

**And That Your Fruit  
Would Remain**

# And That Your Fruit Would Remain

Materials of the General Commission  
for the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God,  
Father Stanislaus Papczyński,  
Founder of the Congregation of Marians

General Curia of the Congregation of Marian Fathers  
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and the Association of Marian Helpers  
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His Eminence, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, praying at the sarcophagus of Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński (design by Jakub Fontana; 18<sup>th</sup> century). In the background, bas-relief by the artist, Witold Czopowik, depicting the Mother of God, Father Papczyński and the Marians (2003).  
Cenacle Church, Marianki in Góra Kalwaria

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## INTRODUCTION

*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;  
For His loving kindness is everlasting*

Ps 118: 1

*Dear Marians, never in the over three hundred year history of your Congregation, has the necessity to reconsider the life and charism of your Founder been more burning. (...) Rejoicing in the gift of this Beatification, choose again the path on which the Gospel calls you and which your Founder showed to you. (Cardinal Franc Rodé, Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, during a Thanksgiving Mass for the Gift of the Beatification in Góra Kalwaria, on September 17, 2007).*

The great event of the Beatification of our Father Founder, Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński, marked by the Lord's kindness and mercy, is still vivid in our memories. Our Father Founder was presented as an example to be followed by all Christians and the Church. Attention was focused on the charism of our Congregation. The year of preparations for the Beatification was also very successful. The program developed by the General Beatification Commission, carried out in our communities, apart from the other fruits which it bore, has helped us to rediscover the rich path of our Founder's faith, and motivated us to reflect on the meaning and relevance of our charism. It may be the case, that the Marian community worldwide has never felt so united, in experiencing God's love, and desiring to offer as much of ourselves as possible to respond to this love, through a more radical living of the Gospel and the Founder's spirit.

Aware of the greatness of the offered gift, we want to thank God since, "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights" (James 1, 17). We also want to make every effort, to recognize the meaning of this gift, and to reinforce the Marian vocation, the beginning of which starts in the life and work of the Blessed.

**To this end, as of January 1, 2008, we are starting a Year of Thanksgiving to the Triune God, for the gift of the Beatification of Father Stanislaus Papczyński. May it also be a time of thanksgiving for calling our Congregation into being and of personal adoration of God for the gift of the vocation to the Religious Life of each one of us. I trust that in this way, the entire Congregation will raise its spirits to meet the new challenges that Divine Providence sets before us today.**

My means of this Introduction, I would like to entrust to you this book entitled, *And That Your Fruit Would Remain*, which includes materials that will help us to effectively experience the Year of Thanksgiving. This publication has been printed in English, Spanish, Polish, and Portuguese versions, so that all of the Local Communities of the Congregation may use it. I would specifically like to point out some conference items, passages from the Bible and from our Constitutions, which are for community and individual use on the Vigil Days. The conferences were based on the writings and the path of faith of our Founder. The mission of the materials is to broaden the meaning of our vocation to the religious and the Marian life. The documents attached in the second part, *Documents, Homilies, and Speeches*, provide a wider theological perspective on the founding charism of the Blessed. The attached liturgical texts are a kind of interpretation of the Person and work of the Blessed in the context of the Word of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as supported by the Church's authority and mandate.

Please respect the set date and manner of carrying out the monthly Vigil Days, designated in the year of the preparation for the Beatification. If for any reason a particular community cannot have the Vigil Days on the designated date, they may have them at some other time.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Reverend Michał Kozak, M.I.C. for preparing the conferences and the accompanying questions for reflection, as well as for selecting appropriate passages from the Bible and the Constitutions, which required a considerable effort on his part. I would like to express my appreciation to the entire General Beatification Commission for the works that have been performed so far. I know from the Commission members' personal accounts, that for many of them, the work on the program of the Beatification has changed their perception not only of our Blessed Founder, but also of the Marian charism and of their own vocation to the religious life. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Reverend Andrzej Pakuła, the Chairman of the Beatification Commission, for the editorial work on this publication and for preparing it for print in four language versions. His contribution to the spiritual and pastoral preparation of the Congregation for the Beatification is a great gift of the Divine Providence.

I pray that the Year of Thanksgiving for the Beatification will bear fruit in the life of each of us and of the entire community.

Rome, November 24, 2007,  
on the 308<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Papal approval  
of the Congregation of Marians

*Jan M. Rokosz, M.I.C.*  
Superior General

**PART I**

**PROGRAM OF THE VIGIL DAYS,  
THE LITURGICAL TEXTS, THE PRAYERS**

# THE PROGRAM OF THE VIGIL DAYS OF THE YEAR OF THANKSGIVING

## THE DATES OF THE VIGIL DAYS DESIGNATED FOR THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

1 <sup>th</sup> day of each month:	Rome, Melbourne, Adelaide
2 <sup>th</sup> day of each month:	Warszawa-Stegny
3 <sup>th</sup> day of each month:	Chicago, Puszcza Mariańska
4 <sup>th</sup> day of each month:	Curitiba I, Mongagua, Marijampole
5 <sup>th</sup> day of each month:	Nyakinama, Kibeho, Marianapolis, Kenosha
6 <sup>th</sup> day of each month:	Plano, Darien + Yorkville, Góra Kalwaria + Marianki
7 <sup>th</sup> day of each month:	Goźlin, Avellaneda
8 <sup>th</sup> day of each month:	Rosario, Kaunas + Panewieżys
9 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Warszawa-Praga, Borysau + Zhodino
10 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Warszawa-Marymont, Vilani
11 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Skórzec, Washington
12 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Grudziądz: Mickiewicza + Kościelna, Chicago III
13 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Licheń, Rio de Janerio
14 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Stoczek Warmiński, Rezekne, Izvalta
15 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Lublin I (WSD + MDS)
16 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Lublin II, Rdzawka
17 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Elbląg, Vilnius
18 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Sulejówek, Eden Hill + Portland
19 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Zakopane, Rzepiska, Atok
20 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Steubenville, Grzybowo
21 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Fawley Court, Curitiba II, Adrianópolis
22 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Curitiba III + Novo Mundo + Mafra
23 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Manoel Ribas + Barra Santa Salete
24 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Orsha, Druya + Rosica
25 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Balsamao, Hradek + Praha
26 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Fatima, Brumov-Bylnice + Dudince
27 <sup>th</sup> day of ech day:	Khmelnicky, Vilgertshofen

28 <sup>th</sup> day of each day:	Cherniovtsy + Sevastopol, Obermedlingen + Dilingen
29 <sup>th</sup> day of each day:	London, Karaganda, Mohyliv
30 <sup>th</sup> day of each day:	Gorodok, Kharkiv, Turvo

## LITURGICAL OUTLINE OF THE VIGIL DAYS

### **Variant I**

- a) Beginning of the Vigil Day (according to the house custom)
- b) Common reading of the conference texts
- c) Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament (at least 30 minutes); reading during the adoration selected fragments of the Bible and the Constitutions

The Adoration Worship Service may take place after the reading of the conference texts. It may also be held at the convenience of the community, for instance, to close the Vigil Days.

### **Variant II** (in the case in which for some reason, adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament is not possible in a community)

- a) Beginning of the Vigil Day
- b) Common reading of the conference texts
- c) Common morning prayers with meditations; part of the meditations is reading the texts from the Bible and the Constitutions.

## OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS FOR THE VIGIL DAYS

### *Opening Prayers*

**To draw from the spiritual fruits of Father Founder's Beatification, for the Congregation that he has founded, and for a dynamic spiritual and dedicated ministry to the Church**

Let us pray to draw from the spiritual fruits of the Beatification of our Father Founder, Stanislaus Papczyński. Let us beg for his intercession for us so that we can generously respond to God's call, coming from this grace, and follow the way of spiritual reformation, to consecrate ourselves unto the service of the Church and the world.

O Lord, Father of Mercy, You called Blessed Stanislaus to found the Order of Immaculate Conception. May Blessed Stanislaus be canonized, may we experience his permanent care, and may his work spread throughout the world.

*We beg You, hear us, O Lord*

O Lord Jesus, You have given us an example in Blessed Stanislaus, of how to venerate Your Mother Mary. Through the example of the Blessed, give us the desire and strength to imitate her virtues.

*We beg You, hear us, O Lord*

Holy Spirit, You are the inspiration of the Shepherds of the Church. Teach us, through the example of Blessed Stanislaus, who dedicated his life to teaching Christian doctrine to simple and neglected people, to preach the Gospel of Christ with faith and zeal, especially in those places where it is truly needed.

*We beg You, hear us, O Lord*

O God, Fair and Merciful Judge, who filled the heart of Blessed Stanislaus with a love for the dying and the souls suffering in the Purgatory, may our zealous prayers, penances and sacrifices help the dying and the deceased.

*We beg You, hear us, O Lord*

O Lord of the harvest, you call workers to Your vineyard, we beg You with confidence, send new vocations to our Community and let us bring Your work into close contact with the needs of the Church, to Your glory and in honor of Mary Immaculate.

*We beg You, hear us, O Lord*

O God, in Your unfathomable mercy You reject no one but gather everyone in with Your love. Through the intercession of Blessed Stanislaus, may Your grace help us to make a personal effort in reforming our Community towards adoration, to work out our own salvation, and to sanctify the world.

*We beg You, hear us, O Lord*

May the example of his whole life, trustingly dedicated to You, no matter the circumstances, his care for the poorest and those who were deprived of spiritual

and financial help, as well as his faithful love for the Crucified Christ, and his imitating the Immaculate Mother of Christ, be the inspiration for the renewal of the grace of our vocation, and of our faithfully persevering in the Religious Family he has established.

*We beg You, hear us, O Lord*

May his apostolic fervor serve to inflame our pastoral zeal. May his desire to sanctify all of the children of the Church inspire us to a greater service, and may his persistent prayer for the souls suffering in Purgatory strengthen our efforts to help the faithful to enter the eternal homeland and rejoice in contemplating Your Image. You, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

***Closing Prayer***

**For the Congregation According to Blessed J. Matulewicz**

Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, graciously look upon this Congregation founded in your Name and in the name of Your Immaculate Mother. Gaze upon, visit, and perfect that which your right hand engrafted. Multiply its company and augment its joys. Gather us from all tribes, peoples, and nations. This is your House, O Lord Jesus, your house. Let no stone be found in it, which your sacred Hand would not have placed therein. Preserve and sanctify us, whom you have called, that we may praise your holy Name, accomplish your works, and courageously wage your battles. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

# LITURGICAL TEXTS

## THE MASS OF BLESSED STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI, PRIEST<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTORY RITES

The Spirit of God is upon me; he has anointed me. He sent me to bring good news to the poor, and to heal the broken-hearted. (Lk 4:18)

### OPENING PRAYER

O God, in your providence, You have called your priest, Blessed Stanislaus, to make known the honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to assist the souls in Purgatory. Following the example of his apostolic life, Grant, we pray, that we may also proclaim the fullness of innocence and sanctity of the Mother of your Son, and invoking your mercy for the departed, may we safely arrive at our true homeland. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

### FIRST READING

Jer 1:4-9

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah  
Go to those to whom I send you.

The word of the Lord came to me thus: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. "Ah, Lord God!" I said, "I know not how to speak; I am too young." But the Lord answered me, Say not, "I am too young." To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord. Then the Lord extended his hand and touched my mouth, saying, See, I place my words in your mouth!

The Word of the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: The Opening Prayer for the Mass and the Second Reading for the Liturgy of the Hours have been approved by the Vatican. The other readings and prayers have been chosen from the Common of Pastors and are suggestions. Other readings and prayers may be chosen.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 96: 1-2. 2-3. 7-8. 10

R. (3) Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Sing to the Lord a new song;  
sing to the Lord, all you lands.  
Sing to the Lord; bless his name;

R. Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Announce his salvation, day after day.  
Tell his glory among the nations;  
Among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

R. Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Give to the Lord, you families of nations,  
give to the Lord glory and praise;  
give to the Lord the glory due his name!

R. Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Say among the nations: The Lord is king.  
He has made the world firm, not to be moved;  
He governs the peoples with equity.

R. Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

GOSPEL VERSE

R. Alleluia. I am the way, the truth, and the life, says the Lord; no one come to the Father, except through me. R. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 15:9-17

† A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

I shall not call you servants anymore; I call you friends.

Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for

the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

## PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

### *Celebrant*

United with Blessed Stanislaus, who intercedes for us, let us confidently lift up our prayers to Christ, the Good Shepherd, who has given His life for His sheep.

### *Lector*

Let us pray together and say: *Hear us O Lord!*

1. For the Pope, the bishops, and the priests, that they would be witnesses in the world and heralds of the Word of truth, sincerely and generously listening and responding to it, we pray to the Lord:

2. For the Congregation of the Marian Fathers founded by Blessed Stanislaus, that they would be faithful to the ideals indicated by the Founder, and grow in merit and in number before the Lord, we pray to the Lord:

3. May Christ, who in Blessed Stanislaus has given us a living image of His merciful love, grant that his name may soon be counted in the Album of the Saints, for the Glory of God, we pray to the Lord:

4. For all of those who share in the life and the charism of the Marian Fathers: relatives, friends, benefactors, and Marian Helpers – especially those who are present here today, that the Lord would graciously bestow His goodness on them, and increase the gifts of faith, hope and charity in them, we pray to the Lord:

5. For all of the faithful present here, that the life of Blessed Stanislaus would inspire them to the faithful following of Christ in the various circumstances of their lives, we pray to the Lord:

6. For the deceased who await the fullness of joy in the presence of the Lord, that He would reveal his face to those who do not yet behold it, and fill them with this glorious vision, we pray to the Lord:

*Celebrant:*

Lord Jesus, You invite us to be the salt of the earth and to sacrifice whatever blocks the realization of this mission. Make giving everything a joy, following the example of Blessed Stanislaus, so that Your Kingdom would grow in us and around us, You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

Pray, bretheren . . .

Father of mercy, we have these gifts to offer in honor of your saints who bore witness to your mighty power. May the power of the eucharist bring us your salvation. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

PREFACE

Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks.

You give the Church this feast in honor of Blessed Stanislaus; you inspire us by his holy life, instruct us by his preaching, and give us your protection in answer to his prayers.

We join the angels and the saints as they sing their unending hymn of praise: Holy, Holy, Holy . . .

COMMUNION RITE

(Mt. 28:20)

I, the Lord, am with you always, until the end of the world.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray, Lord, may the mysteries we receive prepare us for the eternal joys Bl. Stanislaus won by his faithful ministry. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

MAY 18

STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI, PRIEST

Blessed Stanislaus of Jesus Mary was born in 1631 in Poland, in the village of Podegrodzie. In 1654, he entered the Piarist Institute, made his religious vows and was ordained a priest. He left the Piarists in 1670 and in 1673 he founded the Congregation of the Marian Fathers under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary to promote devotion to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, and also to make offerings for the souls in Purgatory and to conduct pastoral work, especially among the needy. According to the decision of the Ecclesiastical Authority, he was appointed Superior General “ad vitae tempora”, and he carried out this office until his death. As a preacher, confessor, and author of works on rhetoric and spirituality, he worked with great zeal to encourage religious and laity to strive for greater sanctity. He died on September 17, 1701 in Góra Kalwaria near Warsaw with the reputation for of sanctity.

OFFICE OF READINGS

SECOND READING

From a work by Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński, priest  
(*Norma vitae*, Chapter II: *De charitate*)

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God

[St. Paul] the Teacher of the Gentiles has best compared a servant of God who is not fervent with true love to a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. For the attainment of eternal life - and the value of meritorious works - is rooted in love. Therefore, more than any other good, you should try to gain this pearl of great price, this treasure hidden in the field. Although love is a gift of God, it is obtained and preserved however, by constancy of prayer and mortification. *Therefore, let everything you do, be done in love.*

The Commandments of God and the evangelical counsels, the laws of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, its prescriptions, decrees, rites, usages, dogmas; also this present Rule, and if at some time further prescriptions are given: let all of these be observed out of the love of God. This is what the heavenly Lawgiver said: *Anyone who loves me, will be true to my word.* And this is to be understood not only of his teaching and of the Scriptures, but equally of his Church, which he himself forms and governs by his Holy Spirit, and its orders and documents, and the dispositions of the superiors which flow from her or are confirmed by her.

Out of the love of God, you will perform every good and escape every evil; you will exercise every virtue possible, and detest every vice and sin.

Out of the love of God you will bear with willingness and fortitude- mortifications, afflictions, reproofs, injuries, calumnies, labors, pains, destitution, austerity, and other situations like these. Out of the love of God you will carry out in a most perfect way your exercises, duties, jobs entrusted to you, and whatever concerns your state and vocation.

You will consecrate to divine Love all of your entire life, all of your daily actions and sufferings, and each and every moment, in every element, circumstances, and change. Each and every action and suffering, by due submission, trust, and piety will be consecrated for all eternity on the altar of love, by a pure heart joined to the merits of Christ the Lord, his Immaculate Mother, all of the Saints, and the universal Church.

What Divine Wisdom commended in both Testaments should be your common rule and is the safest way to heaven: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.*

Concerning mutual love: let it be known that the one who excels in mutual love is more dear to the Divine Majesty. Each of you should keep in mind that the soul of his Institute is love, and what to the extent that one withdraws from love, he withdraws from life.

Therefore, even as he will promote the good reputation, integrity and holiness of the whole Congregation, so he will render to the individual members of this same Congregation all those things, which he would wish for himself.

And so he will avoid the harmful diseases so opposed to love: envy, hatred, rancor, rivalry, suspicion, calumny, exclusive attachment, antipathy, jealousy, secret accusation, jeering, whispering, verbal abuse, annoyance, ambition, contempt for others, disturbances, agitations, quarrels, contentions. As he would watch over the tranquility of his own spirit, so the zealous guardian of love will also give great care to guarding the tranquility of others and of the whole house. He will suitably drive away any evil both from the whole Congregation and from each of its members. Call to mind the love of the early Church, about which the writer of the Acts of the Apostles says: *The community of believers were of one heart and one mind.*

On all occasions you will not neglect to show outsiders every possible love. You will surround with devoted love not only those you find benevolent to you, but adversaries as well, and enemies (whom our Lord rightly commanded us to love). You should always be mindful of the works of mercy which, when done to his members, are done to Christ the Head. These works alone will triumph at the final judgement.

## RESPONSORY

See 1 John 4:9,10; 3:16

In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him.

?? The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

In this is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

??- The way we came to know love was ...

## PRAYER

O God, in your providence,  
You have called your priest, Blessed Stanislaus,  
to make known the honor of the Immaculate Conception  
of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to assist the souls in Purgatory.

Following the example of his apostolic life,  
Grant, we pray, that we may also proclaim  
the fullness of innocence and sanctity of the Mother of your Son,  
and invoking your mercy for the departed,  
may we safely arrive at our true homeland.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**NOVENA**

**FOR THE INTENTION OF RECEIVING NECESSARY  
GRACES THROUGH THE INTERCESSION  
OF BLESSED STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI**

*At the beginning of the novena call to mind with deepest trust in God's will intention for graces you need, agreeing to accept God's will*

**FIRST DAY**

*The Almighty has done great things for me (Lk 1:49)*

Lord God Almighty, look upon Your Servant Bl. Stanislaus, who with utmost zeal took upon himself, in the foundation of a Religious Community, the work of spreading the honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of Your Son, grant us this grace, that we might continually praise You for the great things You have done for Your Saints and permit us to enter Life in the state of friendship with You and in unsullied chastity.

**Prayer for a special grace**

God, our Father, Who in Your unfathomable Providence gave us in Bl. Stanislaus a successful intercessor before Your throne, grant me (us) through his intercession the grace....., for which I (we) beg You, also grant that in accord with his example I (we) may faithfully fulfill Your most holy will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Our Father... Hail, Mary... Glory be to the Father...*

**Prayer for canonization of Bl. Stanislaus**

Most holy and undivided Trinity, You choose to make Your home in the hearts of Your faithful servants, and, after their death, to reward their merits with the glory of heaven. Bring it about, we ask, that Your servant, Bl. Stanislaus, who, enraptured by the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, progressed with such fidelity and so sacrificially towards personal sanctity, and who made every effort to introduce and preserve the Kingdom of God in the hearts of his neighbors, be added by the Church without delay to the company of the Saints. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## SECOND DAY

*His mercy is from age to age (Lk 1:50)*

God, Righteous Judge, look upon Your Servant Bl. Stanislaus who generously and in every way hastened to assist the Souls in Purgatory, grant that we may zealously imitate him in this great work of mercy, especially toward the departed most dear to us and those who most need our spiritual help.

*Prayer for a special grace*

*Our Father... Hail, Mary... Glory be to the Father...*

*Prayer for canonization*

## THIRD DAY

*He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart (Lk 1:51)*

O Jesus, our Redeemer and Master, look upon Your Servant Bl. Stanislaus who used every occasion to proclaim the Word of God and to bring spiritual support to people deprived of pastoral care, grant us the grace that we may attract other people to God through our own word and example of striving for holiness.

*Prayer for a special grace*

*Our Father... Hail, Mary... Glory be to the Father...*

*Prayer for canonization*

## FOURTH DAY

*He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones (Lk 1:52)*

Holy Spirit of God, look upon Your Servant Bl. Stanislaus, who throughout his life firmly defended the Catholic faith and showed willingness to witness to it by a martyr's death, grant us the grace, that we may steadfastly grow in faith and courageously profess it in every moment of life.

*Prayer for a special grace*

*Our Father... Hail, Mary... Glory be to the Father...*

*Prayer for canonization*

## FIFTH DAY

*The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty (Lk 1:53)*

God our Father, look upon Your Servant Bl. Stanislaus who trusting in the help of Your Providence, in spite of many obstacles, by Your inspiration, founded

and strengthened, the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, grant us the grace, that we may distinguish ourselves by an unyielding trust in Your omnipotence, goodness, and fidelity, especially when You guide us on the difficult road toward the wonderful promises of Your love.

*Prayer for a special grace*

*Our Father... Hail, Mary... Glory be to the Father...*

*Prayer for canonization*

## **SIXTH DAY**

*Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy (Mt 5:7)*

God, Father of Mercy, look upon Your Servant Bl. Stanislaus whose love for You showed itself most eloquently in his daily and sacrificial practices of works of mercy, grant us the grace that we may always and generously imitate him in the active love of our neighbor. At the beginning of the novena, call to mind with deepest trust in God's help your intention for graces you need, agreeing to accept God's will

*Prayer for a special grace*

*Our Father... Hail, Mary... Glory be to the Father...*

*Prayer for canonization*

## **SEVENTH DAY**

*Whoever listens to you, listens to me (Lk 10:16)*

Lord, You Who are a faithful God, look upon Your Servant Bl. Stanislaus, who always formed his life and works in a filial submission to the Successor of St. Peter, grant us the grace that we may persevere in our faithfulness to God, the Cross, and the Gospels through our perfect obedience to the Church.

*Prayer for a special grace*

*Our Father... Hail, Mary... Glory be to the Father...*

*Prayer for canonization*

## **EIGHTH DAY**

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:3)*

Lord, You who love us, look upon Your Servant Bl. Stanislaus who freely embraced an austere and mortified life in utmost poverty, so as to give himself to You with all his heart and soul, grant us the grace, that we may courageously

resist the craving of money and sinful pleasures, striving for the freedom of spirit in Your truth and love.

*Prayer for a special grace  
Our Father... Hail, Mary... Glory be to the Father...  
Prayer for canonization*

## **NINTH DAY**

*Take courage, it is I (Mt 14:27)*

God, from Whom everything takes its beginning and to Whom everything returns, look upon Your Servant Bl. Stanislaus who, by the example of his life, gave us a model of total trust in Your holy Providence, grant us the grace that we may confidently place in Your merciful hands our past and future, our whole life, allowing You to lead us along the evangelical road to Your home in heaven.

*Prayer for a special grace  
Our Father... Hail, Mary... Glory be to the Father...  
Prayer for canonization*

*It is recommended that this novena recited for a particular intention,  
be complemented by Confession and Holy Communion.*

**PART I**

**The Reverend Michał Kozak, M.I.C.**

**SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES  
FOR THE VIGIL DAYS**

## CONFERENCE I

### THE GIFT OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

“The religious state itself does not save anyone, but the religious life does” (IC, 13r). I did not accidently choose this statement of Fr. Stanislaus from *Inspec-tio cordis* as the title of this present book. In a succinct and most accurate manner, it presents the fundamental desire of his life: to give himself completely to God by living the evangelical counsels and growing in the virtues proper to the consecrated life. This was the fire that gave him strength, gave resolve to determine his choices, and light to the paths on which he trod. With this fire, he wanted to enkindle the hearts of his confreres, both in the originally chosen Piarists Order, and later in the Marian Community, which he founded. On the road to the fulfillment of this aspiration, our Blessed Founder did not acknowledge any compromises, procrastination, laziness, half-measures, or resting on one’s laurels. He first demanded these things of himself, but he also expected them of his religious confreres. The spiritual state of someone who chose the religious way of life but did not follow it, was most grievous and tragic for Fr. Stanislaus to see, worse than the people “wandering in the wilderness of this world,” as he often wrote of the lay people. The mere perseverance in a religious community offers nothing: “What will this gain for you, that externally you give the appearance of a religious, but internally you will be worse than the worst of men in the world?” (IC 146r). This uncompromising stance did not make his life easy, it clearly caused problems in the Piarists and in the Korabiew hermitage. Nevertheless, he never wavered or relinquished in this regard. He defended religious fidelity and zeal as he would defend his own life, and he valued it even more. This was essentially it: he had no other “life” and did not desire one.

Before we begin to analyze the different aspects of our pilgrimage on the road of the evangelical counsels, in the light of Fr. Founders’ writings, let us formulate a question from a broader perspective. Generally, what was religious life for him; what images did he use to describe it; which elements did he consider most essential?

Our Blessed Founder had magnificent rhetorical skills and used a colorful and rich language replete with metaphors. He strove to reach his listeners to draw the beauty of the religious life closer them by evoking a warm atmosphere, security, affection, and closeness to God. He would often contrast the religious life with the “world,” which rules itself by different laws, and by consequence dwells in

uncertainty, idolatry, perdition, and even hatred in regard to God. The “world” is Babylon – the biblical harlot – the seat of pride, audacity, and evil powers. Those who dwell therein are like lost souls on a stormy and dangerous sea. A religious community is like Jerusalem – strongly fortified, a holy city of God. The one who dwells therein, is in his fatherland, the house of God, His sanctuary, a safe haven and port, like a tree planted in the most beautiful meadow of Christ or like a sheep of the fold wrapped in the tender care of the Good Shepherd. The monastic cell is like heaven, and religious life a blissful country side, paradise, the green fields of Elysium, a most precious pearl worthy of the surrender of everything (cf. *IC* 60rv, 134, 14v, 29v, 70v, 76r, 78v, 124rv, 136v, 164v, 169v, 171r; *Norma Vitae* V, 9). In a way, a religious vocation makes a person the heir of the Apostles, obviously not through an office -- though Fr. Papczyński uses even this expression -- but through a particular link with the Gospel and by a direct friendship with Christ. A Religious sits “at the table of Christ” and, shares His burden along with the Apostles (cf. *IC* 54r, 110v, 132v, 142v).

If, at this point, we would cut short the observations of our Founder’s thoughts concerning religious life, the image left in our hearts and minds would be drastically incomplete, deprived of the eschatological tension between the “already” and the “not yet,” which is so very clear in the expressions of the Blessed. A religious house is not a countryside of carefree happiness and life therein is not some kind of a spiritual “dolce vita,” and Religious are not barrels filled with good wine placed to mature in the monastery’s cellar awaiting the day of the wedding of the Lamb. Comparisons are indicated serenely, securely, by a warm light close to God - Father Papczyński undividedly links a call to do battle with Satan, to battle vices and to grow in virtues, to prayer and continuous conversion, to a real share in the cross of Christ. He says to each one of us: Truly, you dwell in paradise, but the serpent is always present, who “is envious of your prosperity, innocence and future glory, continuously stares at you, waiting with its gaping muzzle, so as to grab you, control you, bite you and devour you” (*IC* 169v). If you escaped from Babylon and reached your own home and fatherland, it is so that you would break away from idolatry and build a shrine for the Lord (cf. *IC* 134r). You are a tree planted in His garden, but threatened to be cut down if you do not grow and bear fruit (cf. *IC* 70v). You belong to the sheepfold, nevertheless remember, that hellish wolfs and mercenaries prowl after you (cf. *IC* 29v). You are surrounded by “walls” and “fortifications”, protected by the Divine Power of the Holy City, Jerusalem, lest the hellish foe recognize you as the most awful enemy and with all its strength tries to “lure you out” or also to “undermine you on the spot, to conquer and annihilate you” (*IC* 29v). You are strolling in the blissful countryside not for your recreation, but for collecting gifts for Christ through your prayer and mortification (cf. *IC* 97v-98r).

Blessed Stanislaus doesn't have the slightest doubt: a religious order is the most opportune place for achieving heaven, holiness, and intimacy with God, but it is also possible to perish there, to forfeit eternal life. A Religious does not follow a simple straight path without curves and crossroads. Every day one faces the need to discern and choose. Two roads – life and death, so clearly stated in Scripture and in Christian tradition (cf. Dt 30:15-20; Ps 1, Jer 21:8; Prv 4:18-19; Mt 7:13-14; the entire Sermon on the Mount; see also the Rule of the Community of Qumran, Letter of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas and others) - they have their resolution in the very heart of a religious vocation. A Religious is chosen, so as to ceaselessly renounce that which is love of the world, laziness, carelessness, indulgence; in essence any hatred regarding God. One is to serve one's Lord with all his heart by accepting the "light yoke" of the religious life in zeal and humility, renouncing one's own will, loving prayer and mortification (see IC 33v-34r, 49rv, 78v-79r, 170v-171r). Fr. Papczyński recommended for the weekly retreat exercises that the confreres profoundly analyze their choices and ask themselves what path they have been following: "Consider, what kind of affairs you most dedicated yourself to and you gave yourself to during your sojourn in this religious state: to mortification or to comfort? To what did you most incline your spirit: to the renouncing of your own will or to doing it? Carrying out the wishes of other people, particularly your superiors, or gratifying your own desires? If you were taken up mostly with gratifying your own desires, then be certain, that a false spirit guided you. If it was the other way around, then have no doubt: you conducted yourself very well, and be certain, that this was in accord with your vocation. To be responsive to your vocation, increase and enlarge at this moment, even these smallest new sparks of divine love, with the goal of practicing the virtues, favoring them with a speedy effort and a desire to make progress and sincere development. If you deny yourself, you will know how sweet the Lord is! If you completely renounce the world, you will know how bitter the world is! For what taste, what smell, can those sense, who not only taste, but soak up carnal pleasures, worldly luxuries and Babylonian drinks? Ach! They shall draw and drink from them a short-lived sweetness, because of which they shall be thrown into a bottomless abyss of eternal bitterness. Eternally, they shall weep over the indulgences of their nature, and never shall they erase their guilt. On the contrary, there is so much lasting sweetness in the cross, patience, mortification, toil, misfortunes and wrongs born in the spirit of imitation of the God-Man! In these things, the adorers of the Cross and suffering, find a plethora of unending joy, perpetual solace, holy and everlasting bliss, even if it should come after a hard battle and skirmishes with the world, hell, and one's own evil inclinations.

You have a free hand in choosing one of these two opposites, because you possess a freedom of judgment and of will. Be aware nevertheless, with what

care and with what cost you have already chosen one of these, and you are still to choose” (IC 170v).

Similarly, in the reviewed passage mentioned, as in other statements concerning the religious life, Father Papczyński particularly emphasizes two matters. The first is the Passion, or rather, the paschal dimension of the religious life. It is, realistically speaking, the way of the Cross: mortification, penance, a humble bearing of contempt and offences, toil without expecting rewards -- all this indicates that we are on the way of the true followers of Christ, that we are sons and not hired hands, because the hired hands reject the Cross (see IC 35v-36r; 49v; 80v; 110r; 130v-131r; 136v). This road, nevertheless, is illumined by the radiance of the Resurrection: “the most perfect Lord, more often than expected, in the Most Holy Eucharist, shares His glory with your soul and only for this does He nourish it with most amazing joys: so that awakened by the taste of everlasting joys, delights, rewards and riches, you may joyfully and voluntarily bear all contempt, confrontations, misfortunes, and the light yoke of the religious life, and that you may know that you are to arrive at the sweetest peace through the hardest toils, through sorrows and the greatest oppressions to rest, through struggle and death to life” (IC 33r).

