And perhaps with the same demands and understanding Saint Vincent was more concerned about the formators than those in formation, although, naturally, for the sake of the latter. To a seminary superior he wrote: *Educate them in the true spirit of their condition, which consists especially in the interior life and the practice of prayer and the virtues, because it is not enough to teach them singing, the ceremonies and a little moral theology, the primary thing is to form them in prayer and solid piety. Therefore we have to be the first ones to be filled with this. We have to be reservoirs of virtue so that we can pour out our water without exhausting our supply, possessing that spirit which we wish to share with others, since no one can give what he does not have. The biggest obstacle would be to want to act as the lords of those in our charge, disedifying and not taking care of them. This is what would happen if we wanted to treat ourselves well, look good, seek distinctions and honors, enjoy ourselves, be lazy and spend time with outsiders. We have to be firm without being hard in our actions and avoid a weak meekness which does not help anyone.*<sup>29</sup>

A few loose notes: Practice for young people: *We have been at fault for not making the young people practice, so that the older members have been worn out and the younger ones have been formed too late. So then, Father Blatiron, begin to act this way: make the young ones practice all of our functions. I am doing that, for example, with the ordinands.*<sup>30</sup>

Vacationers: *As soon as you give one freedom, they will ask for another. You can see that, having given two weeks of*

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<sup>27</sup> SV VII, 102.

<sup>28</sup> SV VII, 237.

<sup>29</sup> SV IV, 597.

<sup>30</sup> SV IV, 114.

*vacation to your students, now some want to go to Our Lady of Savone; and next year they will want to go to Milan or some place else. This will become a custom and from one abuse they will pass to another and, finally, to disorder.*<sup>31</sup>

For those who want to know what Saint Vincent said to a bad formator, see VI, 385-388, letter 2330.

For those who want to know how Saint Vincent received those who repent with a good heart, see VII, 28-29, letter 2496.

For those who want to know what Saint Vincent wrote when he was annoyed, see V, 314-315, letter 1841.

For those who want to know about Saint Vincent's manner when he speaks about our bad moments, see V, 211, letter 1791.

In conclusion and in summary: Saint Vincent, naturally, was concerned about the number of members in his community, but not at any price. When only six entered he said blessed be God, etc. But, at other times, he laments the fact that he cannot attend to everything: *The Lord presents us with many occasions to render our services in places we have not worked in until now. But, we lack personnel and God lets us know in this way of our need to ask him to send laborers to his vineyard.*<sup>32</sup>

He demands all kinds of good dispositions in the candidates. Physical and intellectual dispositions, however, are not what he most appreciated, but rather the values of an integrated personality and a firm decision.

He was a great spiritual director; his reasons were distilled from his lively faith and what he wrote moved and strengthened, although not everyone allowed themselves to be convinced or strengthened.

Humanly speaking, Saint Vincent seems to know everything, as much about communities as about individuals. He is intuitive and insightful. He easily discerns truths from lies and surely for that reason his treatment is not the same for everyone. At a distance of three and a half centuries we know very well that not everything can be imitated or even adapted, but there always remains a spirit and conduct that has to be taken into account: *We do not believe a man because he is wise, but rather because we judge him to be good and we appreciate him.... Whatever we do, no one will believe us if we do not show love and compassion to those we want to believe in us. If you labor in this way, God will bless your works. If not, you will make a lot of noise and fanfare, but produce little fruit.*<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> SV VIII, 106.

<sup>32</sup> SV VII, 550.

<sup>33</sup> SV I, 295.

There are provinces in the Congregation which have the courage to keep the names in the personnel catalogue of priests, deacons and brothers in special situations, that means, outside the province, some for 20 years. There they are. The ecclesiastical hierarchy wants them to be treated with much caution. What would Saint Vincent do? I suppose he would not put up with it. In principle he would have to adjust to the present norms for the cases, but he would erase from the catalogue those whose status no one is interested in justifying, with more reason than those who disappear from the catalogue after having died faithfully in the bosom of the Congregation.

(JOHN P. PRAGER, C.M., translator)

# Cases

by Michael P. Joyce, C.M.