Another point particularly emphasized by Fr. Stanislaus is the need to deny one’s own will and, consequently, a particularly serious acceptance of the vow of obedience. The one who follows “his own will, lead by reason or a demonic mentality,” even if he be a religious, is blind and errs (IC 34r). The way of a vocation is like the path of Abraham and it requires obedience to a heroic degree: “As a response to the desire of God, Abraham sought to give Him his son as a burnt-offering. In imitation of him, you too ought to offer something to the same Lord. At the voice of God, Abraham came out of the land of his fathers, leaving behind all his relatives. You also left your birthplace for a safe haven, which by your religious vocation, the Holy Spirit points out to you. As you left behind your relatives and friends, so too you must leave your bad habits and unbridled passions. You ought to also consecrate, give and present in offering, to the One, All Good and All Powerful God, on the Mount of Moria, (meaning - in the Order), your only son Isaac, that is your one and only will. In all your undertakings or endeavors, always say: “*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* As to myself, may Your will, Lord, be done at every moment, hour, day, and in eternity” (IC 13r-14r; also see IC 60rv; 75r; 170v; TD VI3).

Only a religious who is zealously given to prayer, who is obedient, not abandoning the rule, united in the “service of God, this means leading a life of meaning and sacrifice” (IC 131r), truly deserves this title. Otherwise, he only bears a meaningless label and religious garb. He pretends to be a religious, that he is imitating Christ, yet his behavior is that of a rogue. Father Papczyński frequently, and with great fervor emphasized the need for a profound change of customs and

an authentic religious life (see IC 13r; 115v-116r; 130v; 135v). While reading these passages, it seems as if we're hearing the echo of the voice from the Book of Revelation saying: "... you have the reputation for being alive, but you are dead." Or, maybe, it is the longing of St. Ignatius of Antioch on the way to his martyr's death expressed in his letter to the Romans: "... that I not only be called a Christian, but that I am indeed one."

In seeking through a general sketch to give the image of the religious life as born in the heart of our Blessed Founder, we have to open two further documents. The first is the book of Fr. Stanislaus's life, which definitely proves that for him, an authentic religious life was, as he himself wrote, a most precious pearl worthy of every toil and effort. With the least hesitancy, throughout his whole life, he gave all he had so as to obtain this pearl and to preserve it in its full radiance. The second document is *Norma vitae*, the rule, which he himself wrote for his own Religious Community. This rule, as it may be said, makes the rule of St. Augustine more precisely Marian in nature. For the Bishop of Hippo, the model for a monastic community was the life of the first communities in Jerusalem. This reference point, with a special emphasis on mutual love, appeared equally authentic for our Founder. The Religious Order, which in the concept of Father Papczynski was to be born out of the Rule of Life, was a close-knit, love filled community, growing together, with all its strength, toward salvation.

Should the desire of Blessed Stanislaus for the religious life be erased from his heart, be totally forgotten, and removed from his writings, then Fr. Stanislaus himself would cease to be. His choices, the trials of his life, everything that he did and wrote would become incomprehensible.

If we are rejoicing today because of his Beatification, let us endeavor to make this joy creative, that it would cause us to imitate him. If the glory of Heaven for Fr. Stanislaus is a joy for the Marians today, we have to do everything so that today's Marians would be the joy and glory of Fr. Stanislaus in Heaven. I think that he looks down at us, holding the Rule and praying in St. Paul's words: "Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, beloved" (Phil 4:1). May the present book help all of us to ask the questions: where am I? Where does the exemplary word of our Founder find me? Do I really live out a religious way of life? These are crucial questions, seeing that "The religious state itself cannot save anyone, but the religious life can."

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### **Basic biblical source: Gen 12:1-4**

*1 The LORD said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation,*

*and I will bless you; I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you.” 4 Abram went as the LORD directed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.*

**Relevant biblical verses for deepening the reading of the text:**

Verse 1: Acts 7:1-8; Hbr 11:8ff; Ex 12:37-51; Ex 13:17-22; 1 Kgs 19:15-21; Mt 4:18-22; Lk 9:57-62;

Verse 2: Gen 15:1-21; Gen 17:1-8; Gen 28:10-15; Gen 35:1-12; Gen 46:1-7;

Verse 3: Gen 27, 29; Ex 23:20-27; Nm 24:1-9; Jer 4:2; Sir 44:19-22; Ps 72:16-17; Acts 3:19-26; Gal 3:7-9.

**Other biblical texts pertaining to the topic**

Rm 6:3-11

*Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as [being] dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.*

1 Cor 1:22-31

*For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord.”*

Mt 5:1-12

*When he saw the crowds, they went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for there is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Jn 15:1-17

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete.*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RELIGIOUS REGULATIONS**

A vocation is defined by our Constitutions as a free choice of God made out of love. Consecration guides us on the roads of seeking holiness, through the imitation of Christ and making Him the one and only center of our life. This choice and road is rooted in the grace of baptism and they have as a goal its abundant fruitfulness. With burning zeal, each day we begin anew our search for God, to love Him and unite ourselves most intimately with Him. The particular purpose of our care ought to our personal fidelity to our consecration and to also support new religious vocations.

## **Paragraphs of our Constitutions: 1,4-5,20-21,24,36-38,65,153-154.**

### ***Marians in the Church***

**1** The Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary is a fraternal community of clerics and laymen in the Church who, bound together by mutual charity and their apostolic mission, promote the glory of God and strive for evangelical perfection. Freely responding to the call of divine love, the members assume the obligations of the common life and of witnessing to perfect charity, so that dedicated to Christ and His Church by a new and special consecration through the profession of Evangelical Counsels bear more abundant fruit from the grace of baptism.

*CR 1; LG 44; PC 1*

### ***Total Consecration***

**4** Having renounced all things, as much as human frailty allows, the members should devote, give and consecrate themselves so completely to God and the things of God that God truly be the center of life for both the individual members and the entire Congregation.

*CR 4*

### ***Following of Christ***

**5** Members strive for their own evangelical perfection and the sanctification of others by courageously and faithfully following our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. By diligently searching through His Gospel and meditating upon it, they strive to know, love and imitate Christ more and more from day to day, to be imbued with and directed by the

spirit of Christ, to spread the Kingdom of Christ with all their zeal and effort and to bring Christ into everything. Thus, let Christ be the guide and model of both the entire Congregation and of its individual members.

*CR 3; IN I, 12; PC 5*

### ***Vocation to Holiness***

**20** Mindful that in the baptism of faith they have truly been made sons of God and partakers of the divine nature, the members are obliged to maintain and to make perfect this holiness which they have received from God according to the exhortation of the divine Teacher: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48).

*LG 40*

### ***Observance of the Evangelical Counsels***

**21** The holiness of the Church of Christ becomes apparent and is strengthened in a special way by the observance of the Evangelical Counsels which, rooted in the words and examples of the Lord, are taken up gratefully by the members and

are employed as the most apt means for the purification of hearts and for acquiring likeness in charity to Christ and Mary Immaculate. As a consequence, their life should appear in the world as a sign of the Kingdom of Heaven which can and ought to attract other Christian faithful to the effective and prompt fulfillment of the duties of their own vocation.

*LG 44*

### ***Striving for Holiness***

**24** Following in the footsteps of Christ and having been made in the likeness of His image, fulfilling the will of the Father in all things, they devote themselves with their whole soul to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. Always holding in great esteem their own perfection, they should foster in themselves a continuous desire for it and should exert themselves in a constant and persevering effort to acquire it, as if always beginning anew. And, indeed, they should take great pains and use every means to advance in it daily, seizing every occasion for sanctifying themselves, never considering as sufficient what they have accomplished thus far.

*CR 162; LG 40*

### ***Union with God***

**36** In and through all things, each one should be eager to aim at the closest union with God, to be joined to Him as much as possible first in his prayer, then in all his actions, and also to be magnanimous, and in the highest degree generous and liberal in His service.

*CR 176*

### ***Holy Zeal***

**37** Zeal, which is the ardor of charity, ought to fill the whole life of the members, and it should be:

1) ***supernatural***: animated by a firm, lively faith and an invincible trust in God joined with a distrust of self;

2) ***pure***: seeking not what is one's own, but only what pertains to the greater glory of God, the salvation of souls redeemed at such a great price of the blood and life of Jesus Christ, which uniquely enriches the Church;

3) ***ardent and gentle***: which is inflamed with love for justice and hatred for evil, but is meek, knowing how to sympathize with weakness and is kind and merciful to those who err;

4) ***universal***: which embraces all people with a heart amplified by love and uses every means at its disposal, and also desires to inflame as many as possible with the fire of love;

5) ***prudent and well-ordered***: maturely considering and foreseeing the will of God in everything; considering the example and experience of others and also

consulting experts, above all Superiors; selecting appropriate and efficacious means, considering what may bear most fruit; proceeding in an orderly and methodical fashion; and never neglecting self while helping others;

6) ***industrious and active***: when need be seek occasions for work; finding opportune and suitable means and methods to meet the new necessities that might be brought by changing times; not postponing what must be done; manifesting itself through good works that are adapted to the entrusted duty and trying to do as much as possible and as well as possible;

7) ***strong, generous, and constant***: which moves one to give up his own convenience, expend himself, undertake great and difficult tasks, work and suffer tirelessly; which is not diverted by any adversities from the things which duty and obedience demand and rises to meet any misfortune; which is persevering in its efforts and brings to completion what has been begun;

8) ***disciplined***: never exceeding the limits of its status and office while totally and docilely subjecting itself to the guidance of Superiors.

*CR 177*

### ***Fidelity to the Grace of Vocation***

**38** Each member should hold in greatest esteem the grace of vocation, which is the beginning and fount of so many and such great graces, goods and merits and he should continuously thank God for it. May he who has made his profession, frequently and devoutly renew his vows, may he also strive to enliven this grace and perseveringly cooperate with it and be faithful to it. As each one progresses in years of profession, may he strive with all his strength to progress in the observance of the laws of the Congregation, in fraternal charity, humility, piety, obedience, as well as other virtues and, indeed, in all perfection.

*CR 106*

### ***Spirit of Prayer***

**65** Members should seek and love God above all else, who first loved us and in all circumstances should take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God, which is the source and stimulus of love of neighbor, for the salvation of the world and the up-building of the Church. Although charity is a gift of God, it is obtained and preserved, nevertheless, by constancy in prayer and mortification. For this reason, the members should with constant effort cultivate the spirit of prayer and prayer itself, drawing on authentic sources of Christian spirituality.

*1 Jn 4:10; Col 3:3; NV II, 1; PC 6*

### ***Seeking of Candidates***

**153** We should meditate frequently on the words of Our Lord: “The harvest is rich, but the laborers are few.” (Mt 9:37). Therefore, the Congregation, in its desire to meet the apostolic needs of our time, should try in all possible ways to

find for itself, and for the entire Church, suitable candidates endowed with good character and well-educated by family, they should be fit to receive priestly and religious formation. All members, together and singly, should realize that they are personally responsible for seeking out and cultivating workers for the Lord's vineyard.

*PC 24; RF 10*

***Prayer and Example***

**154** Members should express concern for new vocations primarily through daily and fervent prayer to “the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to His harvest” (Mt 9:37). They also should remember that the example of their own lives, lived with a humble and cheerful spirit as well as mutual brotherly love, are the best recommendation for the Congregation and an encouragement to embrace religious life. They should also strive to attract youth to God's service by their own apostolic work performed with diligence and eagerness.

*CR 356; OT 2; PC 24*

**PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. Where did God find you? What were the beginnings of your religious vocation? From what “fatherland” did you leave, how was your life then?
2. What “promise” did God give you, calling you to the religious way of life? What have you chosen, for what did you desire when you joined the community? To what degree are these desires still alive in you today?
3. At what moment in the history of your vocation did you experience the religious life as a special gift, as a safe stronghold, an antechamber to Heaven, a garden of the Lord?
4. How in your history, do you experience the truth that religious life is dangerous, constantly threatened by the weaknesses of the “old self” and the attacks of the Devil?
5. What in the living of your religious vocation bears a particular expression of the characteristics of the Passion and the Paschal mystery? What is your heaviest “cross of religious life?” According to your experience does the radiance of the Resurrection shine through it?
6. In the straight forward, daily experiences of life, does a “change of habits” occur in you? In what way and by how much does it differ from a way of life in “the world?”
7. In what way are you today a proclaimer of the good news of religious life, especially in regards to young people?

## CONFERENCE II

### FRATERNAL LOVE IN A COMMUNITY

Summing up his life, St. Francis, the Founder of one of the largest Religious Orders in the history of the Church, recalls the Order's beginnings in one short sentence: the Lord gave me brothers, He entrusted them to my care. Amongst Religious Founders there were some, such as Charles de Foucauld, who in their lifetime did not see confreres. Others fled from this "Divine Gift" to ever farther caves even into the heart of the desert. However, for all of them, without exception, the relationship with their brothers was one of the most essential elements of their religious pathway: a place, where in a most direct way, they could live out the truth of human sin and where, with ever greater intensity, they touched the merciful love of God. Without a doubt, it was truly in the heart of this community, in which they lived, for which they longed, and from which they fled, that they heard the voice of God, a call which they followed. From fraternal relationships flowed one of the fundamental streams of their history of salvation.

Similarly, the life of our Founder can hardly be imagined apart from a religious community. He sought it in the Piarists and later, when he struggled with difficulties in the establishing of his "Little Congregation," as he frequently called the Marians. The longing after a fraternal life has several important characteristics for Father Stanislaus Papczyński. The first and probably the most noticeable is this one: that the seeking of a community arises from a more primordial, fundamental calling, which he carried deep within his soul. He desired with all his heart to serve the Lord, to give Him all his life and with all his might, to seek for perfection in this service. This vocation was like a fire, which continuously burned within him and which was not extinguished even in the most difficult moments of his life. A burning flame brought him to enter the Piarists and to depart from the Piarists. A zeal required him to put aside the proposed benefice and ecclesiastical positions offered him by the bishop, and in difficult uncertainty and misunderstanding, to seek a community, with which he would be able to share this inner desire. Recalling the founding of the retreat house in the Korabiew hermitage, Fr. Papczyński wrote: "Nevertheless by Divine disposition it so happened, that – when the matter was brought to naught – I was summoned to Warsaw by my singular patron, the Most Distinguished Lord John Gębicki, at that time Bishop of Plock, afterwards of Cracow. And indeed he was offering me the dignity of a Canon of the Plock cathedral; which I refused for the love of God and because of my intention to honor

the glory of His Mother, although by this deed, the Patron was gravely offended by me, who greatly desired to unite me, adorned by this dignity, to his closest associates. There was no lack of Most Holy Religious Institutes, which were inviting me into their company; assuredly I was unwilling, since I eagerly desired greater perfection. After all, the Divine vision, which was imprinted upon my soul in respect to the founding of the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. M. 180, having spurned all things, and also the possibility of a return to the Institute of Pious Schools having been hindered 181, was compelling me to the goal of that vision” (Foundation of the House of Recollections, p. 6).

In the above statement, one can already see the call to found a new congregation; it appears, however, that the earlier and more fundamental desire of Fr. Stanislaus was to serve God in a religious community. It was only when the life of the Piarists did not fulfill his expectations that he began to understand more clearly, that God was calling him to travel on a new path.

From the above written piece flow other characteristic features of the Founder’s unfolding search for a new community. Looking at his road, one can very clearly define the kind of “communities” that he was not looking for, from which he literally ran away, and which he set aside. He uncompromisingly rejected every form of communal life defined as “soft-light-easy”, every recoiling from a zealous quest for God and His service on behalf of more comfortable living. Father Papczyński was not looking to find buddies in a community, but brothers on the road to salvation. And this was at the root of his problems both at the Piarists and in the Korabiew Forest. He thus recalled his first days spent in this hermitage: “Very early in the morning, I rose from sleep and woke up the Hermits to come for prayer. However, on the second and third day, they complained boisterously before Krajewski, who had already returned and who they are more willing to work with, that they are being forced by me to pray. I noticed therefore, that those men have no inclination to prayer, that they are headstrong men, and that they are dwelling in the Hermitage not from a zeal for penance or for perfection, but to be generously supported by alms, which the people, regarding them as saints, were copiously offering through Krajewski, who use to make the rounds of the Courts of the noble-men. Consequently, I decided to depart, having made some spiritual renewal for at least a month”(Founding of the House of Recollections, p. 18) It is worth noting here, that Fr. Stanislaus spoke with great respect and love about the communities that he left, as though he was looking above and beyond human sinfulness, seeing God’s presence in them. He wrote of the Piarists, where he suffered: “Not a few knew that I was in the Congregation of the Pious Schools, which was more dear to me than my life, in that most sweet Society of the Poor of the Mother of God. It is very difficult to explain how highly I valued my vocation, stirred up solely by God. Moreover, I belonged to that most holy company, bound to it not only by the bond of love, but also truly bound by the commitment of the

oath of persevering in it for ever. I wanted the first to be indissoluble; the other was dissolved by the one, to whom was given the highest authority of binding and of loosing, the Vicar of the Most Holy Jesus Christ, the legitimate Successor of Saint Peter, Pope Clement X. And yet ah! It came to this by the way of the cross!” (Founding of the House of Recollections, p. 2)

In examining the communitarian expectations and experiences of our Founder, we must be aware of this, that here it is not a matter of some kind of peripheral Marian vocation, of something, that is not essentially changed among the elements of our charism and may remain somewhere on another plain. The Word of God, as well as everything that the Church says about herself and the religious life today, points to this, that it is just the opposite. The communal (*communio* or *konomia*) character of the consecrated life pertains to both the very heart of the history of sin and salvation, and also the mystery of the Church. We may say that in a certain sense, it has a fundamental meaning, more essential and more primordial than any particular charism. God created man, male and female. The first ADAM is a person totally immersed in the life-giving love of God, remaining at the same time, in a deep (necessary and intended by God) relationship with Eve, another person, whom the Creator put before him, face to face, as a most precious gift and “help.” This communion of the Garden of Eden is rooted in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, out of which it grows and takes its strength, simultaneously anticipating in a certain way, the mystery of the Church. The sin of the first parents tore unity with God apart, producing a profound destruction of mutual relations among people. Expulsion from Eden is expulsion from community. The gleaming sword of the angel seals the road and renders the return of man to the community of Eden impossible for human nature wounded by sin. A “wall of enmity” mounts between people, which causes a lack of unity and understanding, wars, vengeance, murder; in a word, it clothes humanity with a deep ignorance of the wide sense of death. Jesus tore down this wall restoring our unity with the Father. By His bodily Crucifixion, He put enmity to death. The good news of the Resurrection is the news of love and forgiveness that are more powerful than death. The new, the last Adam opened the gates of the new Paradise. Communion was made possible by the Spirit of the Risen Lord as the fruit of His Paschal mystery. The fires of Pentecost radiated for the first time in the world, the mystery of the Church-community, which in the riches of various languages, rejoices in the unity that comes from above. The Acts of the Apostles clearly show that one spirit and one heart, together with love, broke all divisions and barriers, as the first confirmation of the Church. Only God has the might to restore to man the power of such a love, which can cause, that this “Other”, and this “Other” are no longer “strangers” and “enemies,” but brothers and sisters in Christ. A religious community exists at the very heart of this mystery of salvation, about which the documents of the Church most emphatically speak in recent

years (see, for example, *Vita Consecrata*, part 2; *Fraternal Life in Community*, 8-10, *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 28-19).

In the viewpoint sketched above, it is worth putting forth the question, what value did our Founder give to communal life and fraternal love? From among all his preserved writings, not one is entirely dedicated to the communal life or fraternal love; however, in each one of them, we may find his reflections, encouragements, or a complete observation on this topic. For Fr. Stanislaus, love has an absolutely fundamental significance. He who does not possess the virtue of love, does not possess any of the virtues and is a veritable ignoramus. In *Inspectio Cordis*, he writes: “You will not err, if you will observe that the one who lacks love, this one has none of the virtues. Vain and fruitless is learning, which does not come from love. False and ineffective is obedience, which is undertaken and performed without love. Vain and false is humility, which has a speck of hatred. Base and hollow is chastity, which lacks, as a companion and caretaker, holy love. Heartless and vile is poverty, practiced without love. Deficient is gentleness, not born out of love. Frigid is any perfection, virtue or action not warmed by love.” (IC 166v; see also 28v). In social and communal dimensions, mutual love is the provision of survival and development, but its opposite – hatred – is the greatest threat: “Love is the soul, light, and life of Religious as well as of all human communities. Therefore, the one who destroys love is as one who destroys life, like someone putting out a light, as one who snuffs out a soul. This happens because, the lack of love in one member resounds in the entire body. This can be seen in the example of a human body: if one finger is cut with a poisoned blade, poison travels through the arm and infects the entire body and all parts of the body suffer the wound of one member. Thanks to the love of particular persons as religious members — the Superiors, peers and inferiors — one body is formed as a community. On the other hand, hatred is contrary to love. It is the most harmful, the poison of all poisons, more deadly than any epidemic” (IC 165r; see also 152r). For Fr. Stanislaus, the love of God and the love of brethren are inseparable. Fraternal love is the touch-stone of the love of God and determines salvation and eternal life. Many times we hear the saying, that he who does not love his neighbor, who is not on fire with this love, this one is not filled with the love of God and is not worthy of it (IC 68v; 83r. 152r). Frankly, this is a matter of spiritual life or death: “Concerning mutual love: let it be known that the one who excels in mutual love is more dear to the Divine Majesty. Each of you should keep in mind that the soul of his Institute is love, and to the extent that he withdraws from love, he withdraws from life. Therefore, even as he will promote the good, reputation, integrity and holiness of the whole Congregation, so he will render to the individual members of this same Congregation all those things, which he would wish for himself. And so he will avoid this contagious disease very opposed to love: envy, hatred, rancor, rivalry, suspicion, calumny, exclusive attachment, antipathy, jealousy, se-

cret accusation, jeering, whispering, verbal abuse, annoyance, ambition, contempt for others, disturbances, agitations, quarrels, contentions. As he will watch over the tranquility of his own spirit, so the zealous guardian of love will also give great care to guarding the tranquility of others and of the whole house. He will suitably drive away any evil both from the whole Congregation and from each of its members. Call to mind the love of the early Church, about which the writer of the Acts of the Apostles says, “The community of believers were of one heart and one mind” (Acts 4:32).” (NV II 4). This reference to the early Church is very significant, because it lets us assume that Fr. Papczyński saw the communal life as a particular embodiment of the communal mystery of the Church.

However, the fundamental reason for fraternal love is Jesus Christ. We are called to it by His commandment: “Would you dare now to vilify someone’s good name, destroy other person’s life, work, customs; to avenge yourself for insults; or to nurture hatred against your brother when Christ, the Judge of us all, commands you otherwise, when His Word constantly calls out to us: “This is my commandment: love one another” (IC 37v)? Without love and harmony, Christ cannot be present within a community, as Fr. Papczyński so beautifully and expressively writes with his words in *Inspectio Cordis*: “Consider how the Lord himself values unity and harmony: for when He saw His disciples gathered together in one accord, He immediately appeared in their midst. Since unity grows in harmony, wherever unity reigns, there also is love. And where there is true love, there Jesus cannot be absent, for He is truly Love.

As often as you break the bonds of love or disrupt unity, so many times you exclude Jesus and expel Him from among His disciples – your brethren” (IC 46r). Christ not only calls us to love, but He is its example in a very special way, because He loved us as His enemies and gave His life for us. A Marian is called to a particular participation on this road. He must share torments and misfortunes, put up with most unpleasant things, serve his confreres, tolerate their mistakes and carry their burdens (see IC 29v, 38r, 11v, 116r, NV II 4-5; *Spiritual Testament* I 3). One of our Founder’s last instructions was the commandment to mutual servile love. He wrote in his first spiritual testament: “Above all I desire, my beloved, that among you would be the flower of peace, concord, and mutual love; carry one another’s burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Reading Fr. Papczyński’s words about love and his instructions for the brethren, we discover the Spirit that filled Jesus, when in His “High Priestly Prayer” during the Last Supper, He handed over to his disciples love for one another. The Spirit, Who through the lips of Saint John the Evangelist repeated endlessly: “friends, love one another,” and which St. Paul fulfilled when he wrote Chapter 13 of his First Letter to the Corinthians. Without any doubt, our Founder fervently desired to live in a community filled with ardent love for God, among brothers, who observing religious discipline, zealously serve the Lord and support each

other on the road to eternal life. He longed for a community, where love and forgiveness reigned, where the weak and fallen receive support, and where brothers do not seek themselves and serve one another in such a self giving life that they meet Jesus, who lives among them. He dreamed of such communities for every Marian. We ought to ask ourselves: would he want to live with us in one of our houses today, or “would he decide to withdraw,” as he did from the Korabiew Hermitage long ago? This does not mean a return to the hair shirt and flagellation, but something more essential and fundamental. Are our communities for us places, in which the main function is to guarantee for us a certain existential security, a satisfying of fundamental (and not only this) needs, assuring a “base” for pastoral ministry, etc.? Are they a gift of God, a place, where He is present and gives us guidance? Does our road of pilgrimage in faith run through the community and in the community, together with the brothers, or is our life and our heart elsewhere? One must continuously question oneself and pray along with Fr. Stanislaus: “O Love, the noblest princess of virtues and teacher of perfection! Holy Love, eternal fire, redeeming flame, nurturer of souls, mother of peace, link binding nations and souls, spirit uniting us with God! Never cease and never extinguish in my heart, love toward God, the Highest Good and toward my brothers! Be my companion everywhere, in each thought, resolution, intention and action! Do not turn away from me forever! May knowledge abandon me and prophecies and mysteries, but you do not abandon me (c.f. 1 Cor 13:8-13). May I enter with you the very dwelling of the saints and into the kingdom of love, from where, you the mightiest of virtues, have brought down God’s Child to the earthly kingdom. Amen” (IC 166v).

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### **Basic scriptural text: Rom 12:1-21**

*1 I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. 2 Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. 3 For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. 4 For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; 7 if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teach-*

ing; **8** if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. **9** Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; **10** love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. **11** Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. **12** Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. **13** Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. **14** Bless those who persecute (you), bless and do not curse them. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. **16** Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. **17** Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. **18** If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. **19** Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." **20** Rather, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." **21** Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.

**Scriptural references for deepening the reading:**

- verse **1**: Jn 4:21-24; Rom 1:9; Rom 6:8-14; Acts 10:34-43; 1 Cor 3:11-17; 1 Pt 2:1-9.
- verse **2**: Rom 8:5-11; Rom 14ff; Rom 26ff; Eph 4:23ff; Eph 5:8-14; Phil 1:9-11; 1Pt 1:13-16; 1 Jn 2:15-17;
- verse **3**: Phil 2:1ff; 1 Cor 13:1ff; 2 Cor 10:12-18;
- verses **4-8**: Eph 4:7ff; 1 Cor 12:1ff; Ti 1:5-12; Mt 6:1-3;
- verse **9**: 1 Pt 1:22; Jn 13:34-35; Phil 2:3-4; Am 5:14-15; 1 Jn 2:9-11; 1 Jn 3:10-24
- verse. **10**: 2 Pt 1:5-9; Phil 2L3-4;
- verse **11**: Rev 3:14-16
- verse. **12**: 1 Cor 13:13; Acts 1:14; 1 Thes 5:16-22; Heb 10:32-36;
- verse **13**: Rom 15, 26-27; Heb 13:1-3;
- verse **14**: Mt 5:38-48; Lk 6:27-36; Acts 7: 56-60; 1 Cor 4:11-13;
- verse **15**: Ps 35:12-15;
- verse **16**: 1 Cor 12:15-27; Prv 3:7; Is 5:21; Rom 15:5;
- verse **17**: Prv 3:4; 2 Cor 8:21; 1 Thes 5:15; 1 Pt 3:8-9;
- verses **18-21**: 1 Cor 6:1-8; Deut 32:35; Prv 25:21ff; Rom 14:18; Mt 5:38-48; Lv 19:18; Jas 5:4;

## **Other scriptural texts pertaining to the topic:**

Gal 5:13-6:10

*For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another.*

*Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deluding himself. Each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason to boast with regard to himself alone, and not with regard to someone else; for each will bear his own load. One who is being instructed in the word should share all good things with his instructor. Make no mistake: God is not mocked, for a person will reap only what he sows, because the one who sows for his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith.*

Eph 4:25-32

*Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil. The thief must no longer steal, but rather labor, doing honest work with his (own) hands, so that he may have something to share with one in need. No foul language should come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace*

*to those who hear. And do not grieve the holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. (And) be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.*

1Jn 2:7-11

*Beloved, I am writing no new commandment to you but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. And yet I do write a new commandment to you, which holds true in him and among you, for the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother remains in the light, and there is nothing in him to cause a fall. Whoever hates his brother is in darkness; he walks in darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

1Jn 3:14-24

*We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him. The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. (Now) this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Beloved, if (our) hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit that he gave us.*

Acts 2:42-47

*They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, prais-*

*ing God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

Acts 4:32-35

*The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.*

## PRESENT MARIAN RELIGIOUS RULES

Out of all paragraphs of our Constitutions and Directory speaking about fraternal love, paragraphs 94 and 95 sound, in my opinion, as if written by Fr. Papczyński himself. The reference to the early Church and perception of love and the “soul” of communal life were particularly close to his heart. The obligation of having a perfect love and living in unity and harmony belongs to our Congregation’s mission and is a sign of our Marian vocation. Those are the gifts of the Holy Spirit and a very special role in their development belongs to the celebration of the Eucharist. See:

**Paragraphs of the Constitutions: 1, 12, 31, 69, 91, 94-95;**

**Paragraphs of the Directory: 58.**

### *Marians in the Church*

**1** The Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary is a fraternal community of clerics and laymen in the Church who, bound together by mutual charity and their apostolic mission, promote the glory of God and strive for evangelical perfection. Freely responding to the call of divine love, the members assume the obligations of the common life and of witnessing to perfect charity, so that dedicated to Christ and His Church by a new and special consecration through the profession of Evangelical Counsels bear more abundant fruit from the grace of baptism.

*CR 1; LG 44; PC 1*

### *Distinctive Marks*

**12** They should especially try to excel in a spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice; in humility, piety and industriousness; in a lively, firm faith and fervent char-

ity; in a mutual fraternal union and perfect obedience to Superiors; in an apostolic spirit and active zeal.

*CR 10*

### ***Love of Enemies***

**31** Let them forgive injuries willingly; let them not return evil for evil to any one, but rather try to overcome evil by good; and also let them pray for their enemies, persecutors, and calumniators.

*Mt 5:44; Rom 12:21; CR 173*

### ***Sacramental Life***

**69** May the confreres, according to the mind of the Church, with interior and exterior piety, celebrate the sacred liturgy, in which Jesus Christ fulfills His priestly office, while by visible signs the sanctification of men comes to be, especially in the mystery of the Eucharist, which is the bond of unity and charity. May they also strengthen their spiritual life, drawing from this richest fount.

*PC 6; SC 7*

### ***One Body and One Spirit***

**91** All should highly esteem and cultivate the establishment of common life, which should be animated by the spirit of God's family and fraternal charity, of holy and true friendship and cordiality, of mutual solicitude and solidarity, as the source of all spiritual good. They should be one body and one spirit, just as they are called in the one hope of their vocation.

*Eph 4:4; CR 278*

### ***Gift and Precept of Charity***

**94** Charity, which "has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5) and owing to which we are united with Christ through baptism and participation in the Eucharist, is to be extended by the members to all their confreres with whom they are united by the same vocation and the same manner of life. Reciprocal fraternal charity is the soul of common life and of all that occurs in the Congregation; they should foster it among themselves by mind, heart and deed, anticipating one another in showing respect, being mutually condescending and forgiving, correcting one another in the Lord and rousing one another to good.

*NV II, 4; CR 288; 292; PC 15*

### ***One Heart***

**95** Like the early Church in which the multitude "of believers were of one heart and one mind" (Acts 4:32), the members forgetful of self should live not only with others but also for others in a spirit of fraternal service. They should

show to one another assistance, deference, defense, and consolation. With united forces and counsels, they should harmoniously and unanimously strive in fraternal cooperation to attain the purposes of the Congregation. Let each one rejoice in the successful result of the work of the others and assist them, so that they may fully refine their talents in God's service.

*CR 288; PC 15*

## **Directory:**

### ***Mutual Love***

**58** Let them hold in great esteem true friendship and cultivate it among themselves; let them be on their guard, however, lest they exclude certain members from camaraderie and let them avoid whatever smacks of frivolity or sensuality. Mutual love should flourish and it should be spiritual, active and universal, that is, a love that extends to all the confreres and embraces all of them. (C 95)

*CR 290*

## **PROPOSALS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What is your experience of the community in the history of your vocation? What do you see as positive and as negative? In your opinion, is this evaluation in accord with the criteria Father Papczyński used?
2. What would be different in your inner and exterior life should you live in a religious house all by yourself?
3. What religious virtues do you possess? How much love do they have?
4. In what circumstances of your community life did you experience fraternal love, which is placed on the first plain and which accepts and forgives all? In what way did this experience give fruit in you life?
5. Is the religious community as a place for you of a pilgrimage in faith and growing in holiness, or as a "hotel" where you eat and sleep? What has the greatest impact on this state of affairs?
6. What kind of decision do you usually make when faced with a choice between your own plans, pleasures, apostolate and the spiritual and material well being of the community? What are your motives and how do you usually feel about it?
7. In what way does your community, in which you presently reside, give witness to the truth that love and unity are possible through the power of the Spirit of the Risen Lord? What ought to be changed in order for this witness to be clearer? What can you do in this matter?

## CONFERENCE III

### TOOLS FOR BUILDING UP THE COMMUNITY

A religious community is a gift of God. It is the Spirit of the Risen Christ who gives it growth. *Koinonia* [community] descends from above; it is both a gift and an assignment for man. It may be accepted or rejected. It may grow and vibrate with God's life or it may decline into inactivity, indifference, and the coldness of death. The historical life of a given community, moving toward development or atrophy, greatly depends on each member of the community. There are vices that particularly ruin a community and there are virtues, which – if practiced – will hasten its growth. The centuries-long tradition of common life has fashioned concrete religious practices permitting a deeper and a truer communion in Christ, according to the Spirit of God, not in accord with the flesh and the world. The recent documents of the Church give absolute priority to the spirituality of communion. They speak equally of the external tools of communion, the realities and means which help to foster it. They also mention certain attitudes, which especially benefit a community: true and earnest friendships, empathy, accommodating a brother, bearing a brother's burdens; and those that destroy it: egoism, distrust, jealousy, rivalry, reckless pursuit of a career (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43-44; *Starting Afresh with Christ*, 29). One may find in the writings of Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński, many thoughts and ideas concerning the virtues and the vices in common life. Among the practices in the Religious life which may be identified as tools for the building up of a community, our Founder assigns special roles to the forgiveness of trespasses, fraternal admonishment, communal prayer, the Eucharist, and obedience to the superiors.

#### Vices and virtues

In Fr. Founder's writings, we may frequently come across some peculiar lists of good and evil attitudes, which foster either the growth or the decline of one's vocation. Enumerating religious virtues and vices, Fr. Papczyński records many that more or less directly influence the common life. So as to avoid a minutely detailed analysis, let us consider only the statements that reveal themselves in an obvious community context. That which builds up community is mutual love, which manifests itself in a variety of ways; however, the most important one is

the attitude of service to the brethren as well as forbearance, affirmation, and forgiving their transgressions, because mutual forbearance is the sign of a perfect love for one's neighbor (cf. *IC* 83r). The role of the virtue of love in the religious life was extensively discussed in the previous conference. However, it is worth recalling here, that this virtue has an absolutely fundamental significance for Fr. Stanislaus. "On the other hand hatred is contrary to love. It is the most harmful, the poison of all poisons, more deadly than any epidemic" (*IC* 166r). Father Stanislaus is very categorical in his opinion of this vice and always speaks of it in very strong words, such as expressed above. Hatred together with jealousy and envy, form a deadly triad that closes the road to healing, cutting one off from the sources of unity which resounds in the Eucharist. "Your soul will not be healed, even by the most beneficial medicine of Christ's Body, if you suffer from such afflictions as envy, jealousy, or hatred. Do you really want to drive Christ, the Master of the world, out of your heart? If you don't, then quickly purge every evil that lurks in the core of your soul" (*IC* 134v). Hatred has several intimate companions extremely deadly to the building up of a community. Fr. Founder did not fail to mention them in every one of our early religious rules. "Each of you should keep in mind that the soul of this Institute is love, and to the extent that he withdraws from love he withdraws from life. [...] And so he will avoid these contagious diseases very opposed to love: envy, hatred, rancor, rivalry, suspicion, calumny, exclusive attachment, antipathy, jealousy, secret accusation, jeering, whispering, verbal abuse, annoyance, empty ambition, contempt for others, disturbances, agitations, quarrels and contentions" (NV II 4; cf. also *IC* 166r).

### **Forgiveness of transgressions**

The ability to forgive, mentioned by Fr. Stanislaus among the attitudes necessary for communities where Christian love reigns, was given his profound attention in *Templum Dei Mysticum*. In Chapter XXI dedicated to the renovation of the Mystical Temple, which was being ruined by godless acts, our Founder discussed fourteen works of mercy which rebuild her and through which, one may obtain everything from God. Among the seven works pertaining to the spirit, we find "forgiving the trespassers" (*MTG* XXI) and the "remission of offences" (*MTG* XXI). Similarly the first attitude, which touches forgiving trespasses, as well as the second, which characterizes itself by the renunciation of revenge and of one's rights, are for Fr. Papczynski, the means by which one may become more like Christ and imitate the mercy of our Heavenly Father. "To forgive those who wrong us, and to be reconciled with our enemies, this – I say – is not just peculiarly Christian, but distinctly divine. For in what manner do we more clearly express the goodness of God, than in forgiving offenses and loving our enemies? Indeed,

the Goodness of God shone out most brightly for us in this, that He reconciled us to Himself through His Son, while we were His enemies, not only granting us forgiveness of our sins, but being willing to sacrifice Him for us, in order to satisfy justice” (MTG XXI). Practicing forgiveness in a community is an unfailing sign, that the love which unites brothers is truly a Christian love, clearly bearing in itself the Paschal image, drawing its strength from the love of the Father, who loved us sinners and gave His Son, that we may have life. Father Papczyński has this conviction, which he states, that he who persecutes his neighbor joins the persecutors of Christ Himself; on the other hand, those who endure persecution and forgive offenses become like unto the suffering Lord (cf. MTG XXI). This is more clearly shown by the fact that, for our Founder, there exists an extreme contradiction between a lack of forgiveness and the receiving of the Eucharist. He writes of this often, in very caustic words. It’s worth quoting at least one of these zealous statements: “Listen to this, you, who nurture never-ending hatreds and foster continual rancor in your hearts. You are waiting for a chance for vengeance, and meanwhile, in the most Holy Eucharist, with Judas, you give kisses to Christ the Lord. If your trespasses are to be forgiven you, as you are used to forgiving your enemies, then your salvation is lost, you have perished. Therefore «love your enemies» as Jesus urges, «that you may be children of your heavenly Father» (Mt 5:44-45)” (MTG XXI; see also IC 46r,v; IC 68r). The Eucharist is the celebration of forgiveness and union with God, drinking the Blood of Christ, as St. Ambrose wrote, we drink the remission of our sins and we fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit. The categorical statements of Fr. Stanislaus remind us, that by approaching the Table of the Lord with a heart filled with hatred and destruction, we drink our incriminating verdict, not our forgiveness.

The lack of forgiveness is for Fr. Papczyński a sign of madness, it makes us liars before God and prepares a condemning sentence at the last judgment. He writes beautifully of this, pondering the words of Christ who forgave His executioners from the cross: “We succumb to this madness to such an extent, that we would rather fall into Hell, than calmly overlook, forgive, and place in the wounds of our Savior, a certain cutting remark, a small offense or a lack of respect shown to us, even though we call to our Heavenly Father each day: *and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us* (Mt 6:12). Either we must forgive, or, if we do not forgive, we have to lie to God. But to what end? That we may multiply the sum of our debts? This is preposterous and will show itself to be most stupid! We must forgive even those, who do not ask for it, so that we, who do ask, may receive forgiveness from God. We must forgive, so that we may be forgiven” (OC 6-7). It is equally worth remembering, that the invitation to a life of forgiveness, concerns not only our inner-communal relations, but should extend in equal manner, as Fr. Founder clearly instructs us in his rule, to those outside of the community (see NV II 5).

The forgiveness of transgressions within the community is one of the fundamental signs of the presence of the Spirit of the Risen Lord. Only He gives man a love that is capable of crumbling the walls of animosity that arise from sin. Only a love that comes from above does not seek itself and does not keep a transgression in mind.

### **Fraternal admonition**

Another tool for fostering community, as well as a particular indicator that the community enjoys true Christian health, is fraternal admonition. All groups of people, including religious communities, possess a large array of means by which they may function. These means may be classified as describing the character of interpersonal relationships. Following this path, we may distinguish certain groups, even in the consecrated life, i.e. “common interest,” “consolers and clingers-on,” “mutual admiration societies,” “committees for elections,” “lobbying groups,” “mafia” – which are bonded by that which is evil and “comrade cliques” bonded by what is mediocre, as well as “gossiping old ladies,” “converters” or “killjoys” etc. On the very bottom of this list – its negative pole – we find Cain’s group of murderers who say within their hearts *Am I my brother’s keeper?* (Gen 4:9). The positive pole has the group of brethren seeking salvation and concerned with the life of each of its members. When fraternal admonition is functioning well, this shows that the community members wish to grow and to seek deeper relations with God and with each other.

For Fr. Papczyński, the ability to accept a fraternal admonition has a significance which is absolutely fundamental. The one who does not have this, only deceives himself into thinking that he seeks God’s will, if in reality he is not capable of seeking and accepting it. This sort of attitude does not bode well for the future of a “Religious”. In his reflection on the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Simon and Jude, our Founder wrote: “Be attentive as to an infallible sign, that the one who does not disdain admonitions from the servants of God, and particularly from his superiors, does not neglect God’s will. On the contrary, the one who rejects fraternal admonitions, by turning a deaf ear to them, and even grumbling and ridiculing them, is completely unfit for fulfilling God’s commandments. When you oppose someone’s admonition, then in vain shall you call and pray: *Speak Lord; Your servant is listening* (cf. 1 Kgs 3:9). In vain will you ask: *May it be done unto me according to your will* (cf. Mt 6:10; 26:42; Lk 22:2), if you are so sensitive that you cannot hear even one word of criticism about yourself for your improvement, you will not be able to hear it with gratitude or at least with some patience. Only time will tell what else may come from this attitude” (IC 138r). By making this statement, our Founder inscribes himself into the mainstream of the purest

tradition of the life of faith and the Consecrated Life. This is the pilgrim path on which Abraham journeyed, obedient to God, and the chosen people who prayed each day “Shema Izrael” (Hear, O Israel!, Dt 6:4). This is the road of the Church, living by a faith borne out of listening (see *Letter to the Romans*, part 10). This path emerges from the entire tradition of the Consecrated Life, starting with the Fathers of the Desert, to whom disciples came, asking for a word of life and conversion. Saint Benedict – the Father of western monastic life – also followed this path and assigned it for his spiritual sons, who begins his rule with these words: *Listen, O my son, to the precepts of thy master, and incline the ear of thy heart, and cheerfully receive and faithfully execute the admonitions of thy loving Father, that by the toil of obedience thou mayest return to Him from whom by the sloth of disobedience, thou hast gone away* (Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue, p. 1. He also encouraged listening to the admonitions coming even from the newcomers and the young).

When writing about admonition, Fr. Stanislaus, usually very decisive and uncompromising in his opinions, shows exceptional tact and moderation. Admonition must be mild, prudent and patient, without excessive zeal, anger or vehemence which could result in harm, not benefit. Vices obtained throughout years must be gradually uprooted (see *MTG XXI*). Without “face to face” fraternal admonition, no person’s failings should be made public. “When a fault of an individual, and to a much greater extent the sin of several or of a community, becomes known to more persons, it is usually fiercely defended; some prefer to suffer the loss of their salvation, even though very imprudently, to that of their good name” (*MTG XXI*). In admonishing, consideration should be given to the nature and character of those to whom it is directed; at this point, it is of primary importance to pray for the admonished. “Just see how gently and cautiously we must proceed in fraternal correction! Some correct themselves, when they hear their own shortcomings being rebuked in others; some, unless they see their faults, do not acknowledge them, and believe that others are being corrected in them; some are made worse by frequent admonition; some eagerly desire to be admonished even in the smallest things. [...] I return again to the prudence of a rebuke, and I do not speak ineptly. One must have a regard for the nature of those to be rebuked, and their character; the occasion and method must be wisely applied; indeed one must more fervently pray to God for the obstinate and destitute of grace, that He may accomplish with His light, what exceeds our prudence or authority, since sometimes with this light, He converts the most wicked into the most holy. Here prayer helps more than harsh rebuke or severe blame” (*MTG XXI*).

One can never free oneself from the task of admonishing, for one’s neighbor is entrusted to each person, and the indulgence of evil is the ruination of whole communities. In extraordinary situations, concerning “authorities”, admonition is risky and becomes a heroic deed. If we are strengthened by the grace of God, then

Fr. Papczyński advises that we enter the battle to either win or to die. If nothing can be done, then all that remains is to not approve of someone's mischievous behavior (see MTG XXI).

### **Eucharist, prayer and other common practices**

It is hard to find in Fr. Founder's writings any lengthy reflections on the communal dimension of the Eucharistic celebrations or the role of prayer and other community gatherings (meetings, examination of conscience, etc.) for building up unity in the Religious Life. That would have been a classical error in historicity. It was a different time, a different piety, a different manner of living the liturgy, and "communio" was not a leading ecclesiological category. The main "occurrence" during the Holy Mass was the receiving of Holy Communion with a focus on the deepest, most personal, intimate meeting with Christ. In those times, the fostering and celebrating of fraternal unity was not the primary goal of the Eucharist, community prayers or other gatherings; at least it was not the clear and conscious formulated goal. The primacy of position was rather given to the service of God, the attaining of religious and moral perfection. However, short passages may be found, in which Fr. Stanislaus connects the above mentioned practices and community life, concretely on the level of fraternal love. We already spoke of the mutual exclusion in oneself, between the lack of forgiveness and the receiving of Holy Communion. The reception of Christ cures us from covetousness, and it gives us strength to repay the wrongs we have done in the likeness of Zacchaeus, who after receiving Jesus into his house, repaid four times over, everyone that he had wronged before (cf. IC 157r). In the context of preparing to receive the Eucharist, meditating on the appearance of Christ to His disciples after the Resurrection, our Founder emphasizes, that the unity and love of the assembled brethren calls forth the presence of the Risen One: "*Jesus came* (Jn 20:19). Consider how the Lord Himself values unity and concord: when He saw that disciples were gathered together and were in agreement, He immediately appeared among them. Unity grows out of agreement. Where unity reigns, there also is love. And if there is true love, then Jesus cannot be absent, for He is Love. However often you break the bond of love or disturb unity, so many times do you exclude Christ and remove Him from the circle of His disciples – your brothers. Remember how Saint Francis, the Seraphic Patriarch, did not allow a certain brother to go to bed, whose soul was tormented by a grievance towards another brother, until he purged from his heart the virus of this inappropriate feeling, which could even have been hatred. How far more suitable, and even necessary is it, for you to come to the holy table of Jesus without such anger? Go, therefore, and first reconcile with your brother" (IC 46rv).

Absence from community exercises is at times the source of many misfortunes and failings. Saint Thomas the Apostle is an example of this: his absence at the moment of Christ's appearance resulted in his lack of trust: "... *one of the Twelve was not with them when Jesus came* (Jn 20:24). You can imagine how unhappy, in a sense, St. Thomas was because of not having been there with the other Apostles, when the Lord appeared to them. Perhaps the very reason for his procrastination, hesitation, and lack of trust was a result of his absence from the common gathering. How many spiritual benefits have you lost, if sometimes through indifference or carelessness, you have missed common exercises – be it prayers, meetings, or public acknowledgement of faults. From this a lukewarmness of spirit grows in you. From this, a cloud of ignorance arises as well as waves of improper thoughts. Therefore, so that you would not fall into this avalanche, and find yourself near despair regarding the possibility of receiving the grace of faithfulness, ridding yourself of imperfections, and improving your shortcomings, strive to be present at community exercises, and pray today with the Royal Psalmist to the Lord: 'Restore my joy in your salvation, sustain in me a willing spirit'"(Ps 51:14) (IC 145r).

In speaking of the building up of the community, we cannot overlook the very important role of its superior. However, this theme deserves a separate investigation.

While listening to our Founder's voice, it is sometimes worthwhile to examine our consciences as to our concerns for the depth and the growth of the common life. We ought to ask ourselves: are our communities indeed places of unity and reconciliation? Is fraternal admonition working properly and is it a genuine sign of our seeking the will of God? It is worth asking ourselves about the specific attitudes which harmonize with fraternal love. "As to the love of your neighbor, you ought to consider if you have been taken over by such vices as anger, grumbling, dislike, jealousy, hatred, suspicion, disrespect, a lack of concern, indulgence, distrust, duplicity, calumny, and even slandering of the dead. Or perhaps they were not dominating in you, but in the meantime, you were unjustly accusing others, or tolerating this state of affairs, while unbelievably, you were casting someone else onto the trash pile in your angry impatience? Perhaps you wish others well, but you did not rejoice in a stranger's goodness, or you did not help someone in need? Perhaps you did not bring relief to the poor, or you despised someone or failed to show due respect? Did you not bear with someone's limitations, or did you not pray for him? You may have envied the good of others because of some good fortune or talents given to them by God, or did you destroy or belittle them? Maybe you detracted or slandered not only the good reputation of another, but also his works? Maybe you didn't keep your word, or you did not work within the community? Perhaps when a great danger threatened some person's salvation, you did not utilize to some degree, even extraordinary means, so as to save your

neighbor from it? Take into account that to unjustly upset another person, and especially for futile reasons, is contrary to love; for example, to cause distress to your superior, your peers or your subordinates for a very unimportant matter; to cause turmoil or to be the cause of difficulties to the whole Order, Province or House where you reside. Maybe you have wounded the eyes and souls of others by your inappropriate Religious Life or behavior, and in this manner, you violate – or even destroy – the resplendent union, the most precious, and the most divine virtue. In this way, have you not become the cause of some sort of disturbance? Haven't you disrupted the peace and quiet within the Religious House, or on the outside, among the laity or the people belonging to another state of life? Maybe in your activities, you have neglected to share with others, that which is good in you, or that which you have obtained, thanks to the grace of God and your own diligence? Possibly, despite your strengths and abilities, you did not avoid the threat of everyday evils? Did you fail to become an example for the Order and your Local House, but especially for the Lord's Church, by not contributing to her growth, and by not helping whenever you were precisely able and obligated to do so, in accord with the measure and quality of the talents given to you by God and obtained by nature? And when others did this, did you help them, or on the contrary, did you hinder them? Considering the above account, and many other transgressions contrary to love of which your soul is accused by the Divine Spirit, be sorrowful in the most perfect manner for the known offenses, resolve to make amends for them and strive once again to return to deeds of holy love" (IC 165v-166r).

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### **Basic biblical reference: Gal 5:13-6:10**

*5:13 For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. 16 I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. 18 But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, 21 occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such*

things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. **24** Now those who belong to Christ [Jesus] have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. **26** Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another.

**6:1** Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted. **2** Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. **3** For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deluding himself. **4** Each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason to boast with regard to himself alone, and not with regard to someone else; **5** for each will bear his own load. **6** One who is being instructed in the word should share all good things with his instructor. **7** Make no mistake: God is not mocked, for a person will reap only what he sows, **8** because the one who sows for his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. **9** Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. **10** So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith.

### **Biblical references for deepening the reading of the text:**

verse 5:13 – Ex 6:15-23; 1 Peter 2:15-17; 1 Cor 9:19-23;

verse 5:15 – Is 9:17-20; 2 Cor 11:19-20;

verse 5:19-21 – Rom 1:26-31; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 2 Cor 12:20; Eph 5:1-9;

verse 5:22-23 – Eph 5:1-9; 1 Cor 13:4-7; Rom 13:8-14; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 2P 1:5-7;

1 Tm 1:5-11;

verse 5:26 – Phl 2:1-11; 1 Cor 10:23-24;

verse 6:1 – Ps 141:3-5; Mt 18:12-19; 2 Tes 3:14-15; Jk 5:19n; 2 Tm 2:24-26;

1 Cor 10:12;

verse 6:2 – Rom 15:1-6; 2 Cor 11:26-30; Jn 13:34-35;

verse 6:4 – 1 Cor 11:28-32; 2 Cor 10:12-18;

verse 6:9-10 – Ps 126; Mt 24:9-14; 1 Cor 15:54-58; 2 Tes 3, 7-15; Jn 9:4; Rom 12:9-13; Tt 3:8.

### **Other scriptural texts pertaining to the topic**

Rom 12:1-21

*I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you*

*may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith, if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute [you], bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Rather, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.*

#### Acts 2:42-47

*They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

#### Col 3:5-17

*Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. Because of these the wrath of God is coming [upon the disobedient]. By these you too once conducted yourselves, when you lived in that way. But now you must put them all away: anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language out of your mouths. Stop lying to one another,*

*since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.*

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace onto which you were also called in the body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

James 3:13-18

*Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. Wisdom of this kind does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RELIGIOUS RULES.**

The entire third chapter of both our Constitutions and Directory are dedicated to community life. These documents address fraternal love in a more general and theological perspective, but they give us an array of concrete and practical instructions. They strongly emphasize the need for mutual service, solidarity, care (particularly for the sick and those going through a crisis), forgiveness, and hospitality. They definitely require presence at community prayers and religious practices, dispensation of which may be given in exceptional cases only. The role of the Eucharist in building up the community is feebly addressed. It is also difficult to find any extensive connection to fraternal admonition (in regard to superiors, there exists the function of “monitor”). Instead, they mention how the house convention plays a part in the fraternal life as well as the role of recreation (it seems evident, that in the writings of Fr. Papczyński, this topic is completely missing). See:

**Constitutions paragraphs: 12, 91-100, 102, 107, 113-114;  
Directory paragraphs: 58-69, 73, 182,283.**

***Distinctive Marks***

**12** They should especially try to excel in a spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice; in humility, piety and industriousness; in a lively, firm faith and fervent charity; in a mutual fraternal union and perfect obedience to Superiors; in an apostolic spirit and active zeal.

*CR 10*

***One Body and One Spirit***

**91** All should highly esteem and cultivate the establishment of common life, which should be animated by the spirit of God’s family and fraternal charity, of holy and true friendship and cordiality, of mutual solicitude and solidarity, as the source of all spiritual good. They should be one body and one spirit, just as they are called in the one hope of their vocation.

*Eph 4:4; CR 278*

***Observance***

**92** Common life in the houses of the Congregation, with regard to common prayer, the apostolate, meals and living conditions and the entire manner of life, is to be exactly observed by all. Therefore, no one is to be easily exempted from any common exercise, nor all the more, be allowed to remain alone outside the community for a longer time.

*CR 279; PC 15*

***Lengthy Absence from the House***

**93** A Major Superior, with the consent of his council, may permit a member to live outside a religious house, but for no more than one year, except when the reason is caring for poor health, for the motive of studies, or of an apostolate fulfilled in the name of the Congregation.

*CR 280; CIC 665, 1*

***Gift and Precept of Charity***

**94** Charity, which “has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5) and owing to which we are united with Christ through baptism and participation in the Eucharist, is to be extended by the members to all their confreres with whom they are united by the same vocation and the same manner of life. Reciprocal fraternal charity is the soul of common life and of all that occurs in the Congregation; they should foster it among themselves by mind, heart and deed,

anticipating one another in showing respect, being mutually condescending and forgiving, correcting one another in the Lord and rousing one another to good.

*NV II, 4; CR 288; 292; PC 15*

### ***One Heart***

**95** Like the early Church in which the multitude “of believers were of one heart and one mind” (Acts 4:32), the members forgetful of self should live not only with others but also for others in a spirit of fraternal service. They should show to one another assistance, deference, defense, and consolation. With united forces and counsels, they should harmoniously and unanimously strive in fraternal cooperation to attain the purposes of the Congregation. Let each one rejoice in the successful result of the work of the others and assist them, so that they may fully refine their talents in God’s service.

*CR 288; PC 15*

### ***Special Care***

**96** Special care is to be given to the sick, elderly or disabled members. All, especially the Superiors, are to embrace them with love and care and strive to provide them such conditions that they may always feel useful.

*CR 394*

### ***Mutual Tolerance***

**97** Carrying one another’s burdens, the members should patiently bear with the faults and weaknesses of their confreres which are inevitable in human life. In charity, they should try to understand and tolerate the opinions that are different from their own, as well as other disagreements that arise from the diversity of character, age or nationality. In this way, let the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace be preserved in the Congregation.

*Gal 6:2; Eph 4:3*

### ***Union among the Houses and Provinces***

**98** Throughout the whole Congregation, between the principal house and all the provinces and houses and between these same reciprocally, the closest union, agreement and harmony and the greatest charity should reign. It should be fostered by frequent contacts, by communication and notification of what is being done and is edifying and by the works to be undertaken in common. If an opportunity for helping other houses or provinces should occur, the members should not be found wanting in the duty of charity.

*CR 295*

### ***Hospitality***

**99** Let them show great charity to the members coming from other houses. They should offer them a loving hospitality, counsel and aid them in expediting their affairs, and also if they are in need, to assist them. The guests, on their part, should strive to show gratitude to their confreres and by the example of their life leave behind in the house an incentive for them to strive after perfection.

*CR 289*

### ***Vocation Crisis***

**100** If it happens that a member undergoes a crisis in his vocation, the community is obliged to offer him the help necessary to overcome the crisis.

### ***Recreation***

**107** Every day some free time should be foreseen in the daily order to renew one's strength for new work. Recreation should benefit not only the body, but also the soul and should nourish and foster mutual love among the members. Peace, cheerfulness and also joy in the Lord are recommended to all.

*CR 313-314; ES II, 26*

### ***Bringing the Peace of Christ Everywhere***

**113** In dealing with others, let them be human and simple, but cautious, circumspect, and prudent; in speech let them observe moderation and discretion as well as frankness and truthfulness. Let them beware of speaking evil about anyone or of injuring his good name, let them not introduce into their conversations anything that may divide minds; but let them try to the best of their ability to bring the Kingdom of Christ and the peace of Christ among all and to foster and promote harmony and a sense of fraternity and to work for the salvation of all.

*CR 182; 189; 190; 191*

### ***Practice of Social Virtues***

**114** Humility, gentleness, modesty, politeness, kindness and religious maturity and seriousness joined to affability are so to adorn the members that by their exterior bearing and decorum they might set an example for others, edify those who meet and approach them and render their ministry more efficacious.

*CR 187*

## **Directory:**

### ***Mutual Love***

**58** Let them hold in great esteem true friendship and cultivate it among themselves; let them be on their guard, however, lest they exclude certain members

from camaraderie and let them avoid whatever smacks of frivolity or sensuality. Mutual love should flourish and it should be spiritual, active and universal, that is, a love that extends to all the confreres and embraces all of them. (C 95)

*CR 290*

### ***Healthcare***

**59** Just as excessive solicitude about those things which pertain to the body is reprehensible, so, a moderate and prudent concern for the body's strength and health, which is a precious gift of God, is recommended to all so that they may be able to apply themselves more intensely and for a longer time to God's service. Therefore, healthiness and the rules of hygiene should be prudently kept. Should anyone notice that something is more seriously harming his health, he should candidly and humbly make it known to his Superior. (C 96)

*CR 393*

### ***Vacations***

**60** Each year sufficient vacation time, which is to be spent in a manner agreed upon with the Superior, should be granted to the members. (C 96)

### ***Social Assistance***

**61** Individual communities being concerned with the care of confreres can avail themselves of the insurance, social security and pensions laws. (C 96)

### ***Convalescent Homes***

**62** The provinces, in so far as it is possible, should show solicitude to have certain houses in more healthful localities for the recuperation of the strength and good health of the members. (C 96)

*CR 394*

### ***Infirmarians***

**63** In each house, one of the confreres should be designated, if this is possible, to provide for the ill, all the help and services they need. (C 96)

*CR 396*

### ***Complete Care for the Sick***

**64** It is the duty of the Superior of the house, together with the infirmarian, to be vigilant that a doctor be summoned at the right time for the sick, that the remedies prescribed by the doctor be accurately supplied, and that all their other just needs and conveniences be taken care of. All the ill should be helped by the special prayers of the entire community and also spiritual support should be provided for them. (C 96)

*CR 396-400; 403*

### ***Patience in Illness***

**65** The ill should moderate their demands in the spirit of penitence and poverty and accept the illness itself as a gift of God and a special instrument from the hand of God for their sanctification and they should bear it with patience and a tranquil mind and with complete submission to divine providence. Without rejecting human assistance and not renouncing the hope of recovering their health, let them however above all desire that the will of God be perfectly done in their regard. Those who are more seriously ill should without fear and at the right time prepare themselves for death. (C 96)

*CR 398*

### ***Controversies to be Settled***

**66** If any controversy should arise among the members, it should ordinarily be settled peacefully, charitably, and justly within their home among the confreres. All controversies and judicial processes with non-members should all the more be avoided as far as this is possible. (C 97)

*CR 333*

### ***Unpleasantness Borne or Remedied***

**67** If anyone feels that he is undergoing an unpleasantness from someone in some matter, even by his own Superior, he may either bear it patiently for the merit of eternal life, or sincerely and candidly, personally or through another, reveal what it is that is oppressing him to the same Superior; but if the Superior should be unwilling to remedy the matter or cannot do so, observing the order of instances, it is permitted to have recourse to the Major Superior, who should settle the matter prudently and apply a remedy in the Lord. In ordinary matters the command of the immediate Superior must be accepted until a Superior of a higher level has decided otherwise. (C 97)

*CR 334*

### ***Penal Remedies***

**68** If scandal or serious disturbance of order should arise from the behavior of some member, the Superior should admonish him personally or through another, even in writing. If the admonition and reprimand have remained without effect, an order should be given with a threat of punishment in the event of its transgression. (C 97)

*CR 341-345*

### ***Prescripts of the Law to be Observed***

**69** In settling disputes and in conducting processes, the prescripts of canon law are to be observed, and in imposing punishments, uppermost in mind should

not be the punishment of the fault, but rather, the correction and emendation of the member, and also the healing and edification of the community. (C 97)

*CR 335; 340*

### ***Correction of the Common Life***

**73** Each month at the local convention, with the Superior presiding and having before their eyes the Gospel precepts and the laws of the Congregation, they will review their common life and its defects. On this occasion, the Superior will add exhortations and opportune admonitions so that the religious spirit in the community may continually flourish and grow.(C 102)

*CR 331; 742*

### ***Monitor***

**182** Each Superior is to appoint for himself a monitor who is to watch over his manner of life and should, if necessary, admonish him. (C 213)

*CR 498*

### ***Fostering Fraternal Unity***

**283** He should with utmost care foster fraternal unity among the members and not tolerate mutual anger and dissensions among them; if something of this nature should occur, he is to see to it that, with due forgiveness, they immediately return to mutual friendliness. (C 269)

*CR 733*

## **PROPOSALS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR SHARING**

1. In listening to the Word of God, in what concrete ways do you feel called to the building up of the community? What Good News concerning the fraternal life does the Word of God bring to you?
2. Which of your personal characteristics may be of specific use for the building up of community, and which may be harmful to it? Do you really put to work the good ones and fight the bad?
3. Can you really say of yourself that you are a servant of the community, that you serve your brothers? In what way does this concretely manifest itself?
4. What is your experience of the “joy of forgiving” in religious community? In what way do your confreres’ transgressions toward you and your reconciliation with them influence your relationships? Are there some brothers who for some reason, you have crossed out of your life, long ago and forever?

5. What kind of place in your life does prayer for your brothers have, especially the difficult ones? What kind of experience do you have in the power and fruit of such prayers?
6. Are you able to go to and openly tell your brother what you have against him or to ask for his forgiveness? Do you practice fraternal admonition, striving to build up the community in Christian love, or do you rather choose acquiescence, gossip or Cain's indifference?
7. Do community meetings have any kind of value for you; do you rather see them as a necessary evil? Do you make an effort to participate in community prayers and meals? What is the main motive in these efforts or what is the reason for the absence of such efforts?

## CONFERENCE IV

### A SUPERIOR IN THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

After many years, we still gladly remember the good people who were our superiors and took care of us. If they cared for our conversion and our salvation, then we speak of them to the coming generations. Of those who once were... of the good people, who presently are our superiors we speak of them in varied ways. The charism of superior-ship is one of the most important gifts in a religious community. It may be said without over exaggeration, that it is one of its constitutive elements, because it cannot exist without a superior. A community devoid of a superior's presence quickly begins to lose its supernatural character and evolves into a group governed by purely sociological laws, without forethought, pushing the interests of the strongest members or various "associations of influence and pressure." The service of a superior comes under attack from different sides. We live in times very strongly marked by the lack of fatherhood, by immaturity, and frequently by extreme individualism, all of which necessarily leads to the attacking and abolishing of all authority. We carry this world within us and it enters religious life with us. It comes to this very important and weighty relationship between the superior and each confrere's spiritual dimension, connected to our conversion and birth into a new life. The "old man" living inside each one of us, by his very nature, treats his superiors with a purely disinterested indifference. Satan hunts them down according to the principle: "strike the shepherd and scatter the sheep," he knows, how important their role is for the religious path of salvation, and for his part, he always encourages one thing: full hatred.