## 1. *Incardination*

The vicar for clergy calls you from a diocese within another province of the Congregation of the Mission. He does not know how to work with Societies of Apostolic Life. Apparently, the priest petitioned the Visitor for a year's leave of absence in order that he might be received into the diocese on an *experimentum* basis. The year's leave of absence is nearly expired and the vicar is hesitant to recommend the priest to the diocesan bishop for incardination since he does not know the priest very well.

- **The vicar asks you how to proceed with the priest, since the priest has sought an appointment and wants to remain in the diocese.**
- **The vicar for clergy also asks you what his obligations are to the Visitor of the priest in question.**

## 2. *Illegitimate Absence*

A newly-elected Visitor reviews the personnel files to discover that a member has been illegitimately absent for six years. Apparently, he requested a leave of absence for two years to "sort things out" but never returned to the Congregation. There is no further communication in the file from the member or from the previous Visitor.

- **Is the leave of absence a valid action?**
- **What canonical options does the Visitor have available to him?**
- **What pastoral approaches might the Visitor take toward the absent member?**

## 3. *Administrative Leave of Absence*

Father Jones, an incorporated member of the Congregation of the Mission, had his faculties removed for an act that occurred 15 years ago and which falls under the provisions of *Graviora delicta*. Consequently, he lost his faculties in the diocese of his domicile, the

Diocese of Antioch. His superior knows that he is a good priest, who sincerely repented. The superior trusts him and recognizes his gifts in the area of retreats and spiritual direction. The superior comes to ask advice for a plan. Father Paternitas thinks that Father Jones would make an excellent spiritual director for priests in situations similar to his own. To inaugurate this ministry, Father Paternitas is planning for Father Jones to offer a five-day preached retreat at the Good Shepherd Retreat Center, an apostolate of the house located in the Diocese of Perge. The retreat will be open to these priests. Father Jones will offer two talks a day, celebrate daily Mass, and offer the sacrament of penance to those who wish to avail themselves of that opportunity.

- **What advice do you have for Father Paternitas?**

#### **4. *Laicization***

Father Smith, a member of your province, has experienced several difficulties in his ordained ministry. He has been involved in psychological counseling for several years and has some serious health problems. He has found secular employment while living in a community house because you have been unable to find him an appropriate ministry within the community's apostolates. His participation in the life of the community has been irregular and sporadic. You see now no possible change either in Father Smith or his place in the community in the foreseeable future.

- **What are possible canonical actions that you can take with Father Smith?**
- **Is a dispensation from all obligations arising from ordination a possibility for Father Smith?**
- **What might be the possible reason for Father Smith to obtain a dispensation?**

#### **5. *Dismissal***

Father Nemo has been illegitimately absent from the community for over 20 years. While he was present in the community, other confreres found him difficult to live with. He did obtain a year's leave of absence from the Visitor at the time. Several Visitors have attempted to resolve the confrere's canonical status without success. Each of these Visitors has considered a dismissal procedure. However, they have justifiably feared that if they summoned Father Nemo to return to the community, he will return the day after he receives the first notification. There have been rumors among the confreres of the province that Father Nemo has been acting as a

non-denominational minister. He has kept contact with some parishioners from parishes of the province in which he has served. The current Visitor urgently seeks to regularize Father Nemo's canonical status. He fears that the peculiar character of Father Nemo's personality can render the province open to civil proceedings that would place its material goods in jeopardy.

- **What are some possible avenues that the Visitor might explore?**

## 2006 ANNUAL STATISTICS - CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

### M I N I S T R I E S

Number of confreres involved in the ministries listed below. Each confrere is counted only once, considered under his principal ministry, as of 31 December 2006.