Other than the numerous statements scattered about in different works, Fr. Papczyński dedicates the whole of chapter VII in his *Norma Vitae* to superiors. Most of his instructions, despite the elapse of time, remain timely and some cry out loudly to be applied to life. The first and most basic requirement expected of the superiors is to be present in the community. In his "Directives to my Marian confreres" written shortly before his death, Fr. Papczyński commands in strong words: "The superior must not distance himself from the House, unless it happens infrequently and for a grave reason. During a time of his absence, in keeping with the law, let him appoint another in his place, to whom all for the sake of the Lord are to be obedient." Such a rigorous disposition is not very surprising. The position, which Blessed Stanislaus apportions to superiors, is extraordinary. When we attentively read for ourselves the Rule of Life, we will easily note, that most

every element of the first Marians' religious life depended on their agreement, permission or blessing. It was the superior who was solicitous about the practice of poverty and chastity (see NV III 2, 3), additionally, what the confreres were eating and in what kind of clothing they went about (see NV III 2, IV 2), their silence (see NV V 4), the cloister (see NV V 8), flagellation (see NV IV 6), study and work (see NV VI 2, 3), their rest (see NV V 9), prayer (see NV V 5), and the entire daily schedule (see NV VI 7). The burden of those who run the risk of endangering their chastity rests with the superior (see NV III 3), also of the sick and the dying (see NV IX 5), and the fostering of communal life by convoking meetings (see NV IX). We have to necessarily point out here, that this broad spectrum of duties and the excessively deep look into the life of the confreres in no way comes from a conviction that their level of vulnerability and immaturity requires a constant solicitous presence of a nanny and the watchful eye of a "Big Brother" in the person of a superior. The motives for his kind of attitude have their roots in a faithful conviction, that his instructions, acts, and counsels are the work of God, who guides, encourages and leads him (cf. IC 8r). Our Founder writes of this often and in various ways. A Religious should listen to his superiors, because their words are the words of God, whom they represent (see IC 27r, 39r). The Holy Spirit Himself shows them the way on which they have to lead the sheep in their care (see IC 60v). For this reason the Blessed directs Religious: "You therefore shall honor your superiors, as Christ living in you, and to their dispositions, wishes and intentions be obedient, as if to the dispositions of the Holy Spirit, being of a saintly conviction, that if you are obedient to them, then in the future you will never be deceived by anyone" (ibid, also see IC 97v, 129r, 136v, 138r, 144r, 150v). Of course someone might rightly say that what used to be good in the past, does not necessarily have to be so today. The Marians were different, they had a clear eremitical character, and the times were different. There is less of an accent on the communal nature of the consecrated life, the need for dialogue in seeking God's will, the individual requirements of every single person, and the concern for their development and maturity. This is all true, however this does not address in any significant way, the role which the superior fulfills in the community from the standpoint of faith. The Holy Father, John Paul II asserts this in his exhortation *Vita Consecrata*: "In the consecrated life *the role of Superiors*, including local Superiors, has always been of great importance for the spiritual life and for mission. In these years of change and experimentation, the need to revise this office has sometimes been felt. But it should be recognized that those who exercise authority *cannot renounce their obligation as those first responsible* for the community, as guides of their brothers and sisters in the spiritual and apostolic life. In an atmosphere strongly affected by individualism, it is not an easy thing to foster recognition and acceptance of the role which authority plays for the benefit of all. Nevertheless, its importance must be reaffirmed as essential for strengthening fra-

ternal communion and in order not to render vain the obedience professed. While authority must be above all fraternal and spiritual, and while those entrusted with it must know how to involve their brothers and sisters in the decision-making process, it should still be remembered that *the final word belongs to authority* and, consequently, that authority has the right to see that decisions taken are respected” (VC 43). In this context it is worth asking ourselves if the superiors are really present in our communities? And are they present as superiors, this means, with the right of decision-making and intervention in our lives, plans, and pathways? How many superiors do we have as “absentees” whose life and involvement are outside of the community and who, for various reasons, don’t have the time, strength or desire to fulfill the functions entrusted to them in a true manner? How many superiors do we have, who are made “powerless” by commitments, ties, the wish to please confreres, emotional pressure of the community, Religious “holy cows,” who, because of their special offices and missions are subject “indirectly” and “to a certain degree”? How many of our superiors are truly those who “first listen (to God and confreres), “second discern”, and “lastly decide”? Is it possible that we may “frustrate our vow of obedience”?

The service of a superior is an office and a charism. It belongs in great measure to that stratum of the consecrated life’s reality, which can only be understood in the perspective of faith. Nevertheless, it is fulfilled by people, and for this reason every Founder tries to define the characteristics, which a candidate must have for this function. In reading the lists of virtues required in superiors as recorded in the religious decrees, one may envision a person, who is a miraculous cross between a sheriff, a superman, and a Mother Theresa of Calcutta. There are superiors who are convinced that they most successfully exemplify this mutation; however, the majority consider this as a designated ideal, a sure way, which they ought to follow. What path does Fr. Papczyński point out to them? We will find a rather detailed description in chapter VII of *Norma Vitae* dedicated to the superiors: “Let all of the superiors remember this warning of the Divine Spirit: “If you are chosen to preside ... be not puffed up, but with (them) be as one of themselves” (Sir 32:1). Therefore, be not a dictator, but be an example that the flock can follow. Let him then first do by example what he is about to order others by word. He is equally an observer of the law with others, not only its custodian. Let him be endowed with piety, discretion, and prudence, moderating zeal with mildness and moderating mildness with zeal; lest through too much strictness or indulgence he hurts the Institute, rather than contributing to its good. He should not aggravate his own men with rigid penances or commands. Rather, he should burden each with what conforms to his strength, talents, and abilities. Since his subjects are bound to obey without any excuses, the one in command must foresee that he imposes on each such an obligation as they will be able to fulfill for God’s glory and their own merit.” (NV VII 2) In the same chapter, Blessed Stanislaus

presents the expected requirements for the formators of novices, which may also be understood as certain signs of the characteristics that the superiors should also have. Moreover, the Novice Master is in a way the primary, the ideal superior of a young Religious: “Those should be appointed as Novice Masters who are exemplary, prudent, industrious, endowed with the discernment of spirits, those who above all would teach all lessons perfectly, they will occupy and exercise them in denial of themselves and of what belongs to them, in the following of Christ the Lord, in contempt for passing goods and the desire for the eternal, in patience, humility, modesty, silence, penitence, zeal for prayer, regular observance, and most of all, in the love of God. Novice Masters will always have before their eyes that the care of those to be formed has been entrusted to them – care, first of all for attaining the salvation of their souls, and in the second place for the honor and advantage of the Congregation” (NV VII 7). Summing up, we can say that only a candidate characterized by zeal and an authentic religious life, wise and even-tempered, understanding his confreres’ needs and weaknesses, as well as seeking their true good, would receive Fr. Stanislaus’s approval for the office of the superior. Strong emphasis on maturity, patience and level-headedness comes from his profound understanding of the monastic life and has a long-lasting tradition in religious rules. It is both a matter of protecting the subjects, for it is important that a superior “[...] does not damage the vessel, when he wishes to rub off the rust,” as St. Benedict wrote in his Rule (chapter 64, On the election of the abbot); as to the candidate himself, “because the impetuous, restless, stubborn, envious or suspicious will never know peace” (ibid.). Describing the manner of electing a Provincial Superior, Fr. Papczyński names one attribute, which disqualifies a candidate for being a superior: “If anyone at anytime shows himself an ambitious person, let him be known as perpetually unfit for any offices” (NV, IX 1).

The superior’s exceptional role within the community may cause him to find himself in difficult circumstances, equally in matters both internal and external. For example: he often has to deal with murmuring. This does not mean the murmuring of a nearby brook, or an evening wind singing through the tree branches. It is the grumbling coming from behind his back on the lips of his confreres, full of dissatisfaction, sarcasm, and malice. This incident is very destructive for his functioning as a superior and for the whole Community. It may even lead to an open revolt. Blessed Stanislaus frequently speaks most firmly against grumbling and revolts. In his letter to his Marian confreres, he reminds them, to particularly “[...] scorn disagreement, rebelling, and grumbling against the superiors.” These acts are considered by our Founder as serious violations of the vow of obedience, and even a sign of the inability to fulfill the will of God (see IC 138r, 145v, 162r). Other than the external frictions and pressures within the community, the superiors are jeopardized by two circumstances, which directly affect their personal relations with God. The first one is their neglect of themselves. Father Papczyński

writes about it with extreme sensitivity in his Rule: “Thus, if any one of the superiors would appear to someone a bit negligent or less than exemplary, let him not cease to respect him for this reason, considering the Lord, because the Lord Himself states: «... *do everything and observe everything they tell you. But do not follow their example*» (Mt 23:3). Indeed, the superiors are owed much compassion, for while they serve all, they are at times forced to neglect themselves. Therefore, let the members of the Community always pray for the superiors, so that God will enlighten, lead, support, and preserve them in His grace” (NV VII 3). The second difficult circumstance concerns the interior life – the experience of temptation and sin. It is very significant that our Founder recognizes it as a rule and it may be assumed that he draws this conviction from the practice of consecrated life and ministry as a confessor. In his *Inspectio Cordis* he writes: “Therefore you also ought to learn to commiserate more with sinners instead of being angry with them. It is above all a rule of Divine Providence, that equally on persons righteous and those desiring perfection, as on others, eg., the Superior, to allow great temptations, or even a fall, so that, having come to their senses, they may support others and may know how to hurry with aid for the unfortunate, inexperienced in the occasions of evil” (IC 121v). As can be seen, being a superior is not a piece of cake, and to those who have to eat it, they deserve love, respect, and prayer (see IC 60v, NV III 1).

When just a small fragment of God’s plan regarding the road of religious obedience in the Church is being revealed to us, when we begin to understand the way in which founders of other religious orders and congregations regarded the fulfillment of the superior’s office, then we have nothing else to do but to strike our breast and cry out, paraphrasing the prophet Baruch: “To you, O Lord, be the justice and glory, and to us – shamefulness of the face” (cf Bar 1:15; 2:6). And probably each of us will admit that he ought to do so, be he either a superior or a subject. I firmly believe that, Father Stanislaus Papczynski, either because of his own difficult dealings with the Piarist Superiors and with Krajewski in Puszcza Korabiewska, or also because of his active longing for an authentic religious life, did everything within his power, so that among the superiors of his beloved Congregation, there weren’t people who would fulfill this service by accident, unwillingly, additionally or “marginally” to other occupations, or because of a desire for power and autonomy. Who, where and why one is a superior, is a real indication of the actual concern of the religious life in a given institute. Since a fish decays from its head, maybe healing also comes from the head.

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### Basic biblical text: 1 Peter 5: 1-11

*1. So I exhort the presbyters among you, as a fellow presbyter and witness to the sufferings of Christ and one who has a share in the glory to be revealed. 2 Tend the flock of God in your midst, [overseeing] not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it, not for shameful profit but eagerly. 3 Do not lord it over those assigned to you, but be examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you younger members, be subject to the presbyters. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for: "God opposes the proud but bestows favor on the humble." 6 So humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. 7 Cast all your worries upon him because he cares for you. 8 Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for [someone] to devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings. 10 The God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Christ [Jesus] will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little. 11 To him be dominion forever. Amen.*

### Scriptural references for deepening the reading:

verse 1: Col 3:1-4, Lk 24:44-49, Rom 8:14-17, 1 Peter 1:3-9;  
verse 2: Jn 10:11-14, Acts 20:24-35, 1 Cor 9:13-23, Ti 1:7-9, 1 Tm 3:8-10;  
verse 3: Ez 34:1-16, 2Cor 1:23-23; Phil 3:17-21, 1 Thes 1:6-10, Ti 2:7-8;  
verse 4: 1 Cor 9:24-27, 2 Tm 4:6-8, Heb 13:20-21, Is 40:9-11;  
verses 5-6: Prv 3:34, Jn 13:12-17, Is 57:15, Mt 23:1-12, Hi 22:29, Jas 4:6-10, Phil 2:1-11;  
verse 7: Ps 55:23, Ps 37:5-6, Sir 2:1-18, Mt 6:25n, Phil 4:4-7;  
verses 8-9: Hi 1:6-12, Ps 22:13-14, Lk 18:3, Eph 6:10-20.

### Other scriptural texts pertaining to the topic

Heb 13:1-17

*Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels. Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment, and of the ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the body. Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the immoral and adulterers. Let your life be free from love of money but be content with what you have, for he has said: "I will never forsake you or abandon you." Thus we may say with confidence: "The Lord is my helper, [and] I will*

*not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching. It is good to have our hearts strengthened by grace and not by foods, which do not benefit those who live by them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. The bodies of the animals whose blood the high priest brings into the sanctuary as a sin offering are burned outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he bore. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come. Through him [then] let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have; God is pleased by sacrifices of that kind. Obey your leaders and defer to them, for they keep watch over you and will have to give an account, that they may fulfill their task with joy and not with sorrow, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Mt 23:1-12

*Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens [hard to carry] and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

Lk 22:24-27

*Then an argument broke out among them about which of them should be regarded as the greatest. He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and those in authority over them are addressed as 'Benefactors'; but among you it shall not be so. Rather, let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater: the one seated at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one seated at table? I am among you as the one who serves.*

Jn 13:1-17

*Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean." So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it.*

## **PRESENT MARIAN REGULATIONS.**

Our Constitutions set before a superior two model persons. They are: Jesus, the Good Shepherd and Mary filled with maternal care. Throughout the chapters of the Constitutions, there are scattered paragraphs which speak of the role and function of superiors. These can be divided into two groups: pastoral and maternal. The superior is the one, who is called to the actual leading of the community. He has to discern the will of God, to seek the true good of the community and of its individual members, pray for the confreres, to watch over their fidelity to the spiritual life and discipline. He also has to surround the confreres with love and care, support their initiatives and mutual responsibilities, attend to their needs, and take care of those who show their weakness. See:

**Paragraphs of the Constitutions: 52, 55, 59, 60, 62-64, 78, 82, 102, 221-223.**

***Solicitude of Superiors***

**52** Superiors, with fatherly concern and utmost care, should, insofar as possible, adequately satisfy the legitimate needs of members in accord with each one's age, health, duties, and other conditions, without favoritism. Let them willingly listen to the requests and wishes of the members and let them receive from each one a proper accounting of money and the administration of other goods. Moreover, in their decisions and permissions, especially those of a general character, concerning things allowed for the use of the members, let them be vigilant that nothing creeps in that is contrary to poverty or the common good or the character and goals of the Congregation.

*CR 237; 286*

***Imitation of Christ***

**55** Just as our Lord and Master Jesus Christ did not come into the world to do his own will but the will of his Father and, "taking the form of a slave" (Phil 2:7) in submission to his Father, ministered to the brothers and surrendered his life as a ransom for many, in like manner the members submit themselves in faith to the Superiors as God's representatives and are guided by them in the service of all the brothers in Christ.

*Mt 20:28; CR 195; PC 14*

***Dependence on Superiors***

**59** The members will depend with docility on the Superiors for the following: the order of pious exercises and occupations, duties and offices, contacts with outsiders, public mortifications, studies and the undertaking of any more important ministry or work for their neighbor either within or outside the Congregation.

*CR 202; CIC 671*

***Humble and Active Obedience***

**60** The members should make an effort to acknowledge their Superiors as ones who minister to the fraternal community while they show humble deference to them according to the norms of the Constitutions. Moreover, they should hold in the highest esteem an active and responsible obedience as the principle means to maintain the unity, solidity and vigor of the entire Congregation.

*CR 194; 207; 210; PC 14*

***Responsibility of Superiors***

**62** As those who will have to render an account for the souls entrusted to them, the Superiors themselves, should first try to understand and have a love for

the will of God, that they are to reveal to others in a spirit of brotherly service, as it is related to the entire Congregation and to each one of the members over whom they preside.

*Heb 13:17; DS 25 I 1911; PC 14*

### ***Manner of Governing***

**63** Following in the footsteps of the Divine Master and Good Shepherd, and sharing in the motherly love of the Immaculate Virgin, the Superiors should govern the community both with reverence for the human person and for the Christian dignity of each member, promoting through word and by their own example their willing obedience, as well as their organized effort for the common good. They should strive to treat all as companions and brothers in the spirit of true equality and kindness, so as to express the charity with which God loves them and prompt their hearts and minds to reciprocal love of God in faithful service.

*CR 213; PC 14*

### ***Formation***

**64** From the very beginning of their religious life, all the members should be formed in a spirit of active and responsible obedience, so that as Superiors or as members of any community, council or Chapter, they may be ready and able to cooperate in a bond of charity for the good of the Congregation and the entire Church.

*DS 17 XI 1910; 25 I 1911; 7 III 1911; PC 14*

### ***Concern of Superiors***

**78** Superiors should provide members with adequate free time for pious exercises, so that no one is deprived of his spiritual reading and prayer, especially mental prayer. They should with great eagerness promote piety and fidelity in the sacramental and spiritual life among the confreres, especially a full, and whenever possible, common participation in the Eucharist. They should guard against introducing into the community pious exercises or peculiar devotions that do not favor true progress in the prayer life of the members.

*CR 254*

### ***Superior's Prayer***

**82** The Superior is obliged to frequently pray for the confreres who are entrusted to him and to offer one Mass, or more, for them.

### ***Working Together***

**102** Conscious of their cooperation in attaining the good of the house, members should maintain careful diligence in observing the established daily order, in

fulfilling their duties, and in rendering prescribed accounts and making reports. In fact, the Superiors should help them in the faithful fulfillment of their functions by promoting and fostering the harmonious collaboration of all and they should see to it that matters of greater importance be discussed by the entire community; it is, however, up to the Superior with his council, to decide what is to be done.

*CR 321; GS 26; PC 14*

### ***Initiative and Obedience***

**221** Let Superiors try to help the members, so that these may be able to combine personal initiative with humble and perfect obedience.

*DS 25 I 1911*

### ***Example of Life***

**222** Superiors should set a good example for the members, both in prayer and in action, of a life intimately united with God, of love of the Church and one's own Congregation, of religious observance, apostolic zeal, mutual respect and fraternal cooperation.

*CR 516*

### ***Duties of Superiors***

**223** All Superiors:

1) should constantly be concerned that they faithfully fulfill the office committed to them, mindful that they will have to render an account to God of their stewardship;

2) should be zealously watchful for the faithful observance of the Constitutions, Directory and statutes and for the fulfillment of directives;

3) should distribute the duties and offices to the members in such a way that each of them may develop his talents, knowledge or practical skill and bear as much fruit as possible for the Church of Christ;

4) should exercise their authority in a spirit of service so that, when necessary, it be flexible, that it be firm when circumstances require it, and that they be clement, always open and sincere;

5) should diligently seek and receive with gratitude the opinions and suggestions of the members, they should foster common deliberation of the questions brought for consideration;

6) should require from all that, at the proper time, they give an account of their exterior life and duties;

7) should take care that the members be properly informed concerning the status, life and activity of the Congregation, the Province and of their own house, in order that fraternal communion may be increasingly strengthened and that the collaboration of all be developed more efficaciously for the common good;

8) should strive in so far as it is possible for them to acquire and maintain the good-will of those outside the Congregation and to show their gratitude to benefactors;

9) each one, consistent with his office, is to make every effort that in the entire Congregation, in Provinces and houses, life be disposed perfectly in accordance with the Gospel and the laws of the Congregation and that religious discipline, fervor and zeal flourish, that temporal goods be properly administered, that studies and works undertaken for the glory of God and the salvation of souls prosper, that the houses, provinces and the Congregation itself be preserved in good condition, that they increase in perfection, that the Congregation grow in number and merit.

*Lk 16:2; CR 518*

### **PROPOSALS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. In the course of your vocation, how were the superiors that you had? What did God accomplish through them in your life? Which characteristics did you like in them, and what was hard for you?
2. Are you able to describe your relations with your superiors as open and submissive? What part of your life is really submissive to the superior? What aspects of your life do you try to “protect” from his control? What are the reasons for this?
3. To what degree do you recognize the superiors as the representatives of God’s will? Do you seek help from them in the understanding of the path of your vocation?
4. Do you believe that you are (or have been) a good superior? If yes, what is the reason for this belief? What “leadership” virtues and vices do you have?
5. Is the superior a confrere for you, providing support, or someone, who is threatening? How do you support your superior?
6. Do you believe that the relations between the superior and the confreres in your community is supported by mutual prayer to a great degree?

## CONFERENCE V

### THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF A RELIGIOUS

In his post-Synodal apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, John Paul II develops the theology of the consecrated life, taking as his point of departure, the mystery of our Lord's Transfiguration. The radiance of Tabor shines upon every Christian; however, members of Religious Communities are called to its contemplation in a special way. Filled with a love of the Father's voice, the glory of Christ on His way to the Passover, the bright cloud representing the Holy Spirit – all of this holds the most profound truth about each one of us. The Evangelical Counsels are the gift of the Holy Trinity, while “the consecrated life proclaims what the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit, brings about by his love, his goodness and his beauty” (VC 20). It seems that throughout the centuries, while reflecting on the mystery of the consecrated life, the Church has not fully drawn from this Trinitarian source. It is probably safe to say, without any detailed research, that on the Religious path to the Father, the central figure was always seen in Jesus Christ, while the Holy Spirit, even if He wasn't the “Great Absent One,” certainly remained in the shadows. Meanwhile, without His help, no one is able to so much as enter upon this road, nor to follow it. The Holy Spirit causes people to discover His enrapturing beauty, it is He who awakens in them a desire to fully respond to the voice of a vocation, He forms the souls of those called, gives them the grace of fidelity, and configures them into the image of Christ (cf. VC 19).

In our Founder's writings we may find expressions describing, in the Trinitarian perspective, God's indwelling and action in man, though these are not numerous (cf. IC 56v, 62rv, TDM II). In a very clear and decisive manner, Father Papczyński gives priority, in a Religious member's relationship with God, to Christ. He is to be the focus of our contemplation and reflection, as well as the first model for imitation. This fundamental reference to the person of our Redeemer is nonetheless immersed in the very intense and varied presence of the Holy Spirit. Blessed Stanislaus often writes about the works of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. According to him, consecrated life, Marian life, is not possible without the constant help of the Paraclete. He is our greatest treasure: “O highest Grace! O Gift, of which no greater can be had! What more magnificent benefits, graces, and charisms could the Lord give to His disciples beyond the Holy Spirit? When someone possesses Him, it is believed, that he has everything! When someone is

guided by the Holy Spirit, he cannot go astray and he strives on a safe path towards his heavenly Fatherland!” (IC 47r).

What are the sources of this endowment? From where does this heavenly Gift come to us, according to the Author of *Inspectio Cordis*? The gift comes from the love of Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us and agreed to go to the Father, so that the Advocate, the Light of Heaven, the Teacher of Truth, the Spirit of all knowledge could come down on the apostles (cf. IC 51v-52r, 59r, 165r). Beside this Great Pentecost, which happened only once in the history of redemption, Fr. Papczyński shows us several additional places in our daily life, where we receive the Holy Spirit and His gifts in a special way. This happens first and foremost at the moment of receiving the Eucharist. As early as the 4<sup>th</sup> Century of Christianity, St. Ephrem (Ephraim) wrote: “In Your bread lives the hidden Spirit, which cannot be consumed; in Your wine burns a fire, which cannot be drunk” (St. Ephrem, *Fire and Spirit*). Certainly, Blessed Stanislaus agreed with him wholeheartedly. The Eucharist not only destroys in our hearts that which the devil placed there, but it also restores the works of the Holy Spirit in us (see IC 12r). He Himself comes to us with His gifts, when we receive Christ in the Sacramental Feast (see IC 51v-52r, 55rv, 57r, 146r). In this Eucharistic, pneumatological character of our Blessed, we may also write this, that in a necessary way, he associates the presence of the Holy Spirit in man with the disposition of thanksgiving (see IC 34rv). Another source rich in spiritual gifts for our Founder is the Word of God. He recommends calling upon the Holy Spirit before beginning any reflection (see IC 160v). This undoubtedly also concerns reflections based upon the Bible, which remains a closed book for us without the Divine Spirit of Light (cf. IC 52r, 57r). Father Papczyński is deeply convinced, that the Holy Spirit speaks directly to us through the Holy Scriptures. Frequently, when quoting from the Bible, he does not give any precise reference as to which book it has been taken from. He simply introduces his selection with a phrase like “the Holy Spirit teaches, ascertains, explains, reveals, etc. (cf. TDM IV, VI, XXI, XXII, IC 44v, 162r). The Paraclete’s special assistance is given not only to those who listen to the Word, but also, in a special way, to those who proclaim it. Blessed Stanislaus writes beautifully about it in his *Inspectio Cordis*: “To proclaim the Gospel to the poor, that without actual merit means to abound in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and to receive from the King – only by His grace – the treasures of knowledge and virtues, and to possess the received gifts and to wisely share them with the others for their salvation, as well as to serve them for the benefit of one’s own soul” (IC 6v, see also IC 52r). The instructions of the Spirit also reach us through the word of the Church, especially through superiors (see IC 8rv, 50v, 60v).

Various are the ways by which the Dearest of Guests comes to the human soul, and various are the goals of His presence. Father Papczyński notes three of them,

depending upon the needs of the person visited: “Ponder, for three reasons does the Holy Spirit come to us: 1) to enkindle, 2) to console, 3) to discipline.

He enkindles the tepid and the lukewarm, that they may more speedily progress on the road of virtue. He consoles the afflicted, that they may more deeply love the most gracious God, having an awareness of His great concern and care for them and of His goodness. He disciplines the disobedient, sinners, and evildoers, so that they may quickly abandon evil deeds, avoid lies, and cling to the truth” (IC 54v). Different people and different circumstances; however, the basic method of action is the same: to lead man to a better understanding of himself, to conversion, and to an ardent love for God. In his writings, Blessed Stanislaus put a special emphasis on three key points on this road, which are, in his opinion, a clear proof of the actions of the Holy Spirit. The first is the love of truth, especially the difficult and painful kind, which concerns our weakness and sinfulness. According to the Author of *Inspectio Cordis*, the one who has the Holy Spirit, is the lover of truth and is guided by the truth: “He is not of God, who neither speaks the truth to others nor allows himself to speak it; one who neither listens to the words of God, which are the truth, nor proclaims them to others. Thus, if you accept reprimands as valuable, you possess the Divine Spirit. If you admit transgressions of your past and your present shortcomings, if you repent for them and try to improve, you have the Divine Spirit. If you lead others to recognize their transgressions, to regret them and feel disgust, to improve and make amends, you also have the Divine Spirit. For every desire for virtues, every loathing of vices is of the Divine Spirit, because they are the best thing: «... all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights» (Jas 1:17)” (IC 55r, see also IC 62v). For our Founder, the renunciation of sin and the desire for conversion is another, most especially accentuated fruit of the actions of the Holy Spirit. He lives only in those, who strive to atone for their errors and who prefer to die rather than sin again (see IC 57v, mmm1165v-166r). For it may also be known, that the Spirit of Truth lives in a person by his deep humility. Envy, exaggerated ambition, disregard for others, and boastfulness exclude the presence of the Paraclete (see IC 124r, 126v, 146r). For Blessed Stanislaus, one of the most essential signs of His actions is a desire to follow Jesus Christ, especially in the mystery of His Cross. In the chapter of his exhortation *Vita Consecrata* which deals with the paschal aspect of the consecrated life, John Paul II writes: “In the different forms of life inspired by the Spirit throughout history, consecrated persons discover that the more they stand at the foot of the cross of Christ, the more immediately and profoundly they experience the truth of God who is love” (VC 24). Life born of the Spirit in the radiance of Tabor, is led by Him towards Calvary. This is Father Papczyński’s profound belief. In *Inspectio Cordis* he states unequivocally: “Regard it as a certain fact, that you received the true Spirit of the Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, if in your heart there still

remains a desire to imitate the life of Christ, especially in His most Holy Passion. This is an unmistakable sign, that the Holy Spirit has inflamed your heart, when it not only desired to zealously contemplate the life and deeds of the Lord, but also to imitate them as much as possible. From this, the Apostles were also strongly prompted by this heavenly Spirit, and immediately, without fear, proclaimed the glory of Jesus; and beaten for this proclamation, «they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name» [Acts 5:41], that they received flogging for giving witness” (IC 55r, see also IC 146r, 52r).

The Holy Spirit comes to a person, so as to open his eyes to the truth, to gift him with humility, a longing for conversion, and the imitation of Christ. While forming these attitudes, He also pours out upon us inexpressibly rich gifts. He adorns the mystical temple of the human soul with a seven-branch lamp-stand burning with the radiance of gifts: of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of God (see MTG X). He teaches us how to pray and He prays in human hearts (see MTG VII) and gives joy, peace, goodness, humility, prudence, fidelity, generosity, happiness, unity, and love for the entire Church and her various communities (cf. IC 51v, 56v, 57v, 154r, 165r). According to Fr. Papczyński, all gifts of the Holy Spirit involve a double responsibility. First, the grace of the Holy Spirit does not tolerate procrastination; one must respond to inspirations and bring them into life, so that gifts given to us would not become like pearls thrown before swine (see IC 101v, 54v). Second, we have to remember, that charisms are not our own property: “The gifts of the Holy Spirit should be spread out. It is either envy or malice to refuse to show what is virtue to one who desires it, and it is greed to want a reward for one’s advice” (MTG XXI).

It is difficult to estimate the position and significance, which Blessed Stanislaus attributes to the Holy Spirit in the life of a consecrated person. Only He has the power to make a great change, to renew those who have returned to the state of the old Adam, to change the Den of the Devil into the House of the Lord; the cold and sinful soul to be filled with a fervent love, to change the weak and the fearful into untiring apostles ready for toils and martyrdom (see IC 55r, 57v, 62v, 52r). For our Founder, a Religious is a truly “spiritual” man caught up into the “bright cloud” of the Paraclete. In Him we ought to live, work, and die. Perhaps one is not fully a Marian, if one does not accept as his own, the words of Fr. Papczyński’s prayer full of zeal: “The most Holy Virgin Mary, by the Holy Spirit, conceived in her womb the Son of God. This is a mystery, a grace, an article of faith. It was rightly said, that the One who was full of grace, full of the Holy Spirit, will conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

“O, if one could speak of your deeds, that they come from the Holy Spirit, that they were fulfilled in the Holy Spirit! Truly it is a great blessing to possess the Holy Spirit, greater still to act in accord with the Holy Spirit, and the greatest

of all, to complete one's days in the Holy Spirit. What should I say, what am I to think of her, who carries in her virginal womb, the Son conceived by the Holy Spirit?"

"Oh, most fortunate of Virgins! Oh most blessed among Mothers! I congratulate you with all my heart for this privilege, given to you alone from among the choir of holy women. Grant that we may live and die in accord with the Holy Spirit" (IC 107r).

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### Basic biblical text: Gal 5:16-26

*16 I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. 18 But if you are guided by the spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, 21 occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is not law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ [Jesus] have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. 26 Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another.*

### Scriptural references for deepening the reading:

verses 16-18: Rom 8:1ff, Rom 7:14; 1 Peter 2:11, Rom 6:12-14, 2 Cor 3:17-18;  
verses 19-21: Rom 1:18-32, 1 Cor 6:8-11, 1 Cor 3:1-3, 2Cor 12:20-21, Eph 5:1-5;  
verses 22-23: Eph 5:8-14, 2 Cor 6:1-10; 1 Ti 4:12-16, 2 Peter 1:5-7, 1 Cor 13:4-7,  
1 Ti 1:5-11;  
verse 24: Rom 6:1-14, Gal 2:19-20;  
verse 25: Rom 8:13-17, Rom 6:8.

### Other scriptural texts pertaining to the topic:

Ez 36:24-28

*For I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the foreign lands, and bring you back to your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will*

*cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees. You shall live in the land I gave your fathers; you shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

Rom 8:1-17

*Hence, now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death. For what the law, weakened by the flesh, was powerless to do, this God has done: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the sake of sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous decree of the law might be fulfilled in us, who live not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. For those who live according to the flesh are concerned with the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the spirit with the things of the spirit. The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the spirit is life and peace. For the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you. Consequently, brothers, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, Abba, "Father!" The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.*

1 Cor 12:1-11

*Now in regard to spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware. You know how, when you were pagans, you were constantly attracted and led away to mute idols. Therefore, I tell you that nobody speaking by the spirit of God says, "Jesus be accursed." And no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual, the manifes-*

*tation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RULES:**

If it were not fact, that the sentence: “In the present Constitutions the Holy Spirit is not present” rings ill for a Catholic ear, it could be acknowledged as giving the true state of things. The Name of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity is mentioned three times, and once He appears in a Scriptural quote, that’s all. The Marians by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit have to serve people entrusted to their care and to be obedient to their superiors. They have to attentively, vigilantly, and submissively place themselves under Him. The gift of love coming from the Holy Spirit is the source of care and fraternity in the community. Look up:

**Paragraphs of the Constitutions: 3, 32, 54, 94.**

### ***Principal Works***

**3** In carrying out its mission, the Congregation does not summarily exclude any cause, but by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, it serves with all zeal and in every way possible the people entrusted to it in Christ, especially:

- 1) by acquiring and promoting knowledge and by instructing others;
- 2) by exercising the sacred ministry and rendering assistance to diocesan clergy.