M I N I S T R Y	BISHOPS	PRIESTS	DEACONS	BROTHERS	STUDENTS
1. Parish (popular) Missions to the faithful	2	106	3	4	8
2. Missionary parishes or districts	0	179	6	9	1
3. Parishes	5	839	15	16	10
4. Pilgrimage sanctuaries	0	43	0	3	0
5. Seminaries and clerical formation	0	143	8	2	5
6. Formation of our own exclusively	1	157	2	5	2
7. Missions Ad Gentes	1	185	1	5	1
8. Daughters of Charity (Director, chaplain)	0	137	0	0	0
9. Schools (primary, secondary, superior, professional)	0	177	3	13	1
10. Social Communications (publications, radio, television)	0	20	0	1	0
11. Special studies	0	90	12	2	19
12. Chaplains: military, immigrants, hospital, associations	0	143	0	1	0
13. Chaplains: Vincentian Lay Groups	0	68	1	0	0
14. Direct Service of the Poor	0	43	1	10	0
15. Manual work	0	2	0	33	0
16. Administration	10	147	1	11	0
17. Retired, ill, convalescing	3	306	1	29	0
18. Other	10	100	5	17	0
19. Absence from the Congregation	0	193	8	3	2
<b>T O T A L</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>3078</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>49</b>

PROVINCES	HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS BY PROVINCE - 2006						ADMITTED MEMBERS & ASPIRANTS BY PROVINCE - 2006																	
	Houses	Bishops	Priests	Deacons	Permanents Deacons	Brothers	Students with Vows	TOTAL	ADMITTED MEMBERS					ASPIRANTS										
									CP	CB	P*	PD*	TOTAL	Voc. Grps.		Min. Sem.		Prep. Year						
														AB	AB	AP	AB	AP	AB	AB				
<b>General Curia</b>	4	0	8	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>AFRICA</b>	42	5	251	8	0	12	4	280	154	4	0	0	0	158	35	0	91	0	12	3	141			
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	6		28	4		1		33	38															0
Ethiopia	5	2	38			3		43	12	1				13			17							17
Madagascar	9	2	78	1		6	2	89	24	1				25			14		8	2	24			24
Mozambique	5	1	13	1		2	1	18	3	1				4	23				4	1	28			28
Nigeria	10		56	2			1	59	65	1				66	12									12
St. Justin de Jacobis - Eritrea	7		38					38	12					12			60							60
<b>AMERICA</b>	200	12	1071	21	1	66	18	1189	140	7	0	0	0	147	293	0	20	0	44	0	357			
Argentina	8		44				1	45	8					8	7									7
Brazil - Curitiba	9	3	67	1		2		73	8					8					4					4
Brazil - Fortaleza	3		36				1	37	2					2					4					4
Brazil - Rio de Janeiro	12	2	64	2		7	5	80	9	1				10	7				4					11
Central America	10	3	43	1		2		49	14	1				15					5					5
Chile	7		22	1		2	3	28	7					7										0
Colombia	24	1	153	3		9	2	168	39	2				41	206									206
Costa Rica	4		15	1		2	1	19	1	1				2	4									4
Cuba	4		11				1	12						0	1									1
Ecuador	5		31	1				32	6					6					5					5



France - Paris	20	136	6	10	12	164	22	2		24	53		18	2	73
France - Toulouse	11	55		6	2	63	2	2		4	2	1			3
Germany	3	11		2	1	14	2			2					0
Holland	5	51				51				0					0
Hungary	3	13				13	3			3	3	1			4
Ireland	12	68				68				0					0
Italy - Naples	11	2	50			54	1			1	1		4		11
Italy - Rome	10	1	44	3	1	51	2			2	2				2
Italy - Turin	14		73	1	2	78	1			1	2				2
Poland	28	3	256	10		277	32			32					0
Portugal	11	1	52	1		55	2			2	4				4
Slovakia	7		33	1		38	7			7					0
Slovenia	8	2	48		2	53	1			1	1				1
Spain - Barcelona	8	1	45		2	48				0	3				3
Spain - Madrid	16		108		15	124	2			2					0
Spain - Salamanca	18		85	1	10	96				0	4	1			5
Spain - Zaragoza	19		117	2	1	124	4			4		6			6
SS. Cyril and Methodius	6	1	22	1		24	9			9					0
<b>OCEANIA</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
Australia	7		52		1	4				3				3	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>3078</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>3390</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>803</b>

CP = Candidates to the Priesthood; CB = Candidates to the Brotherhood; P = Priests; PD = Permanent Deacons; P\*/PD\* = Priests/Permanent Deacons coming from a diocese or another Institute; AP = Aspirants to the Priesthood; AB = Aspirants to the Brotherhood.