*CR 2*

### ***Conformity to the Divine Will***

**32** Members should try to conform their will entirely to the divine will, to which they should submit themselves, should do and fulfill it by faithfully and generously observing the precepts of God and the Church as well as the Evangelical Counsels and their own laws, cooperating faithfully with divine grace, by attentively, discretely and docilely following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by overcoming and enduring adversities and by patiently, bravely and eagerly bearing their cross with Christ.

*CR 174*

### ***Scope of Obedience***

**54** Members, already consecrated to God by baptism, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in a special way offer to God, by the vow of evangelical obedience, a total surrender of their own will as a self-sacrifice and thereby unite themselves with greater constancy and security to the saving will of God.

*CR 194; PC 14*

### ***Gift and Precept of Charity***

**94** Charity, which “has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5) and owing to which we are united with Christ through baptism and participation in the Eucharist, is to be extended by the members to all their confreres with whom they are united by the same vocation and the same manner of life. Reciprocal fraternal charity is the soul of common life and of all that occurs in the Congregation; they should foster it among themselves by mind, heart and deed, anticipating one another in showing respect, being mutually condescending and forgiving, correcting one another in the Lord and rousing one another to good.

*NV II, 4; CR 288; 292; PC 15*

## **PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. How do you accept the word concerning the works and fruits of the Holy Spirit’s presence within the community of the Church and in the life of a Christian? For you, what is the promise and hope which most calls you to conversion?
2. How have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in your Religious life, as the One who is the Consoler and Advocate? When do you most often feel a desire for His presence? In what kind of situations do you most often call out to Him?
3. How do you experience the help of the Holy Spirit in your apostolic work: delivering sermons, in catechetical work, hearing Confessions, various pastoral ministries? Do you ask for His presence and assistance? Do you strive to be sensitive to His inspirations and obedient to them?
4. Do you see the fruits of the Holy Spirit in your life, of which St. Paul speaks in his letter to the Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control? Which ones do you lack most and what in your opinion would be the reason?
5. Father Stanislaus strongly associates the presence of the Holy Spirit in a Religious with such dispositions as love for truth, especially the difficult and painful ones concerning our weakness and sin; humility and a sincere desire for

conversion, as well as love for God and a desire to imitate Christ, especially in His carrying of the Cross. In which of these dispositions do you most clearly experience the help of the Holy Spirit; and in which do you most often have to surrender yourself to His actions?

6. What are the individual charisms that God has bestowed on you? Do you develop them? And if yes, then how? To what extent do you use them to serve the Church and your confreres? What fruit has come out of this service?

## CONFERENCE VI

### SATAN – ATTACK AND DEFENSE STRATEGIES

So it is in this world, that at every window the Devil sits, and according to the specialists, two devils sit on each parapet of a religious house. I remember this teaching from my novitiate days. Probably, somebody thought up this thesis, so as to keep young consecrated men from looking longingly into the distance, which – as the history of King David tells us – can come up to no good. The majority of us consider this “parapet demonology” looking with skeptical eyes, nowadays, this topic is very important. The precursors of the religious life went into the desert, which was the territory of demons, to engage them in battle for death and life, convinced that every consecrated man is a slap on the face to the Devil, who attacks him with a particular viciousness, and that he is present from the very beginning, with reflections on life in accord with the evangelical counsels. Today, when we speak of the Devil, we often fall into extremes. It often happens that as the source of all unhappiness and trials for someone, he may overshadow a whole horizon of religious reflection, or the opposite, driven from the real world, he takes up living along with witches and dragons, in some legendary misty lands and fairytales. Meanwhile, it is worth remembering, that evil, which persons experience, and from which they seek salvation from God, is not an abstraction at all, but a person (CCC 2851). The one, who was a murderer and a liar from the beginning, strives to draw men into his personal revolt against God. Though defeated by Christ, till the end of the world, he will remain the enemy of mankind, full of hatred, fighting those who keep the commandments of God and bear witness to Christ (cf. Rev 12:9.17).

Father Papczyński certainly did not treat this enemy lightly. He also had a full awareness, that everyone who desires to serve God on the road of the religious life, will be tempted and attacked with particular viciousness. “[...] In the world, there are many such people who do not suffer temptations, because the Evil Spirit already counts them as his own, and does not unleash his powers against them, does not send darts nor strike a wedge and does not set traps. Those who live in religious communities, and the holy and fortified City of God, he attacks with terrible ferociousness. For this reason, even consecrated persons, despite undergoing much mortifications, fasts and abstinence, are tormented and subjected to unusually difficult temptations. Their communal enemy from Hell considers them to be his most implacable adversaries, and he tries different tricks, mobilizing all his

powers to either dislodge them from the monastery, as if from a stronghold protected by God's power and might, or to undermine, conquer, and annihilate them on the spot" (IC 29r). Our Founder undertook this fight and came out of it victorious, thanks to the grace of God. Nevertheless, for each one of us, his spiritual sons, the battle still goes on, and its outcome is unknown. Therefore, it is worth benefiting from the experience and knowledge of this Blessed One.

The Scriptures reveal a lot of information about the Evil Spirit in the very names used: (i.e., enemy, liar, murderer, beast). This is much the same in Fr. Stanislaus's writings. He does not limit himself here to a few general definitions such as "Devil," "Evil Spirit," or "Satan." He lived in Baroque times, he was a brilliant speaker, he had a solid education and learning, thus he also used titles, of which he was most probably the author, and which say much about the nature and character of our enemy. The most foreign, to the ear of a modern reader, are the descriptions of the Evil One which have their roots in the works of Homer, Horace, and Ovid and are related to the mythology and history of ancient Greece. The Devil is the cunning and sneaky "infernal Ulysses" (IC 12r, 30r), the grasping winged "harp" (IC 25v), or the "infernal Gyges" (IC 30r), which is the giant and hundred armed monster, as well as "crafty and shrewd Apelles" (OC VII). This latter was a historic figure, an exceptional painter, and here lies his "resemblance" to the Demon, who in the unguarded imagination of a consecrated person paints an image of "Diana the huntress," "jealous and proud Juno," or the "immoral Venus" (OC 35). If to these definitions we add a parallel between the sin of drinking the troubled waters of tears, and crying from the river of Hades, or the magic nectar of the sea-nymph Kirke, who turned Odysseus' companions into swine (OC 20), or a connection made between wrongdoers and temples of various pagan deities (MTG XVII), we would be able to say that "the inferno of Fr. Stanislaus" definitely has a classical character. This may produce the impression of that which was written by Dante in his "Divine Comedy." Despite its being a much poorer image, it is certainly more "Christian" than the one created by the Florentine poet, since Fr. Papczyński does not include in there, any of his contemporaries and he does not settle any old scores.

The second group of names for the Devil can be found from the definitions, which our Founder uses in the close concrete context of biblical parables and images. In his reflection on the parable of the weeds (Mt 13:24-30) there appears "the infernal enemy, thief, and farmer" (IC 22rv) who sows the seeds of evil thoughts in the field of a consecrated man's soul. The Biblical connotations of the definition "infernal serpent" actually do not demand any explanation. On the other hand, a much larger array of demonic names show themselves in the meditation on the image of the Good Shepherd from the Gospel according to St. John (Jn 10:1-18). Father Stanislaus presents Satan as the reverse of the shepherd who loves and feeds his sheep. The former is "a quick to retreat hireling, the dispenser

of fleeting pleasures, a benefactor of bitter sweets, and the purveyor of poisoned food” (IC 40).

In the third group, we may fit those scattered throughout various places left as descriptions, which emphasize certain characteristics of Satan and his works. For example: “the infernal architect” (IC 12r), “the infernal enemy” (IC 29), “the most evil enemy” (IC 31v), “the cunning fox” (IC 48v), “the adversary of souls” (IC 88r), “the slave of Hell” (OC VII), “the infernal thief” (OC VII), “the unrelenting seeker of your soul” (OC VII), and “author of death” (OC IV). The whole group of definitions gathered above point out that for Fr. Papczyński, the Devil is the worst and the most ferocious enemy of consecrated men, who desires to cheat us in a crafty and cunning way, so as to sow evil in hearts, to steal and destroy all that is good, and to finally devour our souls by perpetrating death. He verifies this himself, concisely and emphatically, in *Inspectio Cordis*: “How do you judge this? Who is in most need of prudence, if not you, who have left the hospitality of the world and have hidden yourself within the walls of a religious order as if in paradise, where the ancient serpent, always envious of your good fortune, innocence and future glory, ceaselessly waits for you, waiting with wide-open mouth, so as to seize you, gag, bite, and swallow you?” (IC 169v).

In order to reach its goals, the Evil Spirit employs various tactics of action; we ought to know them, so as to be able to adapt appropriate measures of defense. Descriptions of particular temptations found in our Founder’s writings, particularly relate to consecrated men, namely those, who choose God and strive to seek after Him. In order to detach them from Christ, Satan, in the opinion of Fr. Stanislaus, has basic recourse to very subtle and cunning types of temptations. He does not tempt toward serious sins, he begins with little things, sneaking in through one’s mind and imagination, as if an angel of light. He adjusts the temptation to a specific person. He may attack at any moment and in reality, a consecrated man can never be certain at any time, that temptation is not threatening him. Let us try to inspect those elements of “devilish tactics” through the eyes of the Blessed.

One has to guard against little flaws, imperfections, and sins. Father Papczyński knows well that it is very rare that the Devil comes to a pious Religious with a pistol, proposing to remove his superior and the inconvenient confreres or a common three-day escapade to the social agent. “For ordinarily the Evil Spirit acts in such a way dealing with very spiritual people, that he does not immediately snag them by serious sins into his nets, because they abhor sin. He does it through small shortcomings. He knows who gets what, what to undermine, so that they will take things lightly, and then he leads them into more serious falls” (IC 22v, see also IC 87v-88r). The one, who is particularly prone to the Devil’s attacks, is he who does not watch his thoughts and imagination. The train of events is usually the following: “Satan first and foremost slips in an evil thought. This thought poisons or removes one’s purity of heart, and after its loss, great sorrow takes over, which

weakens the power of the spirit, and makes one unfit for anything. Not infrequently, it throws some people into such an abyss of despair, that after throwing away the redeeming yoke of Christ, they take their hands off the plow, and they stop cultivating the field of their soul” (IC 45, cf. also OC 35). Taking delight in sinful thoughts is for Fr. Stanislaus, a “conversation with the tempter” and leads to friendship with the serpent (see IC 144). Thoughts, which are offered by the Evil Spirit, often are clothed in apparent good, they are like poisoned, bitter food covered with the honey of various pleasures. These are wolves in sheep’s clothing. “Here you must take into account the righteousness of your thoughts, examine their quality. For how often, when they are very ugly, they squeeze themselves into one’s inner soul, as though very beautiful? They are such that, frequently, if allowed in under the pretext of piety, they occasion wicked results. In truth, they come under the veil of zeal, but most often they conceal anger. They come clothed as beneficial love, but they bring malevolent love. They come under the pretense of righteousness, but actually they carry in themselves wickedness. They come under the mantle of discretion, but in fact, these are haphazard thoughts. Finally, they come as if bringing holiness, but after their departure, they leave disappointment. Be on your guard. Watch, so that you do not let in wolves in sheep’s clothing” (IC 69v-70r, see also IC 49r, IC 92r). The Devil is like the hundred armed monster, because for each, he is able to choose the most fitting temptation: “This is the way the infernal Ulysses acted; this way of temptation he uses among the servants of God. He utilizes, even the smallest opportunity to achieve their seduction: for the hungry - gluttony, for the exhausted - sluggishness, for the impatient - outbursts of anger, to some, he gives impulses to lustfulness, to others arrogance, pride, and haughtiness” (IC 30r). According to our Founder, the attack of the Enemy may come about at any moment. Nevertheless, we are particularly vulnerable, when we stop being attentive and give into laziness and idleness: “You must be attentive to this, that it is precisely then, that the demons set traps and catch, when they see us idle and in a certain way sluggish. The cause of all sin is none other than actual idleness. In accord with the opinion of many holy fathers, the infernal enemy is afraid to approach the people who are industrious and attentive to their perfection” (IC 22v, see also IC 169v). Father Stanislaus gives three particular moments, in which Satan likes to attack us. It is well to remember these valuable directions so as to avoid many unexpected and painful errors. The devil likes to attack even right after Holy Communion, when we least expect any snares. He does this, because a sin committed right after receiving the Body of Christ takes on an especially serious character and resembles the treason of Judas (see IC 23r). Another moment is one in which our souls are given some holy inspirations. Evil hits with horrendous fury, so as to push aside the seeds of God, to stun and not allow them to produce any fruitful deeds. (see IC 26r). Satan also comes in difficult moments, especially at the time of the final struggle at the end of life, to incline

the soul to conceit or to throw it into despair (IC 177v). Finally, we have to be prepared for the battle that shall never end (IC 31v).

Our Blessed Founder encourages us, nonetheless, to trust. He wants us to entrust ourselves to God and to nourish ourselves with the Eucharist. The victory is ours and the Devil is the afflicted one, who has less power than it appears. In his meditations for the Piarists, Fr. Papczyński wrote: “You, however, do not yield to the Evil Spirit, but on the contrary, you should more fearlessly confront him, even if you may not know peace because of this throughout your entire life. It is actually because of this, that there are so many battles, so that there would be many victories; for this reason, the battles repeat themselves, so that the crowns of glory may multiply. For this reason, the Lord frequently invites you to the Holy Table, so as to strengthen you against the increasing attacks of the enemies” (IC 31v). And in a different place: “Do not abandon hope, for obtaining help from the One, who led you outside the walls of Babylon into the holy desert. Equally, do not lose confidence then and do not lose hope, that you will defeat the infernal enemy, as many times he strikes at you, armed with many ugly thoughts, faults, and evil enticements, because his strengths are far less than one can imagine. This dog may bark, but it cannot bite. You, though, whenever you strengthen yourself with the food of the Most Holy Eucharist, you always gain new strength and defense. Truly, the Eucharist is the most powerful protection against every temptation” (IC 29v). Beside the Eucharist, Fr. Stanislaus attributes a large role in fighting the enemy, to watchfulness and the avoidance of idleness and laziness. Encouragements and warnings concerning these points are very frequent in his writings. Quotes could be multiplied, but let us be content with the above-mentioned ones (see also IC 45v, 169v). Other effective weapons recommended by our Blessed Father in fighting evil are: adherence to the Cross of Christ (IC 49r, 177v, MTG XIII), flying to the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary (IC 141r), avoidance of doing one’s own will (MTG VI), and prayer (IC 31v).

The ultimate victory in the battle with evil is by the grace of God, not the fruit of our efforts, merits, or abilities. Therefore, that it may be given to us, we must receive deep in our hearts the words of Fr. Papczyński: “A teaching flows forth from this for you: that you should not count too readily on your own strength, even though fortified by the most efficacious Sacrament, so that you would not convince yourself that you are safe, though you abound in numerous gifts and supernatural graces. Rather, you should always be watchful, and always pray, that you would not fall into a temptation which is difficult to overcome. The infernal tempter cannot be defeated, even by the greatest knowledge, experience or mortification; but he is forced to withdraw himself, to flee and assure victory by control over one’s senses, the sword of prayer, great trust placed in God, very patient humility, and very humble patience” (IC 30r).

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### Basic Scriptural Text: Mt 4:1-11

*1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. 3 The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." 4 He said in reply, "It is written: «One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.»" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, 6 and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: «He will command his angels concerning you, and 'with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.»" 7 Jesus answered him, "Again it is written: «You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.»" 8 Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, 9 and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." 10 At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: «The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.»" 11 Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.*

### Scriptural references for deepening the reading:

verses 1-2: Deut 8:2-6, Heb 2:14-18, Heb 4:14-16, Ex 24:15-18, Ex 34:18-19  
(or 34:28-29); 1 Kngs 19:1-14;  
verse 3: Gen 3:1-13, Mt 27:39-41, Thes 3:1-5;  
verse 4: Deut 8:1-11, Wis 16:26, Jn 4:33-34;  
verse 5: Is 52:1-2, Rev 21:1ff, Rev 22:19;  
verse 6: Ps 91:11-12;  
verse 7: Deut 6:16, 1Cor 10:1-13, Ex 17:1-7;  
verses 8-9: Deut 34:1-4, Dn 3:1ff;  
verse 10: Deut 6:13, Mt 16:21-23;  
verse 11: Mt 26:53, Lk 22:39-46, Jn 1:51, Heb 1:6, 14.

### Other scriptural texts pertaining to the topic

Eph 6:10-20

*Finally, draw you strength from the Lord and from his mighty power. Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil for our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on*

*the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit. To that end, be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the holy ones and also for me, that speech may be given me to open my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, so that I may have the courage to speak as I must.*

2Cor 12:7-10

*... because of the abundance of the revelations. Therefore, that I might not become too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weakness, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

2Thes 2:1-12

*We ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling with him, not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed either by a "spirit," or by an oral statement, or by a letter allegedly from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand. Let no one deceive you in any way. For unless the apostasy comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one doomed to perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god and object of worship, so as to seat himself in the temple of God, claiming that he is a god— do you not recall that while I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in this time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. But the one who restrains is to do so only for the present, until he is removed from the scene. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord [Jesus] will kill with the breath of his mouth and render powerless by the manifestation of his coming, the one whose coming springs from the power of Satan in every mighty deed and in signs and wonder that lie, and in every wicked deceit for those who are perishing because they have not accepted the love of truth so that they may be saved. Therefore, God is sending them a deceiving power so that they may believe the lie, that all who have not believed the truth but have approved wrongdoing may be condemned.*

1Peter 5:5b-11

*And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for: "God opposes the proud but bestows favor on the humble." So humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your worries upon him because he cares for you. Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for [someone] to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings. The God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Christ [Jesus] will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little. To him be dominion forever. Amen.*

1Jn 3:7-10

*Children, let no one deceive you. The person who acts in righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous. Whoever sins belongs to the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is begotten by God commits sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot sin because he is begotten by God. In this way, the children of God and the children of the devil are made plain; no one who fails to act in righteousness belongs to God, nor anyone who does not love his brother.*

Rev 12:7-12

*Then war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back, but they did not prevail and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have salvation and power come, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Anointed. For the accuser of our brothers is cast out, who accuses them before our God day and night, they conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; love for life did not deter them from death. Therefore, rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them. But woe to you, earth and sea, for the Devil has come down to you in great fury, for he knows he has but a short time."*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RULES**

Satan is not mentioned at all in our Constitutions and Directory. Neither is temptation mentioned or the fight against it.

### **PROPOSALS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. How do you perceive Satan's presence and actions in your life? What "name" would you call him based on your own experience?
2. Is the Devil "present" in your prophesizing and pastoral service? If yes, how? Are you able to keep moderation in this aspect according to the teachings of the Church?
3. Do you witness and advocate to Christ's victory over evil? In your statements about Satan, do you proclaim the power of the Risen One or rather the might of the Devil? To what extent is the mystery of the Immaculate Conception helpful to you in this matter?
4. Ordinarily, from where do the Demon's attacks against you come? Where, in what part of your life do you most often suffer defeat? What are your weak points in this struggle?
5. What gives you most strength in your struggle with the Devil? What brings you healing? What is your experience of the power of the Word of God in your struggle against temptations?
6. What plan may God have in allowing certain forms of temptation in your life? What changes must come to pass in your life for the victorious outcome of this struggle?
7. What strategies of attacking does the Devil use in your case? What are usually his consecutive steps? Are you able to recognize the little compromises and concessions, which open him the door into your life? When you ought to tell categorically "no" to the Devil? If you do not do so, then why?

## CONFERENCE VII

### SIN

One day, I have come across a witty description of the qualities a good coffee should possess. According to it, a noble brew should be as black as night, as hot as love and as sweet as sin. Sure, jokes are jokes but, the fact that “sin” appears in the context of a mysterious, tasty and undeniably positive context becomes a serious problem, exceeding far beyond coffee recipes. If we pay more attention to ads, we will recall colloquial expressions and when we try to analyze the popular image of sin operating in people’s consciousness, we will easily conclude that it echoes the temptation of the serpent from Genesis rather than the Word of God. Girls “worth the sin” are not those we pass on the street without looking or turning our heads. Hell is more interesting, it has fire, taste and color, while Heaven is permeated by cool whiteness and a monotony of a few Gregorian notes sung without rhythm, guitar or end. Sin is crouching at our doorsteps, amiably wagging its tail and we reply with a whistle and smack, winking our eyes. Yet, Devil is neither a good fellow who knows the taste of life nor a funny mongrel. The Bible calls him a liar and a killer, while Saint Martin of Tours, seeing him at his deathbed, tells him: “What are you waiting for, you bloody beast? You will not find anything for yourself in me, you damned ....” (from the 3<sup>rd</sup> letter of Sulpicius Severus, breviary reading on the remembrance of St. Martin on November 11.) We should ask the saints rather than the sinners what sin is really like. The latter ones, though they often suffer because of sin, do not know much about it. Paradoxically, the One who had no sin, in loneliness and the suffering of the cross, “got to know” the dark abyss of sin till the end, and revealed its true face. Let’s turn to our blessed Founder and ask him the question about sin.

Expressions denoting the reality of sin used by Father Papczynski differ diametrically from everyday images which try to tame evil. If we analyze the biggest work of the Blessed, *Inspectio Cordis*, from this perspective, we will come to the conclusion that sin is most frequently dirt and sickness. The array of shades is very wide here. It stretches from a little stain or flaw (see IC 6rv, 17rv, 19r, 24v, 43r, 73r, 96r, 173v), through putrid, nasty and sickening foulness (see IC 4r, 22r, 51r), to comparing a sinful soul to a stable filled with fetid excrements (see IC 147r). A variety of sicknesses rendering the reality of sin is similar. The impurity of sin poisons the soul, it stinks and makes the air stifling (see IC 4r, 6rv, 12v, 43r, 171v). It is similar, or even worse than leprosy (see IC 17rv, 77v). It can be com-

pared to the swelling of dropsy or edema which, when it reaches the heart, kills a man (see IC 81v). The sickness of sin leads to death. Father Papczynski applies this comparison particularly often, outrightly identifying serious sin with spiritual death (see IC 6v, 38v, 61r, 62r, 80r-81r, 91r). Other expressions used by our Founder include: a weed (see IC 22rv, 23r, 26v), a dream (see IC 37r), darkness and night (see IC 51r, 98rv), destruction and ruin (see IC 72r), destruction and drought (see IC 91r). We should sincerely hate sin and abhor it (see IC 125r) and run away from it: “Nowhere and never should one be in a greater hurry, than when fleeing from sin and seeking to improve” (IC 23v). Exceptional haste seems justifiable here, since remaining in this sickness or death is in fact a deep deprivation of man of all that is most vital, a form of extreme desacralization, depersonalization and alienation. Father Stanislaus knows all that and thus he advises us, following the example of the young man from Naim (cf. Luke 7:11-17), to contemplate the miracle of God’s grace which returns invaluable treasures to a sinner: “You also start talking, but with God and with yourself. Sit up, you who once were dead and with your face turned to Him say: Where was I? With what death was I punished? How far did the sin make me stray from life, from God and from myself! Here, thanks to God’s grace I am returning from Hell itself!” (IC 81r).

A short enumeration of the effects of sin, made in the context of the resuscitation at Naim, tells us more about its nature, than the different descriptive notions scattered through the papers of Father Papczynski listed above. A departure from life, from who one truly is, as if losing one’s “name” which was given by the Creator, and written with His finger deep in our hearts, and, finally, severing ties with God alone—this is the heart of the mystery of sin. Our Founder talks directly about a “sudden” breaking of the friendship, of the ties and of intimacy with God (IC 80r, 102r, 144v), and even of “expelling” Him from one’s soul (IC 51rv). This perspective and way of talking about sin are of vital importance, since they place it within a personal relationship between man and God. This is not just a matter of breaking the law or of any external or internal moral norms. We are not merely talking about negligence or of not fulfilling the rules or Constitutions of the Religious Life. This is not first and foremost an issue of personal and psychological maturity or spiritual growth. This is a drama of disdained love, of rejected life-giving “communio,” of the Loved one who was hurt! Only saints think and talk about sin in this way. Those who know the “taste” of the bond with God, understand what a precious treasure sin takes away from man.

Unfortunately, as Blessed Stanislaus remarks, this is not the end of the drama of our revolt. God’s departure from the soul is horrible and dangerous “. . . since there are reasons to believe that the one who enters the soul then is the Demonic Spirit.” (IC 51v). He talks about it more precisely in *Orator Crucifixus*: “God tends to leave man for two reasons. First, when He wants to try him, to show what he is capable of unaided, or at least what he wants to achieve relying only on

himself, while he knows that he cannot do anything without help from Heaven. Secondly, when man, committing a deadly sin, departs from God and moves willingly under the rule of the Evil Spirit. Our Most Generous Lord once complained about it, telling the prophet Jeremiah: “*Two evils have my people done: they have forsaken me, the source of living waters; They have dug themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that hold no water* (Jeremiah 2:13). We are all God’s people as long as we obey His commandments, as long as we rely on His will. But any time we blemish our soul with a dirty sin, departing from our Creator to the creatures, we become rebels for Him and we turn ourselves over to the frightful ruler of Hell. Theologians say that we drink from the fountain of all well-being while we remain in grace; losing the grace through sin, we draw muddy water from Cocytus and Styx [the rivers of Hades made of crying, and moaning and poison – note – MK]. In what nasty waters we dip our mouth when we do not oppose the enticements of demons.” (OC IV). So, sin is not only the lack of ties with God, but also a form of dark, deadly “communion” with the Devil, the liar and murderer, who can do only one thing sincerely: hate you and God.

Here, thanks to God this time, the drama of our rebellion does not end, either. The history of sin reaches its end and, if we may say so, its completion in Jesus Christ. On His Cross, our dirt, sickness and death achieved their “maturity.” Father Stanislaus is deeply aware that, as the old Christian hymn proclaims, the cross is the tree which reaches with its root to the depth of the human soul. “The Most Righteous Lord, the Savior of the world has no crime, no offence weighing on His conscience. Why then was He captured as a criminal? Why was He accused as a scoundrel, convicted and led to death? Why was He crucified and put to a cruel and ignoble death, worse than a thief and first among the rogues? Your sins caused this. *For the sin of His people, was He killed*, says the Divine Majesty through the mouth of the prophet [cf. Isaiah 53:8].” (IC 37r). Only in *Inspectio Cordis*, can we find many similar quotations, and in the writings on the Passion, almost each page calls us to this in a colorful and suggestive way. May a fragment from *Christus Patiens* serve as an example: “Although we can see that the Son of God’s going to the place of His death is joyful under the enormous burden of the Cross, we must not participate in this cruel performance without tears. Since it is we who made this cruel and hard Cross, and who mercilessly put it on His most holy shoulders. Through the mouth of David, the most meek Lamb complains about each of us: *Upon my back the plowers plowed; long did they make their furrows* [Ps 129:3]. Any crime committed in the world, or to be committed, since the expelling of the first man from Eden to this day, until the moment when I am speaking, all of them rest on the most holy shoulders of this most holy and most courageous Atlas; they remain on the Cross He carries; they are placed in the triumphant cart He draws. There are sacks containing all of our crimes. We, too are the makers of the cruel gallows, we are the torturers of this most gentle Ruler.” (CP V). But the Cross of

Jesus Christ is not only the site where the truth about sin was revealed. It is also a place where the fight which concluded with the Resurrection took place! This is the Cross of unimaginable love and victory! Father Papczynski writes about it in Meditation 6 of *Christus Patiens*, which we can consider in its entirety as devoted to the glorious Cross. In this most praiseworthy tree, the history of sin concludes, lit up by the glow of Easter morning. “O happy fault, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!” (Easter Praises). Each sin is a reason to sing *Exultet*! This joy of the Resurrection can be heard clearly in the words of Blessed Stanislaus, when he talks about absolving Magdalene from her sins: “Oh, day most happy and rich in the greatest joy! When you look into Heaven, there is great joy, as the heavenly King Himself admits: *There will likewise be more joy in Heaven over one repentant sinner, than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to repent.* [see Luke 15:7]. It is even hard for you to comprehend what joy the dwellers of Heaven experienced, because of the conversion of the sinner Magdalene. In turn, if you look at the earth, it rejoices with no less joy, seeing that a true Messiah, who comes to redeem not the just, but the sinners, has been sent to it . . . Which of the sinners would despair, when he realizes that Jesus not only very easily absolves those who atone sincerely from sins, but also, stands up to defend sinners? Truly right is the prophet who frequently cries out: *Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His kindness endures forever.* [Ps 106: 1]” (IC 125v). In *Orator Crucifixus*, our Founder sums up this fact succinctly: “. . . it is hard to decide which work of God’s omnipotence and goodness was greater: the creation of the world and everything else or the conversion of Magdalene?” (OC IV) And it sounds as if he sent us to find an answer, in the prayer said by the Church on the night of the Easter Vigil after the first reading from the Book of Genesis: “Almighty and eternal God, you created all things in wonderful beauty and order. Help us now to perceive how still more wonderful is the new creation by which in the fullness of time you redeemed your people through the sacrifice of our passover, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.”

Let’s conclude by returning to the young man of Naim waking up from the sleep of death, who sees Jesus at his side, Jesus who gave him back his life and returned him to his mother. Father Stanislaus willingly uses this picture to describe the reality of sin and the grace of atonement. The Blessed, who, as confirmed by the Church, miraculously returned a son to life in his mother’s womb, wants to tell us that sin is death, expelling God, and exchanging communion with the Giver of Life, for the relationship with a murderer, while conversion is the return to God, to oneself, to life, to light and to love.

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### Basic biblical source: 1 John 3:4-9

*4 Everyone who sins acts lawlessly for sin is lawlessness. 5 You know well that the reason he revealed himself was to take away sins; in him there is nothing sinful. 6 The man who remains in him does not sin. The man who sins has not seen him or known him. 7 Little ones, let no one deceive you; the man who acts in holiness is holy indeed, even as the Son is holy. 8 The man who sins belongs to the devil, because the devil is a sinner from the beginning. It was to destroy the devil's works that the Son of God revealed himself. 9 No one begotten of God acts sinfully because he remains of God's stock; he cannot sin because he is begotten of God.*

### Relevant biblical verses for deepening the reading of the text:

verse 4: Mt 7:21-23; Rom 4:15; 1 Jn 5:17;

verse 5: Is 53:1-12; 2 Cor 5:17-21; 1 Pt 1:19-20; Heb 9:24-28; Jn 1:29; Jn 8:42-47; Heb 7:26-27;

verse 6-7: Rom 6:8-14; 1 Jn 1:3; 1 Jn 2:1.14.26.29; Mt 7:15-20;

verse 8: Gn 3:1ff; Jn 8:44; Jn 16:11; Jn 12:31-32; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Jn 3:12;

verse 9: 1 Peter 1:23; 1 Jn 5:1.18; 1Jn 2:14; Jn 1:12-13;

### Other biblical texts pertaining to the topics:

Is 1:1-18

*The vision which Isaiah, son of Amoz, had concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth, for the LORD speaks: Sons have I raised and reared, but they have disowned me! An ox knows its owner, and an ass, its master's manger; But Israel does not know, my people have not understood. Ah! sinful nation, people laden with wickedness, evil race, corrupt children! They have forsaken the LORD, spurned the Holy One of Israel, apostatized. Where would you yet be struck, you that rebel again and again? The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot to the head there is no sound spot: Wound and welt and gaping gash, not drained, or bandaged, or eased with salve. Your country is waste, your cities burnt with fire; Your land before your eyes strangers devour (a waste, like Sodom overthrown). And daughter Zion is left like a hut in a vineyard, Like a shed in a melon patch, like a city blockaded. Unless the LORD of hosts had left us a scanty remnant, We had become as Sodom, we should be like Gomorrah. Hear the word of the LORD, princes of Sodom! Listen to the instruction of our God, people of Gomorrah! What care I for the number of your sacrifices? says the LORD. I have had enough of whole-burnt rams and fat of fatlings; In the blood of calves,*

lambs and goats I find no pleasure. When you come in to visit me, who asks these things of you? Trample my courts no more! Bring no more worthless offerings; your incense is loathsome to me. New moon and sabbath, calling of assemblies, octaves with wickedness: these I cannot bear. Your new moons and festivals I detest; they weigh me down, I tire of the load. When you spread out your hands, I close my eyes to you; Though you pray the more, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood! Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow. Come now, let us set things right, says the LORD: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; Though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool.

Jr 2:4-13

Listen to the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob! All you clans of the house of Israel, thus says the LORD: What fault did your fathers find in me that they withdrew from me, Went after empty idols, and became empty themselves? They did not ask, "Where is the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt, Who led us through the desert, through a land of wastes and gullies, Through a land of drought and darkness, through a land which no one crosses, where no man dwells?" When I brought you into the garden land to eat its goodly fruits, You entered and defiled my land, you made my heritage loathsome. 4 The priests asked not, "Where is the LORD?" Those who dealt with the law knew me not: the shepherds rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, and went after useless idols. Therefore will I yet accuse you, says the LORD, and even your children's children I will accuse. 5 Pass over to the coast of the Kittim and see, send to Kedar and carefully inquire: Where has the like of this been done? Does any other nation change its gods?-- yet they are not gods at all! But my people have changed their glory for useless things. Be amazed at this, O heavens, and shudder with sheer horror, says the LORD. Two evils have my people done: they have forsaken me, the source of living waters; They have dug themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that hold no water.

Rom 6:3-11

Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also

*live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.*

1Jn 1:5-2:2

*Now this is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light, 2 and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say, "We have fellowship with him," while we continue to walk in darkness, we lie and do not act in truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If we say, "We are without sin," we deceive ourselves, 3 and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. If we say, "We have not sinned," we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My children, 1 I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world.*

Eph 1:13b-14

*[You] were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RELIGIOUS REGULATIONS:**

The necessity of an uncompromising fight with sin is strongly stressed in the present statutes of our Congregation. We have to avoid any, even the smallest sin, hate it, exclude it from our life and abhor it. The Constitutions clearly connect the postulate of fighting sin with the mystery of the Immaculate Conception. Our main Patroness is the source of strength, hope and the impulse to take up the struggle. Penance and restraining our undisciplined self-love help us in turning away from the delusion of sin and turning to God. The document talks also about the role of confession and encourages us to diligent service in the confessional. See:

**Constitution paragraphs : 6, 19, 23, 25, 83, 87, 70, 91.**

### ***Marian Character***

**6** In the following of Christ, our special Patroness, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, shows us the way and assists us. The mystery of her Immaculate Concep-

tion is and has been from the very beginning of the Congregation, a particular sign, strength and joy of the Marian vocation. By this mystery, Mary urges the members to trust in the unlimited fruitfulness of the work of redemption, to avoid all sin, even the slightest, to hold in highest esteem purity of heart, to imbue life fully with divine grace and charity, and to so upbuild the Church in unity “that it be holy and immaculate” (Eph 5:27).

*CR 164; IN I, 12; LG 65*

### ***Assistance to the Deceased and the Dying***

**19** The union of the living on earth with the brothers who have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ is not in the least interrupted. On the contrary, according to the conviction of the early Church, it is strengthened through the exchange of spiritual goods. Thus, our Congregation, from its very beginning, following the abiding faith of the Church in the communion of saints in the mystical Body of Christ, with great devotion honors the memory of the dead and offers suffrages for them. Therefore, members should remember to aid the souls of the faithful departed suffering in purgatory by offering their indulgences and mortifications, by prayers and intercession, especially by the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, and by offering up for them their zealous deeds and other good works, for “it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they be loosed from their sins.” (2 Mc 12: 46 Vulg.). Likewise, they shall not neglect to assist the dying who face the most critical moment of their lives.

*NVI,2; CR 16; IN XVI, 8; LG 49; 50*

### ***Mirror of Virtues***

**23** That while overcoming sin they may grow in holiness, the members should raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as a model of virtues. On the other hand, in their apostolic ministry inspired by the love of the Immaculate Mother for Christ and the Church, and aided by her powerful intercession, they should strive to lead as many people as possible to union with God.

*LG 65*

### ***Fight against Sin***

**25** They should absolutely flee from and avoid all sin, which is the greatest evil and should abominate, detest and abhor it daily more and more. With all their strength they should try to diminish and eliminate the kingdom of sin, sincerely and constantly grieve over sins committed and in their awareness become more humble and distrustful of themselves, more vigilant and cautious against dangers, occasions and temptations; be made more prompt and fervent in repenting and

making satisfaction for them, in making up for lost time and by responding in love to God's love for them. They should always try to have a pure conscience.

*CR 163*

### ***Necessity of Penance***

**83** Members should wholeheartedly embrace penance as a turning away from the allurements of sin and a turning toward God, lest the old man prevail in them over the new man, "created in God's image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth" (Eph 4:24). They should be persuaded that the Kingdom of Christ can only be entered by way of *metanoia*, that is, by that intimate change of the whole man, through which he begins to think, judge and arrange his life in the light of the sanctity and charity of God, which in these last days are manifested in the Son and are fully communicated to us.

*Heb 1:2; Paen. 1*

### ***Overcoming Oneself***

**87** Each one should especially try to restrain inordinate love of himself, which is the cause of all sin, by forcefully and continually conquering himself. Having forsaken all things, each one should also deny and forsake himself, his inordinate opinions and wishes, so that dead to himself and the world, he might live wholeheartedly for Christ. And for him, Christ should replace everything and he should not hesitate to expend himself completely for Christ and His Church.

*CR 167*

### ***Sacrament of Penance***

**70** Members, striving for union with God, should frequently approach the sacrament of penance in order to obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offenses committed against Him, and, at the same time, to be reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and to be confirmed more and more in the love and grace of the Father of Mercies.

*CR 245; LG 11; PO 18; CIC 664*

### ***One Body and One Spirit***

**91** All should highly esteem and cultivate the establishment of common life, which should be animated by the spirit of God's family and fraternal charity, of holy and true friendship and cordiality, of mutual solicitude and solidarity, as the source of all spiritual good. They should be one body and one spirit, just as they are called in the one hope of their vocation.

*Eph 4:4; CR 278*

## PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. In your religious life, do you experience sin as the “blessed guilt,” a place where the victory of Christ will be revealed? What moments do you recall when God made you sing *Exultet* over your sin?
2. When, in the course of your life and pastoral work, did sin reveal itself most clearly as the greatest affliction of man, a sickness leading to death?
3. What feelings dominate your experience of sin: anxiety, shame, fear connected with the awareness of breaking the commandments and moral norms, or rather a personal aspect deriving from grief over breaking the communion with God, self-denial and entering into the relation with Satan?
4. Are there in your life any “domesticated” sins, ones you have gotten used to and treat as unimportant trifles which you have learned to live with?
5. To what extent can you consider your own, the cry of the saints, “rather to die than to sin”?
6. What truth about sin do you express in your conversations with confreres and colleagues? What truth about sin do you convey through your jokes and loose, informal conversations?
7. What image of sin can you derive from the experience of the confessional, both as a penitent and as a confessor? What can you do to make confession a better place of proclaiming and receiving the good news about sin and forgiveness?

## CONFERENCE VIII

### DISCERNMENT AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Human life is a fight. Yet, on the battlefield of his heart, man does not struggle alone. God, who is glorified in a living man, wants to dwell there for ever. The Devil, who is always a liar and a murderer, tries hard to prevent Him. The former, gives us inspirations and consolations, strengthens and defends the human soul with His grace. The latter, a foe, tempts and deceives, often by assuming the figure of an angel of light. A Religious should follow the inspirations of the Divine Spirit and resists devilish endeavors. The first step on this path is distinguishing between the two. Since the beginning of Religious Life, a great help in this respect has been found in the knowledge of the rules of the “discernment of spirits” and the assistance of an experienced spiritual director. For those who want to search for God, such discernment of the path is absolute necessity. Anyone who sets out on a long and dangerous journey is looking for a good guide, and learns how to find the way so as not to get lost. It is the same way with a pilgrimage of faith. If you do not inquire about the thoughts which surface in your heart, “where do you come from?”, and if you do not want spiritual direction from the most experienced guides, then, most probably, your life is not leading anywhere, and you are only deluding yourself that you are seeking God. You allow the events of life carry you away to a port which neither you nor God picked, or you sit on a rock on the side of the road and your life passes by.

Father Papczynski paid a lot of attention to these two “aids” on the path of a Religious. Scattered throughout his writings are short comments about evaluating one’s thoughts and inspirations and watching over them. In a few places, he devotes more space to discussing the issue. It is worth taking a closer look at these statements. All of them come from *Inspectio Cordis* and appear in the context of the readings from the Liturgy.

Jesus’ warning against false prophets who come in sheep’s clothing, but interiorly are wolves on the prowl (Mt 7:15-20), presents an opportunity for the Blessed Founder to encourage the scrutiny of thoughts and inspirations that come from the heart, and evaluating them on the basis of the fruit that they bear, rather than being deceived by first appearances which are frequently false. “You have to think about the soundness of your thoughts and examine their quality. How often, when the thoughts are very malicious, do they get inside your soul disguised as very beautiful thoughts? Not infrequently, when allowed in on account of devo-

tion, they exert dishonorable results. They come in under the cover of zeal, but they reveal irritability. They come in clothed as noble love, but they bring an unhealthy love. They come under the mask of justice, but in fact they bring vindictiveness. They come under the cloak of discretion, but they are slothful thoughts. Finally, they come as carriers of sanctity, but once they depart, they leave disappointment. Beware, beware not to allow in the wolves in sheep's clothing. [. . .]. [The Evil Spirit] used to deceive in this way as well: he persuades many to believe that they are sick and cannot devote themselves to mortifications; or out of care for their good name, they cannot take contempt from others; or convinced about their predestination to Heaven they do not need to strive for it any longer. Alas! This is the wolf, not the sheep! Ask the Lord at His holy table to give you the light to distinguish wolves from sheep, good things from bad ones. You have already been given by the Lord the way to uncover false prophets, senses, thoughts and inspirations, when He says that by the results, consequences and fruit they should be judged. He himself says: A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit any more than a decayed tree can bear good fruit (Mt 7:18) The effect therefore, of good inspirations and thoughts would be the most positive, and of bad, the most negative. So, do not think that it was God who gave you such thoughts and inspirations which deprived you of repentance, submission and self-contempt. Do not consider good these raptures, ecstasies and visions which do not make you good or better. Do not believe that holiness without love and humility is true." (IC 70r).

In a meditation on the parable of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-19), we find a contrast between Jesus, the true "Heavenly Shepherd" and the Evil Spirit, "a hired hand prone to running away." Their ways of acting are diametrically different. The Devil comes bringing different sweets and pleasures, and whispering words to the soul which appear to be true. But these are only traps which are followed by bitterness, remorse, deep sadness and death. He seeks only his self-interest and not the benefit of the soul: "He sucks milk, that is, he deprives it of the desire to practice the virtues; shears wool, meaning he drives it away from performing good deeds, and then as the roaring lion, he devours it all." (IC 48v). God, in exactly the opposite way, allows afflictions, reveals the cross, leads one on a difficult path of penance, and does it to strengthen the soul and bring it to salvation. For our Founder, the choice is obvious: "Side with the true Heavenly Shepherd, and run away from the mercenary: reject his pleasures, sweets and baits for doing evil, and cling to the strict teaching of the cross and mortification of your own passions." (IC 48v49r).

On the occasion of meditations dealing with Pentecost, Father Stanislaus gives the signs of the coming and the dwelling of the Divine Spirit in man. He finds great help in discerning the stirrings of the heart in the Book of Acts: "The coming of the Holy Spirit and the events that preceded it, you may consider as miraculous:

- 1) because they followed the anguish of the heart, according to the words of the Lord: You were overcome with grief (Jn 16:6);
- 2) His coming was accompanied by a great noise;
- 3) He was coming not from anywhere else but from Heaven.

The criteria to discern the Divine spirits are the same. If oppression precedes them, it is a true sign of God's grace, which is going to be given to a human soul [ . . . ]. The Spirit comes to man with noise and uproar, when the soul is upset, anxious and repentant. Finally, it comes also from Heaven, sent by Jesus Christ from this imperishable fortress of the triumphant Heavenly Ruler. Since the gusts coming from the hellish swamp of the evil spirits—I say—they reach a human soul in the form of delicate whispers, luring it pleasantly, yet after departure, they leave thousands of remorse, thousands of stings, thousands of most cruel pains. On the contrary, with the Divine Spirit, when preceded by distress, it comes in the wind and noise; Yet it leaves signs of joy, thousands of comforts, a thousand fruits and a thousand goods." (IC 56v-57r). We can recognize which spirit directs man through many other signs. The one from God loves the truth and causes a Religious to appreciate reproofs, to recognize his trespasses and his transgressions, to seek his improvement, and to desire virtue. He can tell the truth to others and persuades them to do penance (IC 55r). The Good Spirit bestows humility, obedience and the ability to carry the cross (IC 146r). The Evil Spirit does not let the truth speak, does not want to listen to it, nor proclaim it to others (IC 55r), causes man to follow his passions, to resist his superiors, to act presumptuously, to want to control others and to look for his own glory. Father Stanislaus ends these distinctions with an encouragement: "You should constantly follow this [good] spirit, if you want to become a true follower of Christ. What good will you gain, if you pretend to be a Religious on the outside, but inside you will be worse than the worst of the worldly people." (IC 146r).

This last sentence of the Blessed is essential for a proper understanding of the sense and importance of his opinions concerning the discernment of spirits. It is hard to tell whether, and to what extent, Father Papczynski knew the teaching of Evagrius of Ponticus and Cassian, the first monastic masters in this field. We can assume that he knew the rules given by St. Ignatius of Loyola, as he was indebted to the Jesuits for a major part of his formation. It seems, however, that all he wrote about it is not an attempt to create an extensive and comprehensive theory based on deep studies. It is rather a sharing one's experience gathered in the Religious Life, with those who are trying to tread the same path. A sharing derived from the conviction, that without discernment of one's thoughts and inspirations, the life of a Religious is constantly endangered with sliding down into the abyss of delusions, spiritual emptiness, degradation and extreme hypocrisy.

Father Stanislaus was faced more than once with the need to make choices regarding issues of vital importance, concerning the direction of his life and the fate

of the Congregation he wanted to establish. He gives us a beautiful testimony of this toil, of searching for God's will when he recalls the beginnings of the retreat house in the Korabiew Forest: "[. . .] indeed, I was most inclined at the beginning, to take the opportunity of making my case, but numerous reasons kept me from doing this; among others: the audacity of a man [Krajewski], who did not know obedience, who wished to grant himself this title of the Founder, his unsteady spirit, his various words, his impetuous nature, his vulgarity, his cunningness, and his stubbornness. Due to the awkwardness of presenting it more precisely, may they remain so described. Whatever I did, I begged God. I did as much as my sins could endure, yet in prayer I received the opposite answers, so I was completely prevented from a bond with this man. Did I look for advice from the experienced and the learned? They weren't there. One came from the Order of St. Francis and he did not discourage me. Another commanded; this one, whom I once asked in Cracow about the founding of the Congregation, replied that this was the will of God for me, to start the work. When he came to Studzianna for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, during confession, he advised me to go to the hermitage and with God's help, to start something, leaving it up to God, to finish the work." (FDR). This is a specific example of discernment based on recognizing intentions, prayer and looking for advice of experienced people. Our attention is called to the need for spiritual direction, particularly visible in the words of the Founder. He seldom writes about it so directly. Yet, he often stresses the necessity of obedience and renouncing one's will. Disobedience is for Father Stanislaus "a certain proof of human condemnation" (IC 37rv), but one who follows the will of the other "can never be tricked by an evil spirit" (TD VI). The word of spiritual directors is one of the ways the Lord speaks to us, and we should listen to and obey them as to God, if they follow the line of God's Commandments (IC 129r, 148v). How important spiritual direction was for our Founder can be inferred also from the advice in the *Rule of Life*, where he encourages Marians to be clear-sighted confessors and spiritual directors: "In hearing Confessions, let them join sweetness to prudence. They should be cautious in examining the consciences of penitents, especially the simple folk. They should be careful in assigning penances, careful about becoming friends with outsiders, and learned in resolving doubts and scruples. They should not be ignorant of those cases reserved to the Apostolic See, or the bishop or the superior; knowing that absolution is not always to be given to all." (NV VIII, 4).

Marko Ivan Rupnik, in his book about spiritual discernment, presents a tactic employed by the devil toward the people who follow Christ: "The enemy would like to make God's forgiveness and salvation (cf. 2 Pt 2:17-22) futile for us. Yet, he cannot do this offering banal, regular egoism. . . . Thus, he attacks man in such a way that he would return to sin: to the attitude of someone who directs his life himself, who makes his own "ego" the foundation of his life, who takes care of

himself—and all of this in a spiritual climate, within the path taken in Christ. The enemy gradually and slowly would guide the person in a direction where he will no longer be with Christ, but will *believe* that he still is with Him. Christ will stop being someone vivid, will stop being the Lord and the Savior. He will be replaced by many thoughts of Him, a well-developed doctrine or even intense feelings apparently directed to Him. But, in fact, such a person will find himself locked in the circle of his “ego,” and his Christ would be a fantasy.” (Marko Ivan Rupnik, *Rozeznania duchowe/ Spiritual discernments*, part 2, 20-23).

I quoted this passage because I am certain that our Blessed Father wanted to warn us about this particular danger, when he wrote that, without discerning and choosing the Divine Spirit, we may become worse than the worst of the “worldly people.” When the Israelites in the desert, after their liberation, made a molten calf of their golden earrings and worshipped it, they were certain that this was their god who had led them out of the land of Egypt (see Ex 32:4). We, who follow Christ, may share a similar fate, if we do not examine our intentions, motivations and inspirations which guide us, if we do not submit them to the judgment of God’s Word and to experienced spiritual directors. The enemy will cause that the old man, who dwells in us, will make a god in his likeness out of different trinkets. He may be pretty and suave, he may glitter with the beauty of his preaching, moral digressions and elevated rules, yet it will not be the God of life, the God of the Passover, the God of love which does not shrink from the ultimate sacrifice. How often do we get caught in this trap and, as a result, although we look nice, as a colorful Easter egg glittering with decorations and tints, we are just an egg shell. Father Papczynski calls us on a different path. If we listen to him, if we submit to spiritual direction and return to discerning inspirations, thoughts and motivations which guide us, many difficulties we have with ourselves, with the Religious Life, with our confreres . . . will certainly disappear, and we may even cause future Marians a “problem” and a “fuss” over our beatification.

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### **Basic biblical source: 1 John 4:1-3**

*1 Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, 3 and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God. This is the spirit of the antichrist that, as you heard, is to come, but in fact is already in the world.*

### **Relevant biblical verses for deepening the reading of the text:**

verse 1: 1 Cor 12:10; 1 Tes 5:12-22; Deut 13:1-6; Deut 18:20-22; 1 John 2:18; 1 Peter 2,1-3; 2 Jn 7-11; Mt 7:15-20; Mt 24: 23-28; Lk 12:54-57;  
verse 2: 1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 2:22-23;  
verse 3: 1 John 2:22-23; 2 Tes 2:3-12; 2 Jn 7;

### **Other biblical texts pertaining to the topics:**

Deut 30:15-20

*“Here, then, I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. If you obey the commandments of the LORD, your God, which I enjoin on you today, loving him, and walking in his ways, and keeping his commandments, statutes and decrees, you will live and grow numerous, and the LORD, your God, will bless you in the land you are entering to occupy. If, however, you turn away your hearts and will not listen, but are led astray and adore and serve other gods, I tell you now that you will certainly perish; you will not have a long life on the land which you are crossing the Jordan to enter and occupy. I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you, a long life for you to live on the land which the LORD swore he would give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”*

Is 55:6-9

*Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near. Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked man his thoughts; Let him turn to the LORD for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.*

Ps 1

*1* **2** *Happy those who do not follow the counsel of the wicked, Nor go the way of sinners, nor sit in company with scoffers. 3* **3** *Rather, the law of the LORD is their joy; God's law they study day and night. They are like a tree planted near streams of water, that yields its fruit in season; Its leaves never wither; whatever they do prospers. 4* **4** *But not the wicked! They are like chaff driven by the wind. Therefore the wicked will not survive judgment, nor will sinners in the assembly of the just. The LORD watches over the way of the just, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.*

Gal 5:16-25

*I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 14 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, 15 drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.*

Heb 5:11-14

*About this we have much to say, and it is difficult to explain, for you have become sluggish in hearing. Although you should be teachers by this time, you need to have someone teach you again the basic elements of the utterances of God. You need milk, (and) not solid food. Everyone who lives on milk lacks experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties are trained by practice to discern good and evil.*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RELIGIOUS REGULATIONS:**

In our Constitutions, the expression “discernment of the spirits” does not appear. But we can find strong encouragement to seek and to fulfill God’s will, to submit to the Holy Spirit and to follow good intentions and supernatural love. The role of confessors and spiritual directors, as well as communal discernment in seeking God’s will are also mentioned. See:

**Constitution paragraphs: 32, 65, 73, 62, 77, 102**

### ***Conformity to the Divine Will***

**32** Members should try to conform their will entirely to the divine will, to which they should submit themselves, should do and fulfill it by faithfully and generously observing the precepts of God and the Church as well as the Evangelical Counsels and their own laws, cooperating faithfully with divine grace, by attentively, discretely and docilely following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by overcoming and enduring adversities and by patiently, bravely and eagerly bearing their cross with Christ.

*CR 174*

### ***Spirit of Prayer***

**65** Members should seek and love God above all else, who first loved us and in all circumstances should take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God, which is the source and stimulus of love of neighbor, for the salvation of the world and the up-building of the Church. Although charity is a gift of God, it is obtained and preserved, nevertheless, by constancy in prayer and mortification. For this reason, the members should with constant effort cultivate the spirit of prayer and prayer itself, drawing on authentic sources of Christian spirituality.

*1 Jn 4:10; Col 3:3; NV II, 1; PC 6*

### ***Responsibility of Superiors***

**62** As those who will have to render an account for the souls entrusted to them, the Superiors themselves should first try to understand and have a love for the will of God, that they are to reveal to others in a spirit of brotherly service, as it is related to the entire Congregation and to each one of the members over whom they preside.

*Heb 13:17; DS 25 I 1911; PC 14*

### ***Right Intention***

**73** Members are to be directed by a right and pure intention which they should strive to renew frequently: namely, to seek God in all things, to do all things out of love for God, to please God in all things, to refer everything to God and His greater glory, with Christ, in Christ and through Christ.

*CR 240; 241*

### ***Devotional Renewal of Vows***

**77** The pious exercise of frequently renewing professed vows should not be neglected by members. All shall renew their vows solemnly and in community on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They should do it privately and individually at least as often as they are on their monthly retreat.

*CR 251*

### ***Working Together***

**102** Conscious of their cooperation in attaining the good of the house, members should maintain careful diligence in observing the established daily order, in fulfilling their duties, and in rendering prescribed accounts and making reports. In fact, the Superiors should help them in the faithful fulfillment of their functions by promoting and fostering the harmonious collaboration of all and they should see to it that matters of greater importance be discussed by the entire community; it is, however, up to the Superior with his council, to decide what is to be done.

*CR 321; GS 26; PC 14*

## PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. Is it obvious to yourself, that you have a goal set in your life, that you truly search for God? Where exactly in your life can toil and efforts connected with these attitudes be perceived?
2. How does Satan try to deceive you most often? Among the thoughts, feelings and images of recent days, can you name those which came from the Demon and those which came from the Holy Spirit? Do you make an effort to distinguish between the two and what criteria do you apply?
3. What is your experience of God coming to you in the word of another man, a word which opens your eyes, leads you out of the dark, gives you hope and steers you from the wrong path?
4. How would you describe the history of “spiritual direction” in your life? What fruit did it bear? How is it today? Do you have a permanent spiritual director and do you agree to serve as one to others? What are your reasons and motives?
5. Is the relation superior-subordinate a site for discerning and seeking God’s will in your life? What difficulties do you face and where do they come from? Do you perceive this relation as one of openness and filled with prayer?
6. Do you participate in the effort of communal searching for the path of God? How do you do it? Do you share with and listen to your confreres during house meetings? What reasons make you speak up?

## CONFERENCE IX

### PRAYER

Within the Church, we can find Orders which take care of the poor, others which tend to the sick, and yet others which focus on the search for wisdom and knowledge in books. There are some which travel the world proclaiming the Gospel, and others which do the same while never leaving the cloister walls. There were some which have erected bridges, fought with a sword, ransomed slaves. Maybe, there will be some which we will come across only on the Internet or on Mars, and others which we cannot even think of . . . Yet, there hasn't been, there isn't, and there won't be, one which would not pray. Seeking closeness to God in prayer, unceasingly and as perfectly as possible, is one of the first seeds from which the Religious Life has sprouted. This is also the path of the Church for the Third Millennium, as we are reminded by the Holy Father, John Paul II: "Prayer and contemplation provide the ambient for the reception of the Word of God and at the same time, they spring from listening to the Word. Without an interior life of love which draws the Word, the Father and the Spirit to itself, an outlook of faith is impossible (cf. Jn 14:23). As a consequence, life itself loses meaning, the faces of brothers and sisters are obscured, and it becomes impossible to recognize the face of God in them, historical events remain ambiguous and deprived of hope, and apostolic and charitable missions become nothing more than widespread activity. Every vocation to the consecrated life is born in contemplation, from moments of intense communion and from a deep relationship of friendship with Christ . . . Every vocation must constantly mature in this intimacy with Christ. 'Your first task therefore'—John Paul reminds consecrated persons— 'cannot not be in the line of *contemplation*. Every reality of the consecrated life is born and is regenerated each day in the unending contemplation of the face of Christ'." (*Starting Afresh from Christ*, 25).

The place which Father Papczynski reserves for prayer in the life of a Religious, corresponds both to the longings of the monks from the Egyptian deserts as well as to the teaching of the Church in the third millennium. We inherited from the apostles, the evangelical counsels, and with them, promises connected with prayer and a duty to remain faithful to it (see IC 54r, 34v). Prayer is the foundation of the life of individual Religious, and of entire communities. Its lack cripples a Religious or a community and it brings unhappiness foreshadowing ruin. "Contemplate, that there are two serious infirmities, filled with the greatest unhap-

piness, the state of being deaf and dumb at the same time. Symbolically, these infirmities of the mouth and ears describe the disobedient and the godless. About them, the king-psalmist says: “They have ears but hear not, they have mouths but speak not” (cf. Ps 115: 5-6). How crippling for a Religious is this deafness, that is disobedience! What a great tragedy is this harmful closing of the mouth, that is a lack of the practice of prayer. Since every Order survives for extended years when it is based on these two, that is, on the virtue of obedience, and the love of prayer, who will not cry out in dismay, that a Religious, who is disobedient, and not devoted to prayer will perish?” (IC 75rv). When the ability to listen and to pray deteriorates, man closes himself in the deserted world of his own “ego”. The Mystical Temple of God which he should become, breathes with emptiness, since the incense of prayer is not burning constantly at its altar (see MTG VII). Yet, the human heart does not remain deserted for long. Devoid of the fragrance which kept the Demon away, without a sword, a shield, a cure and a defense, it succumbs to the enemy and makes its way toward Hell: “So stay close to this holy and fruitful practice of prayer. Know also that if at any time, you neglect it, you will move a step closer to condemnation. Whoever abandons prayer, approaches Hell: each step he takes towards it, is a result of the many times he neglected prayer. On the contrary, the more zealous and frequent the prayer, the more often, he will experience communion with God. There is no better way to multiply vices and to breed imperfections than to neglect prayer. If you examine yourself, you will realize that you always committed many transgressions, when, due to laziness, you neglected some of the regular prayers.” (IC 54r, see also IC 29v-20r, 31r, 53v-54r; OC IV). Paraphrasing a well known remark of St. Irenaeus of Lyon, we can say that, according to Our Savior, every Christian, a Religious in particular, consists of a body, soul and prayer. Without the last component, he misses the essence of his own vocation, and becomes a site of vices and a devil’s sport.

Placing prayer in the place assigned by St. Irenaeus to the Holy Spirit is somehow legitimated by the fact, that it is closely related with His presence. One who does not persist in prayer and thanksgiving, according to Blessed Stanislaus, does not possess the Spirit of God, since it is more His work than man’s: “For if you are humble, as one of the Saints used to say, the Holy Spirit will teach you to pray. He will supply you with incense, He will kindle it, He will increase the flames, and He Himself will accept the most sweet aroma.” (MTG VII, see also IC 34v). In this pneumatological context, the unparalleled value, power and efficacy of prayer is clear, as well as its link to the presence of the Risen Christ, and the spirit of thanksgiving filling the human heart.

Contemplation is the greatest, truly invaluable gift for a Religious. With zeal, which can be attributed only to personal experience, Father Papczynski talks about it in *Inspectio Cordis*, pondering the Gospel about the blind man (Lk 18:35-43): “If the blind man asked to receive again his sight to see the world and cre-

ated things, with what desire should you ask for the light of your soul, with what persistence in prayer and—may I say—with what holy obtrusiveness should you demand to behold the very Creator and to contemplate Him? People who do not know the path of holy contemplation are deprived of a very powerful tool, since, thanks to it, one can reach knowledge of oneself and God, and can achieve a close communion with the Creator of all things, with the Highest Goodness. In fact, there is no better good and gift of God, among those bestowed upon people, than the gift and benefit of contemplation, since all the happiness of the saints comes from beholding God. Thus, those who, with a shrewd and very careful mind, contemplate God, themselves and God’s creation, in a way, access this happiness, receive a foretaste of it, and become its participants. Holy contemplation is the eye of the soul: look for it with all your heart, demand it with all your strength, ask for it in ceaseless prayer, and when you receive it, guard it, so that you would not lose it. Pay attention not to forfeit it, in the midst of a multitude of things to accomplish. Remember to guard it as carefully as normal people tend to guard their physical eyes.” (IC 29r). Happiness, opening of the eyes to the truth about yourself and the world, cognition and communion with God, these are the deepest and most “primary” desires of a human heart, and simultaneously, the main aim of the path of the evangelical counsels. Yet, the fruit of contemplation is even more abundant. If a prayer is zealous, humble, persevering, not refraining from toil and struggle, coming from a pure heart, then it brings well-being to the soul, purifies it, brings back unity with God, and makes the performing of great works possible (see IC 17v, 19r-20v, 29r, 53v-54r, 75rv, 131v-132r, MTG VII, OC IV). In the opinion of the Blessed Founder, nobody does more for the Church than those who pray: “Such souls as these, intent on their zeal for prayer, can help the whole Church more in one moment than all preachers with their sermons, teachers with their lectures, confessors with the administration of penance. They can rouse the dead to life, recall the wicked to righteousness; they can destroy whole armies, avert famine, chase away disease, and do all things, being supported in their prayer by two arms, Faith and Charity” (MTG VII).

The necessity and the efficacy of prayer also comes from the calling and the promise of Christ. When we get on our knees and call to Heaven in His name, our cry has a power “coercing God.” According to Blessed Stanislaus, just as Jesus protected and took tender care of His disciples during His life on earth, He left them prayer, so that they would not remain without defense and protection after His return to His Father (IC 52v-53r). Prayer is for our Founder a place of meeting with the Risen Lord. One who neglects common spiritual exercises is similar to St. Thomas the Apostle, who suffers from incredulity, since he was away, when Jesus appeared to His disciples after the Resurrection. In every moment of affliction, we should run to Galilee, to the place of prayer, because the Risen has gone ahead of us, and is expecting us there (see IC 42v, 145rv).

It is worth noticing a few more, important traits which emerge from the picture of prayer contained in the writings of Father Papczynski. He introduces a clear hierarchy of invocations and requests brought to God. There are things we must not pray for, since they oppose justice, love or mercy. Among them are: demanding harm to someone's life, health or possessions, or asking for God's punishment of our enemies. We can implore for some benefits only conditionally, such as health or success, if this is God's will. While for such spiritual goods as grace, conversion, improvement of morals, forgiveness of sins, perseverance, or everlasting glory, we should knock tirelessly, and persistently, insisting on them, since the violent take the Heavenly Kingdom by force (see IC 53rv, 17v).

Yet, for the Blessed, supplication is not the most beloved way of coming before God. Deep in his heart he has inscribed the advice of St. Paul: "Give thanks to God the Father always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph 5:20). He encourages Religious to make a thanksgiving prayer in the following way: "Depending on the needs of those who ask, prayer takes different forms. Some, praying, atone for their sins; others, asking, beg for forgiveness; some, longing, seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit and holy virtues; but there are also those who, with a great desire and constant pestering, demand from God knowledge, wealth, possessions and other goods or good fortune. But you, in the time given by the Providence of Eternal Wisdom for prayer, devote to thanksgiving, for numerous blessings such as creation, life, justification, redemption, enlightenment and a double vocation, or for the creation of this abundant gift of the Last Supper. You see how generously He treated your soul at His Table. Do not even doubt, that once you receive a given grace with great thankfulness, and once you pay your rightful thanksgiving, the Lord will add you many more graces. Each thanksgiving brought to the best and most high God, prepares man to receive even greater gifts and charisms. Whoever bestows the greatest thanks on God, makes Him a debtor most certain to repay." (IC 53v, see also IC 34v). This "eucharistic," thanksgiving dimension of prayer is particularly worth noticing, since it is one of the most important features of a deep, mature Christianity.

In the writings of Father Founder, we can find encouragement for the prayer of intercession. It should include the intentions of ". . . your Holy Church, of the Pope, of the Christian Emperor, of our King and Kingdom, and of all Kings and Christian Kingdoms, neighbors of my own and of my parents, relatives, benefactors, friends, enemies [ . . . ] and all those for whom I have ever either resolved, promised or ought to pray, and whom your Majesty wishes to be prayed for, whether alive or dead, but not yet enjoying Your glory; for the conversion of sinners and heretics and the enlightening of unbelievers and schismatics." (MTG IV). Particularly dear to Blessed Stanislaus, is intercession for the souls remaining in the flames of purgatory, such prayer is the greatest charity (see MTG XXI).

We could devote much time to reflecting on the words of Father Papczynski referring to contemplation and different forms of standing in the presence of God, but it may be worth posing a question - what does his prayer tell us about himself? All those who had a chance to see the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II steeped in prayer, were deeply moved, because they were aware, that they had discovered not only the source of his strength, but also, a very important truth about himself... Prayer is the mirror of the soul. What face of our Founder can we see in this mirror? He was certainly a man of deep prayer. The expressions: zeal, contemplation and ecstasy seem justified in his case. We do not have many testimonies or detailed accounts from his life. He prayed when he was a child, later on, in difficult situations and before making important decisions, he searched for the light and strength of God. He had visions and ecstasies. When we refer to his writings, we can find prayers which he had picked, advised or himself brought to God; sometimes a conference he was preaching changes from the word to the Religious, into the word directed to Heaven. (see e.g. IC 20rv, 113v, 115v, 116rv, 118v-119r, 125v, 174r-176r; MTG IV, XVI, XXII). These are always the prayers of a sinner who trusts in God, a humble man willing to submit to His will. They reveal a loving heart, asking to love more, till the end.

St. Theophan the Recluse in his conference on prayer recalls “. . . a wise habit of the ancient Fathers, according to which, when they greeted one another, instead of asking about health or anything else, they inquired about prayer, saying: what about prayer—how is it going? The activity of prayer was for them, a measure of the spiritual life—and they called it a *breath of the spirit*. The body lives when it breathes; when the breath stops—life ends. It is the same with the soul. When there is prayer—the soul lives; a lack of prayer— a lack of life in spirit” (after St. Theophan the Recluse, *Slowa o modlitwie/Words on prayer*, Tyniec 2003, 10). I think that our Founder would wholeheartedly embrace such a greeting. If he visited our communities today, a question about prayer would be among the first. . . for a start. What would be your answer?

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### Basic biblical source: Mc 14:32-42

*32* 11 Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” *33* He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. *34* Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch.” *35* He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; *36* he said, “Abba, Father, 12 all things are possible to you. Take this cup away

from me, but not what I will but what you will.” 37 When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” 39 Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing. 40 Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to answer him. 41 He returned a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. 42 Get up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

**Relevant biblical verses for deepening the reading of the text:**

verse 32-33: Jn 18:1; Mt 17:1-8; Mk 5:37. 9:2. 13:3; Lk 9:28ff; Acts 1:12-14;  
verse 34-35: Ps 42; Ps 43; Jonas 4,7-11;  
verse 36: Mk 10,35-40; Mt 11:25-27; Jn 5:19-20; Rom 8:14-17; Ga 4:6-7;  
verse 37-38: Rom 7:18-24; Ga 5:16-18;  
verse 41: Mk 14:35; Jn 13:1;

**Other biblical texts pertaining to the topics:**

Gen 18:22-23

*Let these men render decisions for the people in all ordinary cases. More important cases they should refer to you, but all the lesser cases they can settle themselves. Thus, your burden will be lightened, since they will bear it with you. If you do this, when God gives you orders you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.”*

1 Kings 19:4-14

*Elijah was afraid and fled for his life, going to Beersheba of Judah. He left his servant there and went a day’s journey into the desert, until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death: “This is enough, O LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree, but then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and eat. He looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, but the angel of the LORD came back a second time, touched him, and ordered, “Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you!” He got up, ate and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb. There he came to a cave, where he took shelter. But the word of the LORD came to him, “Why are you here, Elijah?” He answered: “I have been most zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.”*

*Then the LORD said, "Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by." A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD--but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake--but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire--but the LORD was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, "Elijah, why are you here?" He replied, "I have been most zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. But the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life."*

Mt 6:7-15

*In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. "This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, 10 but deliver us from the evil one. 11 If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.*

Lc 10:38-42

*As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. 14 She had a sister named Mary (who) sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."*

Jn 15:1-17

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me*

*will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, 6 because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another.*

James 1:5-8

*But if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and he will be given it. But he should ask in faith, not doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed about by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord, since he is a man of two minds, unstable in all his ways.*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RELIGIOUS REGULATIONS:**

A deepened life of prayer, aiming at the closest union with God, was placed by our Constitutions and Directory at the center of the Marian vocation. We have to strive for it with all our heart. The spirit of prayer, nurtured by the authentic sources of Christian spirituality, opens us to receiving the gift of God's love, and allows to keep this treasure. Chapter Six of our Constitutions is devoted in its entirety to prayer and piety. This aspect of the Marian life, according to the recommendations of the Statutes of our Congregation, should be particularly cherished and taken care of. Superiors should make every effort to secure a proper time for prayer for everyone. Any activities cannot collide with it and keeping order, silence, meditation and the cloister have to create favorable conditions for its improvement. One of the main aims of the novitiate and seminary formation is the development of one's prayer life. The Constitutions and Directory also provide a number of specific prayer intentions entrusted to particular concerns of the confreres. The ones that recur most often are calls to pray for the deceased, for the Church, her unity and hierarchy, for the Congregation and its superiors, for

subordinate confreres, for the conversion of sinners, for parents and benefactors, for the sick and those in hardships, for vocations. See:

**Importance and significance of prayer: 36, 65, 73-75, 66, 92, 166, 192;**

**Care for prayer: 35, 78, 101-105;**

**Intentions Constitutions: 19, 80-82, 154**

**Directory: 37-43, 54.**

### *Assistance to the Deceased and the Dying*

**19** The union of the living on earth with the brothers who have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ is not in the least interrupted. On the contrary, according to the conviction of the early Church, it is strengthened through the exchange of spiritual goods. Thus, our Congregation, from its very beginning, following the abiding faith of the Church in the communion of saints in the mystical Body of Christ, with great devotion honors the memory of the dead and offers suffrages for them. Therefore, members should remember to aid the souls of the faithful departed suffering in purgatory by offering their indulgences and mortifications, by prayers and intercession, especially by the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, and by offering up for them their zealous deeds and other good works, for “it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they be loosed from their sins.” (2 Mac 12: 46 Vulg.). Likewise, they shall not neglect to assist the dying who face the most critical moment of their lives.

*NVI,2; CR 16; IN XVI, 8; LG 49; 50*

### *Work and Prayer*

**35** They should carefully and diligently prepare themselves for any duty or ministry and, having God before their eyes, should devote themselves from the heart, fervently and with perseverance, diligently and conscientiously to any work, yet without doing harm to their prayer life or physical health. When anyone feels that he is overburdened with work or that, due to a multitude of occupations, he cannot properly perform his pious exercises, he should candidly and sincerely make it known to his Superior.

*CR 355*

### *Union with God*

**36** In and through all things, each one should be eager to aim at the closest union with God, to be joined to Him as much as possible first in his prayer, then in all his actions, and also to be magnanimous, and in the highest degree generous and liberal in His service.

*CR 176*

### ***Spirit of Prayer***

**65** Members should seek and love God above all else, who first loved us and in all circumstances should take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God, which is the source and stimulus of love of neighbor, for the salvation of the world and the up-building of the Church. Although charity is a gift of God, it is obtained and preserved, nevertheless, by constancy in prayer and mortification. For this reason, the members should with constant effort cultivate the spirit of prayer and prayer itself, drawing on authentic sources of Christian spirituality.

*1 Jn 4:10; Col 3:3; NV II, 1; PC 6*

### ***Knowledge of Jesus Christ***

**66** Desiring to live according to the pattern of the Gospel, in the first place, let them have the sacred Scripture at hand daily, that by reading and meditating on it, they might learn “the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:8). Let the members keep in mind that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture, so that a conversation may take place between God and man; for, we speak to Him when we pray; we listen to Him when we read the divine oracles.

*DV 25; PC 6*

### ***Right Intention***

**73** Members are to be directed by a right and pure intention which they should strive to renew frequently: namely, to seek God in all things, to do all things out of love for God, to please God in all things, to refer everything to God and His greater glory, with Christ, in Christ and through Christ.

*CR 240; 241*

### ***Liturgical Actions and Pious Exercises***

**74** All should hold in highest regard liturgical actions and pious exercises, which are the principal nourishment of the spiritual life and instruments of perfection. Their importance and purpose should be fully known to members who must strive to learn theoretical and practical aspects of their method, performance and application, so that they may be able to use them to their own advantage and also to instruct others who seek perfection. In the use of pious exercises, however, they are to observe the holy freedom of the sons of God and should strive to grow to the highest degree of intimacy with Him.

*CR 256*

### ***Daily Practices***

**75** Daily, they should zealously perform the following liturgical actions and pious exercises:

- 1) priests are to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice, while the others are to make every effort to participate and receive the most holy Body of Christ;
  - 2) they are to visit and adore the Lord himself present in the Blessed Sacrament;
  - 3) Priests and deacons in a dignified manner are to recite the liturgy of the hours, the others are to recite some part of it as defined in the provincial statutes, but they may fulfill this prayer requirement also in some other manner, as prescribed in the same statutes; in the morning and evening, they should recite suitable parts of the liturgy of the hours or other prayers, in so far as possible, in common;
  - 4) they are to spend a half-hour in mental prayer;
  - 5) they will make an examination of conscience twice a day;
  - 6) they will devote a suitable amount of time to spiritual reading;
  - 7) they will recite one part of the Rosary, devoutly meditating on the respective mysteries;
  - 8) they will pray before and after meals.
- CR 242; SC 96, 99; CIC 276, 2; 663, 2-4*

### ***Concern of Superiors***

**78** Superiors should provide members with adequate free time for pious exercises, so that no one is deprived of his spiritual reading and prayer, especially mental prayer. They should with great eagerness promote piety and fidelity in the sacramental and spiritual life among the confreres, especially a full, and whenever possible, common participation in the Eucharist. They should guard against introducing into the community pious exercises or peculiar devotions that do not favor true progress in the prayer life of the members.

*CR 254*

### ***Prayers for the Living***

**80** Members should frequently pray for holy Mother Church and the Supreme Pontiff, for the conversion of sinners, for the expansion and unity of the Church, for the diocesan Bishop and all the clergy, for their own Superiors, confreres, students and the entire Congregation and its benefactors. In addition, they should frequently offer up to God their customary prayers, mortifications and other works for the same intention.

*CR 410*

### ***Prayer for the Deceased***

**81** In their prayers, all should commend both their confreres as well as all the faithful departed to the mercy of God. Moreover, members should show solicitude

to gain indulgences granted by the Church and, as much as possible, offer them for the souls detained in purgatory.

*CR 416; 418*

### ***Superior's Prayer***

**82** The Superior is obliged to frequently pray for the confreres who are entrusted to him and to offer one Mass, or more, for them.

### ***Observance***

**92** Common life in the houses of the Congregation, with regard to common prayer, the apostolate, meals and living conditions and the entire manner of life, is to be exactly observed by all. Therefore, no one is to be easily exempted from any common exercise, nor all the more, be allowed to remain alone outside the community for a longer time.

*CR 279; PC 15*

### ***Prayer and Example***

**154** Members should express concern for new vocations primarily through daily and fervent prayer to “the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to His harvest” (Mt 9:37). They also should remember that the example of their own lives, lived with a humble and cheerful spirit as well as mutual brotherly love, are the best recommendation for the Congregation and an encouragement to embrace religious life. They should also strive to attract youth to God’s service by their own apostolic work performed with diligence and eagerness.

*CR 356; OT 2; PC 24*

## **Directory:**

### **Retreats**

**37** Each month members shall make a one-day retreat, and each year spiritual exercises lasting about a week, as determined by the provincial statutes, either in community or separately. (C 76)

*CR 249; 252*

### ***Manner of Commutation***

**38** If any member should ever happen to omit some liturgical action or pious exercise because of work dedicated to God, he should try to make up for this even while being occupied at least by more frequently calling to mind God’s presence and by brief prayers; he should also offer up to God, with greater affection, the very works he is performing. (C 76)

*CR 255*

### ***Private Prayer***

**39** They should, in addition, take care: to pray in private frequently, fervently, and with confidence, especially before undertaking any more important matter or work, to foster in themselves, by whatever means a discrete piety will suggest, a spirit of continuous prayer; without interruption to walk in the presence of God and eagerly to nourish their interior life, to make again and again an examination of foresight; frequently to look into themselves, and to reflect upon themselves and their actions; often to raise their mind to God through ejaculatory prayers and to call forth acts of virtues and to be inflamed with holy desires for better things. (C 76)

*CR 243*

### ***For the entire Congregation***

**40** Annually each of the priests is to say one Mass for the entire Congregation, that it may grow in merit and in number. The Superiors, on their part, must celebrate Mass with the participation of the community for this same intention on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Once a month, if possible on the day of the monthly retreat, the individual members shall say their whole day's prayers and perform pious exercises for the same intention. (C 80)

*CR 411*

### ***For the Superior General***

**41** Once a year in every house, one Mass is to be celebrated, with members participating, for the intention of the Superior General. (C 80)

*CR 412*

### ***For the Living and the Deceased***

**42** Likewise, every year in each house, two Masses shall be celebrated for the living and dead parents and relatives of the members; and one for the benefactors. (C 80)

*CR 413*

### ***For all the Deceased***

**43** Each priest shall say one Mass each year for all the deceased members of the Congregation; one Mass is to be said once a year in every house for all the faithful departed. (C 81)

*CR 418*

### ***Prayers for those in Need***

**54** Ill members or those who find themselves in special difficulties or straits should be zealously aided by the prayers of the confreres; likewise, for just reasons, the Superiors may commend various works and also both individual members and non-members to the prayers of the confreres. (C 82)

*CR 415*

### **PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What place does prayer have in your religious hierarchy of values? Is it simply a general norm or is it fulfilled in your life? What concrete situations and choices does it offer?
2. When do you most often experience prayer as a gift, as the presence of the Holy Spirit who prays in you? What are the fruits of such prayer?
3. How do the following expressions apply to your practice of prayer: “a spiritual battle,” “an exercise in prayer,” “the struggle of prayer”?
4. Prayer is the mirror of the soul. What is your reflection in this mirror? What does your prayer tell you about yourself (its intensity, object, balancing it amidst other requirements, adoration and thanksgiving, etc.)?
5. What are the sources of your prayer? Where does it come from and what nurtures it?
6. What is your experience of communal prayer? What is the greatest obstacle and difficulty in practicing it and what facilitates it?

## CONFERENCE X

### ASCETICISM AND MORTIFICATION

Man needs care. From time to time, we like to devote some time to ourselves, to take care of our health, to go on a good retreat to mend our spiritual leaks. It is best if we have received a new spirit, or some gifts, or if one of the Jesuits who gives the spiritual exercises listened to our outpourings, and dug soil in our garden . . . it won't do any harm and something may even grow at last. Let's imagine that this year, a monk named Stanislaus came to us and invited us for a week at the Korabiew hermitage . . . not for any strict retreat, just a week of ordinary life. An offer that we can't refuse . . . we have to accept it with a smile. Our face would fall, when we found in our cell, next to a bundle of hay, the daily schedule. Getting up right after midnight!!! Two hours of meditation daily! Apart from the Office, three parts of the Rosary and the first meal after eleven am??? They must be crazy, but after all, a week is not a prison sentence, I will survive somehow. I need to thank God I was lucky enough not to come here during Lent, Advent or during some retreat! Even if we managed to survive till 11 am wearing a hair shirt and if we reached the refectory in our wooden clogs, our eyes heavy with sleep, here we would certainly lose our temper: veggies, roots, lean soup and water to drink. Most of us would slam the door and return to carry the burden of the Religious Life on less steep paths. A few of those who would survive until evening, would pack up there bags when hearing of flagellation, and they would leave the Korabiew Forest convinced that the Prior who put together "The Rule of Life" should be placed on therapy, since he reveals self-destructive tendencies, is a religious maniac, and is destructive toward his own body.

Probably many of us read this report of "a day in the Korabiew Forest" with a smile. Yet, I believe many would agree with the statement, that we have a problem with mortification. Even worse, it is not just the issue of restraint and balance or keeping a proper relation between asceticism and grace. I am even scared to think what Father Stanislaus would say about the Congregation in which 70% of the "monks" are overweight, while regular fasting may be practiced by a small percent, out of which, most are considered, not without reason, eccentric. Who of us should not beat his breast hearing the words such as: daily schedule, cloister, silence, diligence, restraining one's senses, etc. It is enough to recall how our blood boils, when something is missing at home and we have to endure little inconveniences and wants, not to mention renouncing necessary yet not indis-

pensable things. I assume that some of us would react faster and more violently to cutting us off from the Internet, than to bricking up the chapel door. Our eyes, ears, thoughts and imagination frolic without restraint, on paths where there are no holy images on the wayside . . . we have to admit that all this departs from many entries in our Religious Constitutions, and we have to talk about the decline of asceticism and mortification in our lives. Even though the above image may be a bit of an overdrawn picture of the Marians at the time of the Beatification, it seems that the situation is alarming.

In an Advent meditation about making the paths straight for the coming Savior, our Blessed Founder stresses that it is only penance and mortification that make the way for the Lord. Thus, he zealously admonishes his reader: “to be more eager in saying farewell to the world and the body, than to part with penance, to be ready to die rather than to forsake mortification.” (IC 9v). Was Father Papczynski a “record-holder in mortification”? Did asceticism take a leading place in his life? What was its aim and boundaries? It is worth looking for answers to these and similar questions. The daily schedule, prayers, and way of life advised by the author of the *Norma Vitae* shows that he did not belong to the people “dressed in soft clothes.” Undeniably, he led a strict life devoted to penance and mortification. Yet most probably, he did not consider himself or his brothers as any great ascetics. Meditating on the torment of Christ, having quoted the examples of serious asceticism (e.g. Dominick the Armored, who during Lent flagellated himself 3 million times, or Kasper Druzbecki, who with a scourge equipped with iron ends flagellated himself 15 thousand times a day), he claims: Whose words can list other [such mortifications]? The poet was correct who said: *The self-flagellations of our predecessors compare with ours: you will find them true, while ours, even serious, you will call a joke.* Compare, my Christian, your own penance with that of John, Paul, Anthony, Onufrus, and many other hermits, with the penances of Benedict, Francis, Dominic, Bernard and many of our guides; with penances of Theresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, Rose of Lima, Kunegunda of Poland, Magdalene of Italy and many other brides of Christ; *you will find them true, while ours, even serious, a joke.*” (OC VI). It is worth drawing our attention to the fact that ascetic practices are not, for the Blessed, an aim in themselves. They always refer to our relation with God, are a sign of true conversion and make us followers of Christ. In *Inspectio Cordis*, Father Stanislaus writes about it very forcefully: “This truth was expressed by the Prophet: *Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting and weeping* [Jl 2:12]. This is the drink of people who convert to God: weeping and lamenting! Their healthy and redemptive refreshment: fasting. You should as well restrain gluttony of your stomach if you truly want to convert your heart to God.” (IC 103r) and in another place he adds: “This is what it means to follow Christ, not to lose any opportunity to suffer for Him, to desire to carry the cross. And you, you should be ashamed, that you are so hypersensitive, that

you avoid even a tiny mortification. You bear with a frown and a great murmur both internal and external, even a bit of unpleasantness in words. Oh you, an excellent follower of Christ! How would you behave during the scourging? Are you not aware that the open path to Heaven leads only through thorns?" (IC 131r; see also IC 130r-130v). Afflictions and the Cross, which bear the fruit of patience, and mortifications, which bring submission to God's will, are the two envoys preceding the coming of Christ to souls (see: IC 39r). Flesh and blood cannot lead to getting to know God, and anyone who relies on them, and neglects asceticism, is called insane by Blessed Stanislaus. "Ponder that those who dwell in the matters of flesh and blood are not able to understand heavenly things. Because the things of God require not so much a diligent study, as ardent mortification. Thus, the Old Sage says: *Into a soul that plots evil, wisdom enters not, nor dwells she in a body under debt of sin.* [cf. Wis 1:4]. Just as the insane puts earthly knowledge before heavenly knowledge, just so, is he who wants to discover God's mysteries without mortification devoid of any wisdom. It was not flesh and blood which revealed the Divinity of Christ to the First Prince of the Apostles, while the second, in order to know heavenly mysteries, says: *What I do is discipline my own body and master it* [1 Col 9:27]." (IC 122r). In the opinion of Father Stanislaus, mortification saves the soul from death, and yet, in itself, similar to knowledge and experience, it is not able to defeat Satan; in this fight, of crucial importance is confidence placed in God, prayer, humility, patience, and restraint of the senses ( see IC 87r, 31r). Love is the heart of mortification, without it, God is not pleased with sacrifice. (MTG VI).

According to our Founder, mortification should be external as well as internal, it should encompass all our senses, reach to the brink of our endurance and never end, it should last till our death (see IC 111r, OC VI, MTG VI, NV IV3). Besides Chapter IV of the *Norma Vitae*, which regulates mortifications in the Congregation of Marians founded by Fr. Papczynski, Chapter VI of *Templum Dei Mysticum* is also very important, since it talks about the victim in the Mystical Temple. It contains many practical tips, and it points to various dimensions of asceticism such as: the restraint of judgment, will, speech, imagination, sight, taste, flesh, and passions. Blessed Stanislaus also mentions the limits of mortifications there. One should practice silence, but not to the point of surrendering a fight for the truth. One should restrain the imagination, but without doing damage to the brain or the head. One should mortify the body, but not without consideration of one's health, if it does not threaten the loss of the soul. The passage from this chapter on the restraint of emotions is also very significant, "In addition, you must not think that I am taking no account of that which is best, and which alone makes a man wise and holy, namely, the moderation as we say, of our emotions: I allow you to grow angry, but without sin; to rejoice, but in the Lord; to grieve, but because you have sometimes offended God, who is the highest good, or your

neighbor; to hope, but for the Kingdom of Heaven; to be consumed with sorrow, but in penitence for the evils that you have committed, or the good deeds that you have omitted; to fear, but only God, as a son fears his father; to love, but this same God alone, or, for His sake, your neighbor, and much more so your enemy.” (MTG VI) We can clearly see that mortifications of the Blessed, as well as his advice on sacrifice, are not based on a rejection of human nature with all of its abundance of thoughts, emotions and imagination. He only wants to subsume it completely to the love of God and man, and in this way, to bring back its beauty which God designed, and the prospects for eternal life. Father Stanislaus knows that “. . . food is destined for the stomach, but the stomach is destined for worms” (NV IV 2), while your aim on this earth is not consumption, but rather, God’s glory: “I do not insist that you get accustomed to hard, coarse bread, or that you sprinkle it with ashes (which, however, some of the Saints did in a most holy manner), that it may have no taste. Nor do I want your honey to be mixed with gall; your heart, I say, should not be free from bitterness, unless God stimulates you to do this and helps you; but I do boldly advise you: do not take delight in these gifts, but rather bless and love Him who gives you food and drink at the right time, not that you live to eat, but that you eat to live;” (MTG XIII). Mortification is, in a sense, a part of the pains of the birth of the new man who lives in unity with God: “And so let us rather learn to seek God through the death of the senses, and we shall find him. They die, when they are directed wisely, when such things are removed from them by which brute animals themselves are attracted. Then, when the animal man dies, the spiritual one will arise, who, having found in himself God as his possession, will sweetly repeat with Paul: *I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me* (Gal 2:20).” (MTG XV)

Asceticism and mortification are not popular these days. They have almost completely disappeared from everyday speech, and even when they show up, they usually have negative connotations. No wonder, they oppose the rules of “this world” to the extreme. Also in the documents of the Church referring to the Religious Life, they do not come to the fore. They do not appear at all in *Redemptionis Donum*, while in *Vita Consecrata* only one point (p. 38) is devoted to asceticism and spiritual struggle, further developed in the instruction *Starting Afresh from Christ* (p. 27). It is hard to expect profound analysis of ascetic practices to be found in the pronouncements of the Church. They focus rather on the theological aspect of Religious Consecration, and on the perspective that the signs of the times show us the ways of involvement at the service of God and man. Yet, we should take deeply to heart, a short statement from the mentioned documents: “Asceticism . . . is truly indispensable if Consecrated Persons are to remain faithful to their own vocation and to follow Jesus on the way of the Cross.”

When Blessed Stanislaus mentioned the mortifications of the ancient fathers, the penance of his contemporaries seemed to him trifling and not serious. If we

compare his way of life with the asceticism that we practice, it will appear to us ridiculous or none at all. In a certain way, it resembles a famous story about prayer. A father was praying zealously, and when a cat disturbed him, he tied it to the table. His son, whenever he said prayers, followed his father's example, he tied the cat, although he did not know why he did this. His grandson tied the cat to the table only from time to time . . . Transposing this image on the practice of mortification in our Congregation, let's ask ourselves whether we are not the "third generation"? Is the cat not running freely through our houses? And isn't it high time to catch the rascal and tie it, but also to ask why our Father did it.

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### Basic biblical source: Phl 3:4-16

*4...[A]lthough I myself have grounds for confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he can be confident in flesh, all the more can I. 5 Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a Pharisee, 6 in zeal I persecuted the church, in righteousness based on the law I was blameless. 7 (But) whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith 10 to know him and the power of his resurrection and (the) sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ (Jesus). 13 Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us, then, who are "perfectly mature" adopt this attitude. And if you have a different attitude, this too God will reveal to you. 16 Only, with regard to what we have attained, continue on the same course.*

### Relevant biblical verses for deepening the reading of the text:

verse 4: Rom 7:5ff; 2 Cor 11:18ff;

verse 5: Gen 17:10ff; Lk 1:59; Lk 2:21; Mt 3:7ff;

verse 6: Acts 8:1-3;

verse 7: Mt 13:44-46; Lk 14:25-35; Rom 10:1-4;

verse 8-9: Mt 16:26; Is 53:11-12; Jer 9:23-24; Rom 1:16-17; Ga 2:15-21; 1 Cor 2:1-5; Col 2:2-3;

verse 10: Rom 6:3-5; Rom 8:5-17; 2 Cor 4:7-14; Gal 6:17; 1 Peter 4:12-13;

verse 11: Acts 4:2; Acts 26:7; 1 Tes 4:13-18; Rev 20:5-6; Phl 2:16;

verse 12: Gal 5:1-7; Mt 5:48; Ac 9:5-6; 1 Cor 13:10-12; 1 Tim 6:11-16;

verse 13-14: Lk 9:62; Hbr 11:26; 1 Cor 9:24-27; Col 3:1-4;

### **Other biblical texts pertaining to the topics:**

Rom 6:3-11

*Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.*

Col 3:1-17

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory. Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry. Because of these the wrath of God is coming (upon the disobedient). By these you too once conducted yourselves, when you lived in that way. But now you must put them all away: anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language out of your mouths. Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has*

*forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Mt 16:24-28

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct. Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

Mt 9:14-17

*Then the disciples of John approached him and said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast (much), but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one patches an old cloak with a piece of unshrunk cloth, for its fullness pulls away from the cloak and the tear gets worse. People do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."*

Jn 12:24-25

*Amen, amen, I say to you, 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. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RELIGIOUS REGULATIONS:**

The entire Chapter Seven of our Constitutions is devoted to penance and mortification. It defines the aim of mortification and its scope. Ascetic efforts are to lead a Marian towards conquering all that is unruly in human nature, make him submit entirely to God, and live for Christ alone. Mortification should be external

and internal, yet our Statutes stress the latter more forcefully. A lot of space in our Constitutions and Directory is devoted to the attitude which can be called “asceticism of life.” We are called to cope with life’s burdens and afflictions, to patiently accept weariness and sickness in order to lead a modest and sober life filled with work, and to courageously and willingly carry the cross. Mortifications should not harm our health or dissipate our strength to work. We should remember about rest, and keep in mind the significance of recreation for our health, spirit and communal life. See:

**Constitutions paragraphs: 4, 26, 32, 34, 44, 65, 84-90, 107;**  
**Points of Directory: 2, 3, 55, 65;**

***Total Consecration***

**4** Having renounced all things, as much as human frailty allows, the members should devote, give and consecrate themselves so completely to God and the things of God that God truly be the center of life for both the individual members and the entire Congregation.

*CR 4*

***Carry the Cross with Christ***

**26** Faithfully and courageously following Christ, let each one be ready, whenever necessity demands it, to suffer and endure heat, cold, thirst, hunger, lack of the necessities of life, hardships, injuries, contempt and humiliations as often as these seem to contribute to the greater glory of God, the spiritual benefit of others and the salvation of their own soul.

*CR 168*

***Conformity to the Divine Will***

**32** Members should try to conform their will entirely to the divine will, to which they should submit themselves, should do and fulfill it by faithfully and generously observing the precepts of God and the Church as well as the Evangelical Counsels and their own laws, cooperating faithfully with divine grace, by attentively, discretely and docilely following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by overcoming and enduring adversities and by patiently, bravely and eagerly bearing their cross with Christ.

*CR 174*

***Industrious Life***

**34** Members should love an industrious life. They should highly prize the time given them by God and try to use it reasonably, usefully, fruitfully, properly,

in an orderly way and more meritoriously from day to day. Let them apply themselves seriously to what they are doing and see to it that they do not waste even the least bit of time in doing nothing, doing something other than what they are supposed to be doing or doing something badly. Absolutely shunning all idleness, the source of so many evils, for as long as they are in good physical health, they should keep themselves always occupied in some useful task, each one according to his strength, natural ability and the requirements of his office, as well as the disposition of the Superiors.

*CR 353*

### ***Poor in Fact and in Spirit***

**44** Adhering to God alone and trusting in His providence and goodness, members should be content with the necessities of life and should rejoice if they ever truly happen to experience indigence and privations. Let them remove far from themselves every form of avarice; let them not use anything as their own; let them not keep in their possession anything superfluous. Insofar as holy discretion allows, they should be inclined to prefer privation to abundance and to select lesser things that are cheaper for their own use. Members should always remember that for true poverty it is not enough to be subject to the Superiors in the use of goods, but they should be poor in fact and in spirit, having their treasures in Heaven.

*Mt 19:21; Lk 12:33; CR 233-235; PC 13*

### ***Spirit of Prayer***

**65** Members should seek and love God above all else, who first loved us and in all circumstances should take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God, which is the source and stimulus of love of neighbor, for the salvation of the world and the up-building of the Church. Although charity is a gift of God, it is obtained and preserved, nevertheless, by constancy in prayer and mortification. For this reason, the members should with constant effort cultivate the spirit of prayer and prayer itself, drawing on authentic sources of Christian spirituality.

*1 Jn 4:10; Col 3:3; NV II, 1; PC 6*

### ***Purpose of Mortification***

**84** Through the constant practice of mortification they should strive to remove, purify and subdue whatever is inordinate in human nature, that nothing immoderate and undisciplined may remain in them, so that having become masters of themselves, they may direct and make use of all their God-given powers for pursuing some suitable good.

*CR 166*

### ***External Mortifications***

**85** Members have the obligation, first of all, to perform the penitential practices prescribed for all the faithful in the universal and local Church. Each one should also assume other external mortifications that the striving for his own perfection and prudent zeal would suggest, nor should their practice be neglected since they are greatly helpful to progress in the spiritual life. However, mortifications which are harmful to one's health or one's duties are forbidden.

*CR 271*

### ***Internal Mortification***

**86** Without neglecting the external mortification of their bodies and senses, the members should chiefly apply themselves to internal mortification by mitigating and restraining their passions, concupiscences, affections, desires and inclinations and by keeping constant watch over their thoughts, imagination and heart.

*CR 273*

### ***Overcoming Oneself***

**87** Each one should especially try to restrain inordinate love of himself, which is the cause of all sin, by forcefully and continually conquering himself. Having forsaken all things, each one should also deny and forsake himself, his inordinate opinions and wishes, so that dead to himself and the world, he might live wholeheartedly for Christ. And for him, Christ should replace everything and he should not hesitate to expend himself completely for Christ and His Church.

*CR 167*

### ***By Work***

**88** Each one should willingly accept whatever work or office is entrusted to him, or that falls to him for the common or particular good. And he should not consider any occupation unworthy of himself if it is useful and honest, looking attentively at the example of Jesus Christ working with His own hands and of so many saints who considered it a delight to do even humble tasks.

*CR 276*

### ***Hardships of Life***

**89** In the spirit of penance, they should, in the Lord, bravely, patiently and readily endure life's hardships, the weariness, annoyances and difficulties of their labors, occupations, and offices, bodily pains and infirmities, tribulations of the soul, persecutions of the world and any other crosses that God permits.

*CR 277*

### ***Temperance and Sobriety***

**90** Food is to be simple and frugal, but sufficient and healthful. Both the quality and quantity of the meals are to be regulated in accord with local customs, with allowances made for work, health or greater need. At all times and everywhere, members should strive for temperance and sobriety; ordinarily they are to abstain from alcoholic drinks.

Especially forbidden is the use of tobacco, except for a weighty reason and with the special written permission of the Major Superior.

*CR 236; 274*

### ***Recreation***

**107** Every day some free time should be foreseen in the daily order to renew one's strength for new work. Recreation should benefit not only the body, but also the soul and should nourish and foster mutual love among the members. Peace, cheerfulness and also joy in the Lord are recommended to all.

*CR 313-314; ES II, 26*

## **Directory:**

### ***Acquaintance and Dialogue***

**23** In governing the family of God, the Superiors should have before their eyes the character and mission of their own community in the Church; they should strive to ascertain the strength, talents and needs of the members, and the difficulties in the given circumstances of the times and the place; and let them undertake fraternal dialogue for hearing the opinions of the members about common matters. (C 63)

*CR 213; PC 14*

### ***Attire and Living Quarters***

**55** The attire and furniture of the living quarters of each of the members should be adapted to their occupations, preserving, however, a modesty which is proper to those who "have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24). (C 90)

### ***Patience in Illness***

**65** The ill should moderate their demands in the spirit of penitence and poverty and accept the illness itself as a gift of God and a special instrument from the hand of God for their sanctification and they should bear it with patience and a tranquil mind and with complete submission to divine providence. Without rejecting human assistance and not renouncing the hope of recovering their health,

let them however above all desire that the will of God be perfectly done in their regard. Those who are more seriously ill should without fear and at the right time prepare themselves for death. (C 96)

*CR 398*

## **PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. Without the death and resurrection of Christ, our mortification makes no sense. Without the primacy of grace, it becomes a heresy. How do the paschal mystery and grace-giving presence of the Holy Spirit enlighten the burdens of your life and your mortifications?
2. How do you practice asceticism in your life, and which particular matters does it concern? What is the aim of your mortifications and ascetic practices?
3. How do you come to accept such limitations of the Religious Life as silence, cloister, daily schedule, or the annoying traits of your confreres?
4. How do you react when due to some inconveniences and daily matters, you experience any insufficiencies, or you have to change your plans, to devote your time to someone or to give up your pleasure or rest?
5. What is your attitude toward traditional forms of asceticism such as fasting and alms giving? How often do you fast out of your own choice rather than by the order of the Church? How do you react to those who ask for alms?
6. How do you practice internal mortification embracing your feelings, thoughts, imagination, etc.? Can you point to any form of asceticism in your life referring to your film viewing, reading, music listening, internet and other media use?

## CONFERENCE XI

### THE PATH OF THE RELIGIOUS VOWS

The Religious Life, almost from its beginning, has been inseparably connected with the practice of the evangelical counsels which we take up through the power of our vows. Recent documents of the Church discuss quite profoundly the theological significance of obedience, chastity and poverty, the three basic obligations taken up by most contemporary religious communities and orders. The profession of the evangelical counsels ties man to Christ in a special way, making Him the sense of one's life, and causing man to resemble Him. It acknowledges the sublime beauty of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit with wonder, and bears witness to His loving concern for every human being (*Vita Consecrata* 16). It is a gift of the Holy Trinity and the radiance of the transcendence (*ibid.* 20-21). Anyone who takes religious vows enters in the unity of bridal love with God, plunges anew into the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ, (see *Vita Consecrata* 24; *Redemptoris Donum* 7-8), and becomes a prophetic and eschatological sign of the Kingdom of God to the world.

During the period in which Father Papczynski lived, the Holy See did not devote many treatises to the theological aspects of the religious vows, yet our Founder frequently refers to the issue in his writings. He contemplates it through the perspective of spirituality and asceticism, and his views concerning particular vows are characterized by great zeal and devotion on the one hand, and knowledge of life, religious practice and human nature on the other. Let's listen what he has to say about individual vows in the order that they are professed.

"There is nothing more valuable, splendid and to God than chastity"—claims the Blessed. Among all the blessings, this one entails the most valuable reward: seeing God. We should value it more than life, following the example of the bed-ridden St. Casmir, who did not listen to the advice of the medics encouraging him to marry in order to be healed. He rejected the infamous medication, saying that he would rather die than tarnish himself. (see IC 105v). Chastity has enormous value and those who do not guard it will be severely punished. We are bound to keep it, not only on account of the natural or God-given law, but also on the basis of the vow we have taken, the breaking of which would be a sacrilege. Thus, the sin of incontinence in sexual matters is compared by our Founder to the sin of Lucifer, who wanted to sit on the throne of God (see IC 163r). Father Papczynski shares the opinion of the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, who claims that sins

are the nourishment to the fires of Hell, and those who follow their bodies, and indulge in them more will have more fuel to burn, while those who indulge in debauchery will burn in tar and stinking sulfur, and they will howl with pain as rabid dogs. (cf. IC 164r).

For our struggle to keep chastity, Blessed Stanislaus gives us a number of specific tips. We have to pay attention to our vices which destroy chastity and are “robbers of purity”: restless eyes (a glance at Bathsheba led David to adultery and to murder), unrestrained hands (touch can be like a venomous adder), impure thoughts (which kill the soul the same as an impure act), love for soft fabrics and sophisticated foods (a desire to taste the apple led Eve to sin), idleness, and indecent books (see IC 163 rv).

Sins against chastity may derive from neglect or from God’s dispensation. The first case takes place when we neglect small imperfections and initial, inconspicuous attacks of evil which are particularly dangerous in this sphere. While in the second, on those who are proud, disobedient, haughty, lazy in spirit, frigid and confiding in their own strength, prudence and reason, God himself allows sins of unchastity (cf. IC 163v). In the *Norma Vitae*, our Founder relates chastity to the remaining vows, and he gives practical advice both for superiors and for all confreres: “Obedience guards chastity, and poverty nourishes chastity. Therefore, the one eager for purity exercises himself in obedience and poverty, and then he will possess chastity. The following means will greatly assist anyone to preserve this angelic virtue [of chastity]: modesty of the eyes and the constant elevation of the mind to God; the flight from laziness, idle conversations, useless reading; prudently avoiding dangerous company; love of one’s cell, and respect for the cloister; an ardent invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mother of God, your Guardian Angel, St. Joseph, the holy virgins. The superiors will take pains lest they throw anyone into a situation endangering so great a virtue, or that they would neglect someone so endangered, seeing that they will have to render to God a most strict accounting of those entrusted to them” (NV III, 3).

In a similar way, Father Papczynski talks about the vow of poverty, clearly stressing the fact that it makes us similar to Jesus, Mary and the Apostles. Thus, we should not be ashamed of poverty, or even begging, since our impoverishment follows the example of Mary who put her Son in the tomb, and the example of Jesus who, coming into the world which belonged to Him, had nowhere to lay His head (see IC 71v-72r, 138v, 165r; NV III 3). He chose poor parents for himself and avoided Pharisees who were wealthy (see IC 165r). The Apostles gifted with the grace of a wonderful haul, left everything they had and followed Jesus. Our answer to the gifts of God should be the same (see IC 66r). Also in our mission, we should be like them: “You ought to follow in the footsteps of the Apostles who, setting out in different directions, had one command: to do without a walking stick and a traveling bag. When you are practicing extreme poverty, do not

be afraid that you will lack something, as a well-known author says, *a naked monk is the master of the entire world.*” (IC 138v, cf. also IC 164r, Jan Kasjan is most probably the quoted author). Anyone who wants to follow Christ faces an unconditional necessity to abandon everything: the world, honors, properties, friendships, loves, close ones, relatives, parents and one’s own life, if he does not do that, excessively burdened on his way, he will never reach Christ (see IC 66r, 131r, 164v).

Possessing things is not the only aspect at odds with the vow of poverty. Though, when we have in our cell any thing which contradicts it, according to Father Stanislaus Papczynski, we should treat it as a venomous snake (see IC 164r). Yet, we should inspect not only our cell but also our hearts: whether we are not attached to possessions, whether or not we desire them and whether our will does not go after them (see IC 164v). Any concealment of received gifts, bringing things into the cloister, compelling superiors and brothers to keep something for oneself, or a desire to have an exclusive use of something, is against the virtue of poverty (see IC 164rv). The vow of poverty brings peace and freedom, gives such liberty which allows one to comprehend and contemplate heavenly things and to desire them (see IC 165r, 164v). A religious who is focused on the horrifying fall of Judas resulting from greed, should rather die, than give in to the worst desire of acquiring and possessing material things (see IC 165r).

The birth of Jesus in poverty, and from a poor Mother, also took place in deepest obedience. Through submitting her will to God at the moment of the Annunciation, Mary opened the way for Christ (see IC 7v). He himself, from His youngest years, submitted Himself to His parents and always followed the will of the Father (see IC 14rv). This, according to Father Stanislaus, was the essence of the work of salvation, as he stated in *Inspectio Cordis*: “Christ did not save the world when He left Heaven, descended to the earth and took a human body, but through the fact that, fulfilling the will of the Father, He was tortured to death” (IC 162v). Jesus and Mary were not the only ones to follow the path of obedience, but also Abraham, Isaac and many others. This is the most frequented path to Heaven (see IC 14rv, 133r). Obedience pleases God more than sacrifices, because, as our Founder repeats after St. Gregory the Great, in sacrifices we give strange meat while in obedience, we give to Him our will (see IC 162r, 30v). God is disgusted with disobedience; it is a certain sign of condemnation (see IC 37v, 26rv, 39v). Father Papczynski considers it to be something that cripples a Religious. It is a type of deafness, and when it is accompanied by a lack of prayer, which makes a religious both deaf and dumb, it is a sign of quick and infallible ruin (see IC 75r). Obedience is the mother of all virtues, and the two other vows depend on it (see IC 133v, 162r). In the meditation dedicated to this vow, our Founder enumerates six features of its true fulfillment. We should perform it to the fullest (in the most perfect way, without harm, with particular

resourcefulness, carefulness and exactitude), with love (for God and man, not for empty glory or worldly recompense), eagerly (promptly, without pressure, repetitions, without delay), consistently (without murmuring, fatigue, discouragement, or giving in to the instigations of the Evil Spirit), courageously (without avoiding hard and difficult tasks), faithfully (practicing this virtue with perseverance, uprooting vices which oppose it, no matter to whom you are submitted) (see IC 162v-163r). Obedience is a source of happiness and it brings numerous graces: “Think of how happy the souls are who willingly take up the sweet yoke of obedience. To be obedient is to fly using another’s wings, to rest on another’s shoulders, to let oneself be carried in another’s arms; to walk always in a very pleasant paradise, and to delight in internal peace: to have a taste of Heaven during this earthly life; and to harness passions and to gain virtues. Someone once said, that obedience implants into the soul all the other virtues, guards what has been implanted, and crowns what is guarded. To be obedient, is to be an angel in a human body and a true follower of Christ. Moreover, the one who sets his steps, guided by someone else is the safest, and this is exactly what the obedient do. The one who places his conscience in the hands of the other, and follows his opinions, will never expose himself to the danger of losing his salvation. This is the happiness of the obedient” (IC 163r, see also 143v-144r). As was the case with the two other vows, here also, Father Papczynski is deeply convinced that we should rather die than be disobedient (IC 40r).

This brief presentation of the chosen thoughts of Father Stanislaus referring to the three evangelical counsels, clearly shows that the religious vows were for him an invaluable gift, more precious than life. They were the path of freedom and joy on which he followed God, and sought to attain a likeness to Christ Crucified and Risen, in the place where the old man was dying and the new one was coming into being. He embraced this path with all his heart, and did not allow any compromises or half-measures. He reached Heaven following it. Yet, it does not always turn out that way. Religious consecration does not guarantee an automatic participation in the Kingdom of Heaven. As any gift of the Spirit, it requires acceptance and cooperation. It may be rejected or wasted, and then it will bring a sentence rather than the expected justification. It is obvious in case of the open breaking of the vows, but it seems also possible without any drastic trespasses of canonical law and the religious constitutions. We can cool down this “chariot of Elijah” with our faint heart, and instead of fiery horses, draw it with the shuffling old mare of our egoism. Out of general and presumed permissions, out of various “engagements” and offices, out of psychological manipulations and emotional blackmails, we can construct a wall, which will keep obedience on the outer layer of our life. Poverty, which was to deliver us into the hands of God and allow us to His tender care, may become a satiated stagnation. Chastity may turn into a well preserved egoism, devoid of feelings and of deeper relationships, garbed in the

false clothes of piety. There are also two ways facing these who took the vows, one which leads to life, the other to ruin. Which one do you follow? Is it truly the same one Father Stanislaus used to tread?

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### Basic biblical source: Ps 116:12-19

*How can I repay the LORD for all the good done for me?  
I will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.  
I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.  
Too costly in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his faithful.  
LORD, I am your servant, your servant, the child of your maidservant;  
you have loosed my bonds.  
I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.  
I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,  
In the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem.  
Hallelujah!*

### Relevant biblical verses for deepening the reading of the text:

verse 13: 1 Cor 10:14-21; Ps 16:5-11; Ps 23:5-6; Ps 105:1-3;  
verse 14: Ps 66:13-14; Ps 22:24-27; Ps 50:14-15;  
verse 15: Is 43:1-7; Ps 72:12-15; Ps 97:10-12;  
verse 16: Ps 86:14-17; Ps 107:14-16; Ps 143:11-12; Ecc 9:4-6; Lk 1:38.48;  
verse 17: Lev 7:11n; Ps 50:14-15; Ps 107:22;  
verse 19: Ps 96:8; Ps 135:2;

### Other biblical texts pertaining to the topics:

Mt 5:1-16

*When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets*

*who were before you. "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father:*

Ps 56:9-14

*My wanderings you have noted; are my tears not stored in your vial, recorded in your book? My foes turn back when I call on you. This I know: God is on my side. God, I praise your promise; in you I trust, I do not fear. What can mere mortals do to me? I have made vows to you, God; with offerings I will fulfill them, Once you have snatched me from death, kept my feet from stumbling, That I may walk before God in the light of the living.*

Rom 6:3-11

*Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.*

1Cor 1:22-31

*For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast II before God. It*

*is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord."*

1Peter 1:3-9

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Although you have not seen him you love him; even though you do not see him now yet believe in him, you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, as you attain the goal of (your) faith, the salvation of your souls.*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RELIGIOUS REGULATIONS:**

The subject of religious vows is one of the basic issues dealt with in our Statutes. A separate chapter of the Constitutions is devoted to each of the three evangelical counsels. The vows are rooted in the baptismal consecration and their goal is to form us in the image of Jesus and Mary Immaculate. Love for God and a desire to devote oneself entirely to the service of the Church should be their foremost elements. A sign of the Heavenly Kingdom to the world can be found in the life of the Marian who fulfills the vows he took. See:

**Vows in general, Constitutions: 21, 22, 77, 173, 221**

**Chastity-Constitutions: 39-42; Directory: 2-6.**

**Poverty-Constitutions: 43-53; Directory: 7-15.**

**Obedience-Constitutions: 54-64; Directory: 16-24.**

### ***Observance of the Evangelical Counsels***

**21** The holiness of the Church of Christ becomes apparent and is strengthened in a special way by the observance of the Evangelical Counsels which, rooted in the words and examples of the Lord, are taken up gratefully by the members and are employed as the most apt means for the purification of hearts and for acquiring likeness in charity to Christ and Mary Immaculate. As a consequence, their life should appear in the world as a sign of the Kingdom of Heaven which can and

ought to attract other Christian faithful to the effective and prompt fulfillment of the duties of their own vocation.

*LG 44*

### ***Consecration through Vows***

**22** Public vows, by which members take upon themselves an obligation, in the act of profession, to observe the Evangelical Counsels, make more firm and stable their previous baptismal consecration to God and the Church, simultaneously they constitute bonds by which the professed are united in fraternal charity with the brotherhood of the entire Congregation. Motivated by this charity, they should not only faithfully observe the evangelical vows which they have solemnly pronounced, but should also dispose their interior and exterior lives entirely according to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the laws of their own Congregation, thereby striving for the perfection proper to their state of life.

*CR 161; CIC 598, 2*

### ***For the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven***

**39** By the vow of chastity the members commit themselves to a life of celibacy and perfect continence for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven so that they might be more inflamed with love of God and men and so that they may readily devote themselves to the service of God and the works of the apostolate.

*Mt 19:12; CR 214; PC 12*

### ***Value of Chastity***

**40** Chastity consecrated to God shall be held in the highest esteem in the entire Congregation and guarded as a precious and ever-honorable gift of divine grace in the Church. The members, united more closely by chastity with Christ and His Virgin Mother, become a living sign of the future world, which is already present through faith and charity, in which the children of the resurrection are neither given in marriage nor marry.

*Lk 20:35-36; PO 16*

### ***Basis for Chastity***

**41** Members will be able to persevere and grow in chastity only insofar as they will follow Christ as the one and only needed one and will foster love of God by combining the contemplation of divine things with apostolic zeal.

*Lk 10:42*

### ***Formation and Testing***

**42** Since the observance of perfect continence touches intimately the deeper inclinations of human nature, Superiors and Educators should be vigilant that

candidates neither approach the profession of chastity nor be admitted to it except after a really adequate probation and unless they have attained due psychological and affective maturity. During the period of formation, students ought to be clearly and positively instructed in the teaching of the Church regarding both the excellence of evangelical chastity and the dignity of matrimony, considering them in their theological, psychological, social, and pastoral aspects so that they may accept celibacy consecrated to God as a great good both for the integral development of their own person and their apostolic action.

*PC 12*

### ***Evangelical Poverty***

**43** Members should hold in high esteem evangelical poverty, as a way of participating in the poverty of Christ and give witness to it before the world, as a foundation of religious life. Following Christ who became poor for our sake, and Mary who shines forth among the lowly and poor of the Lord, the members, abandoning earthly possessions and excluding every inordinate attachment to them, should aim at seeking the Kingdom of God with greater eagerness. For “blessed are the poor in spirit; theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mt 5:3).

*2 Cor 8:9; CR 220; LG 42; 55; PC 13*

### ***Poor in Fact and in Spirit***

**44** Adhering to God alone and trusting in His providence and goodness, members should be content with the necessities of life and should rejoice if they ever truly happen to experience indigence and privations. Let them remove far from themselves every form of avarice; let them not use anything as their own; let them not keep in their possession anything superfluous. Insofar as holy discretion allows, they should be inclined to prefer privation to abundance and to select lesser things that are cheaper for their own use. Members should always remember that for true poverty it is not enough to be subject to the Superiors in the use of goods, but they should be poor in fact and in spirit, having their treasures in Heaven.

*Mt 19:21; Lk 12:33; CR 233-235; PC 13*

### ***Extent of the Vow***

**45** By the vow of poverty members renounce the right to licitly dispose of any temporal thing that has material value and to use it without the permission of their lawful Superiors.

*CR 221; CIC 600*

### ***Ownership of Goods***

**46** Every professed member with perpetual or temporary vows retains the ownership of his goods and the capacity to acquire other goods legitimately, but

he may not add their profits to his patrimony. However, because all professed members renounce the free administration of their goods by virtue of the vow of poverty, they ought to cede this administration before their first profession to whomever they wish, being free to arrange for the use of goods and revenues as they see fit. Moreover, before perpetual profession, they should draw up their last will and testament, valid also in civil law, concerning their present possessions or those that they may inherit.

*CR 77; 79; 221; 222; CIC 668,1*

### ***Changing Cession, Disposition and Will***

**47** Members may change the cession of the administration of their temporal goods, the disposition of their use and revenues, and their last will and testament (acts mentioned in C 46) not arbitrarily, but only for a just reason and with the permission of their Major Superior.

*CR 225; 226; CIC 668, 2*

### ***Renunciation of Patrimony***

**48** After perpetual profession, members, with the consent of the Superior General and his council, may totally renounce any patrimony which they have acquired or may acquire, especially in favor of the poor, so that following the Gospel exhortation, they may be able to imitate Christ more closely.

*Mt 19:21; PC 13; ES II, 24; CIC 668, 4*

### ***Acquiring Goods for the Congregation***

**49** Whatever a professed religious acquires by his personal endeavor, either as payment for his work or as a gift offered him in view of the community or one of its goals, and legitimately accepted, is acquired as a benefice of the Congregation. Likewise, whatever a member may obtain as pension, grant or insurance, is acquired on behalf of the Congregation.

*CR 222-224; CIC 668, 3*

### ***Common Witness to Poverty***

**50** In addition to the individual poverty of its members, the Congregation itself, taking into account local conditions, should strive to witness a manner of corporate poverty. Avoiding every appearance of luxury, of excessive profit and the accumulation of goods, the Congregation should contribute something of its own goods to other needs of the Church and to support of the poor, whom the members should love, both by Gospel mandate and apostolic admonition, not in word or in speech, but in deed and in truth.

*Mt 19:21; 25:34-36; 1 Jn 3:18; PC 13*

### ***Adornments of Poverty***

**51** As becomes those who have professed poverty, they should apply due diligence in caring for and protecting the community's domestic property and preserving the things that have been given for their use whole, neat and for as long as possible, prudently striving after thrift on the one hand and avoiding miserliness on the other. Indeed, the adornments of their poverty should be order, cleanliness, neatness, religious moderation and simplicity in all things, and especially Christian sensitivity and liberality for all those in need.

*CR 238*

### ***Solicitude of Superiors***

**52** Superiors, with fatherly concern and utmost care, should, insofar as possible, adequately satisfy the legitimate needs of members in accord with each one's age, health, duties, and other conditions, without favoritism. Let them willingly listen to the requests and wishes of the members and let them receive from each one a proper accounting of money and the administration of other goods. Moreover, in their decisions and permissions, especially those of a general character, concerning things allowed for the use of the members, let them be vigilant that nothing creeps in that is contrary to poverty or the common good or the character and goals of the Congregation.

*CR 237; 286*

### ***Handling of Money***

**53** Funds of whatever sort, as well as deeds and securities, must be placed in a common safe; a free disposition of funds is prohibited to individuals, neither do Superiors have the right to permit or tolerate such a disposition. Individual members are permitted to have a small amount of money for current expenses which occur frequently, for which they are obliged to render an account to the Superiors.

*CR 283*

### ***Scope of Obedience***

**54** Members, already consecrated to God by baptism, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in a special way offer to God, by the vow of evangelical obedience, a total surrender of their own will as a self-sacrifice and thereby unite themselves with greater constancy and security to the saving will of God.

*CR 194; PC 14*

### ***Imitation of Christ***

**55** Just as our Lord and Master Jesus Christ did not come into the world to do his own will but the will of his Father and, "taking the form of a slave" (Phil 2:7)

in submission to his Father, ministered to the brothers and surrendered his life as a ransom for many, in like manner the members submit themselves in faith to the Superiors as God's representatives and are guided by them in the service of all the brothers in Christ.

*Mt 20:28; CR 195; PC 14*

### ***Like the Handmaid of the Lord***

**56** Imitating the life of Christ and participating in the mystery of His redemption, the members should keep before their eyes Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord, who is in the Church a model of perfect union with Christ. For under Him and with Him, serving the mystery of redemption, by her obedience she became the cause of salvation for herself, as well as for the whole human race.

*Lk 1:38.48; LG 56; 63*

### ***In Service of the Church***

**57** In submitting to the universal government of the Supreme Pontiff, whom they are also obliged to obey by virtue of the vow of obedience, as well as to the pastoral authority of the bishops according to the norm of universal law, the members should be convinced that in this way they are more strictly bound to the service of the Church and respond more profoundly to their own apostolic vocation.

*CR 484; 488; LG 45*

### ***Extent of the Vow***

**58** In a spirit of faith and love for God's will, the members assume through the vow of obedience the obligation to fulfill the commands and dispositions of the legitimate Superiors in those things that pertain to religious life in the Congregation according to its laws.

*CR 196; 199; PC 14*

### ***Dependence on Superiors***

**59** The members will depend with docility on the Superiors for the following: the order of pious exercises and occupations, duties and offices, contacts with outsiders, public mortifications, studies and the undertaking of any more important ministry or work for their neighbor either within or outside the Congregation.

*CR 202; CIC 671*

### ***Humble and Active Obedience***

**60** The members should make an effort to acknowledge their Superiors as ones who minister to the fraternal community while they show humble deference to them according to the norms of the Constitutions. Moreover, they should hold

in the highest esteem an active and responsible obedience as the principle means to maintain the unity, solidity and vigor of the entire Congregation.

*CR 194; 207; 210; PC 14*

### ***Supernatural Obedience***

**61** They should not consider who it is that they obey, but rather who is the one on whose account they ought to show perfect obedience, namely, Jesus Christ the Son of God, “obediently accepting even death, death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). They should make their own the words of the Holy Apostle: “Do not render service for appearance only and to please men, but do God’s will with your whole heart as slaves of Christ” (*Eph 6:6*).

*CR 208*

### ***Responsibility of Superiors***

**62** As those who will have to render an account for the souls entrusted to them, the Superiors themselves should first try to understand and have a love for the will of God, that they are to reveal to others in a spirit of brotherly service, as it is related to the entire Congregation and to each one of the members over whom they preside.

*Heb 13:17; DS 25 I 1911; PC 14*

### ***Manner of Governing***

**63** Following in the footsteps of the Divine Master and Good Shepherd, and sharing in the motherly love of the Immaculate Virgin, the Superiors should govern the community both with reverence for the human person and for the Christian dignity of each member, promoting through word and by their own example their willing obedience, as well as their organized effort for the common good. They should strive to treat all as companions and brothers in the spirit of true equality and kindness, so as to express the charity with which God loves them and prompt their hearts and minds to reciprocal love of God in faithful service.

*CR 213; PC 14*

### ***Formation***

**64** From the very beginning of their religious life, all the members should be formed in a spirit of active and responsible obedience, so that as Superiors or as members of any community, council or Chapter, they may be ready and able to cooperate in a bond of charity for the good of the Congregation and the entire Church.

*DS 17 XI 1910; 25 I 1911; 7 III 1911; PC 14*

### ***Devotional Renewal of Vows***

77 The pious exercise of frequently renewing professed vows should not be neglected by members. All shall renew their vows solemnly and in community on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They should do it privately and individually at least as often as they are on their monthly retreat.

*CR 251*

### ***Notion***

173 Religious profession is an act whereby a member makes a pledge, by a public vow, to observe the three Evangelical Counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and becomes, in a special way, totally consecrated to God out of the greatest love; and, for the sake of God, commits himself to the Church of Christ and in the Church to the Congregation, with all the rights and duties defined by law. In turn, the Congregation, in the name of the Church, firmly accepts this commitment and assumes the burden to assist and sustain the professed in the way of his vocation, and also to direct and engage him according to its own character.

*CR 83; CIC 654*

### ***Initiative and Obedience***

221 Let Superiors try to help the members, so that these may be able to combine personal initiative with humble and perfect obedience.

*DS 25 I 1911*

## **Directory:**

### ***Concern***

2 Members are bound not only to cherish a chaste life but also, trusting in the help of God and the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin, with the greatest effort and diligence to avoid anything that might contaminate or stain it or obscure its splendor. They should use appropriate means to keep it perfectly intact so that they may offer their hearts and bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, pleasing to God. Nor should they neglect also natural means which favor health of mind and body. (C 41)

*Rom 12:1; CR 215; PC 12*

### ***Helps***

3 Members should be concerned about guarding, protecting and cultivating evangelical chastity; for which for everybody will be of the greatest help: continuous mortification of the body, unceasing custody of the senses, imagination, affections and thoughts; avoiding occasions of sin and idleness; modesty and decency,

constant prayer to God and incessant mindfulness of His presence; frequent Holy Communion; the ardent invocation of the Immaculate Virgin Mary; the Guardian Angel and Saint Joseph; as well as trusting recourse to our Savior, Jesus Christ Himself, and to His wounds in temptation and danger. (C 42)

*CR 216*

### ***Guarding***

**4** Members should avoid excessive care of their own body and every form of effeminacy, especially freedom from restraint of the eyes and an unbridled imagination, indiscriminate use of communication media which would constitute a danger to their chastity, likewise, all inordinate affection, every incautious and, even more so, dangerous association, relaxation and reading, superfluous and useless and, even more, idle visits and conversations, singular signs of affection, excessive familiarity especially with persons of the opposite sex, as well as everything which may have the appearance of evil or produce scandal, injure a good name, or may arouse suspicion in lay people who are easily scandalized in these things. (C 42)

*CR 217; CIC 666*

### ***In Community***

**5** By the profession of chastity, members not only consecrate themselves fully to God, to Christ, and his Church, but they are also united by religious family ties. All, but especially Superiors, should remember, that chastity is more easily preserved when a true fraternal love thrives among members in their common life and a spirit of family and friendship prevails. (C 42)

PC 12

### ***Obligations of Charity***

**6** True religious charity imposes an obligation to seriously admonish a confrere in case of any external danger that threatens the virtue of chastity of any member or—because of him—of any other person; and if this does not suffice, the Superiors are to be informed. The Superiors, on their part, guided by the same charity, should counteract without delay the evil with appropriate and efficacious remedies and remove all, even the slightest, scandal as quickly as possible. (C 42)

*CR 218; 219*

### ***Permission of the Superiors***

**7** Generally speaking, the members are not allowed, by their own will, without the permission of their legitimate Superiors, to possess or to retain any temporal thing for any reason whatsoever, either with themselves or with others, to

administer, to use it or to dispose of it; and for any reason, to alienate, receive, lend, exchange, transform, or dispense it. (C 45)

*CR 230*

### ***Special and General Permission***

**8** Members shall make sure that they obtain special permission from their legitimate Superiors for all those actions; but they may also obtain general permission from them for some of those actions for a limited time. (C 45)

*CR 231*

### ***Presumed Permission***

**9** In more urgent and unforeseen cases, let even a prudently presumed permission be sufficient, and any member may act on it, having considered the matter opportunely before God; afterwards, he should render account to the Superior about it. (C 45)

*CR 232*

### ***Gifts given to Members***

**10** Unless proven to the contrary, it is presumed that those things, which are given to members, are given in consideration of the Congregation. However, when it is obvious that something was donated in consideration and for the use of the member himself, it is permitted to comply with such an intention of the donor only if the spirit of our poverty would allow for it. (C 49)

*CR 282*

### ***Donations***

**11** A donation or offering of greater value made to a church or to a community, or in consideration of them, may not be refused except for a just reason approved by the Major Superior. Members, however, should not excessively seek donations. They should rather strive to acquire by their own work whatever is necessary for their livelihood and endeavors. Goods lawfully entrusted to a member for pious causes extraneous to the Congregation are to be faithfully spent according to the donor's intention. (C 49)

*CR 223; 550; PC 13; CIC 1300; 1302, 3*

### ***Juridical Acts***

**12** In spite of their vow of poverty, members may, with the permission of their lawful Superiors, perform juridical acts of ownership, as prescribed by civil law. (C 49)

*CR 227*

### ***Transfer***

**13** He who is transferred from one house to another, besides those things which are strictly for personal use, is not allowed to take anything with him except what the Superior, taking into account the circumstances, has permitted. (C 49)

*CR 229*

### ***Mutual Aid***

**14** Houses and provinces should share their material goods with one another so that those which have more of them assist those which suffer indigence; as an expression of their religious consecration, these communities should strive to live on a rather small amount of money, not taking into account at all greater revenues coming from work or some other source. (C 50)

*PC 13*

### ***Sense of Justice and Charity***

**15** At the appropriate time, a statement of the money that is to be received and spent by the community, that is, a so-called “budget”, a house “state of the economy”, as well as the way of making expenses for the sustenance of the members, are to be proposed for their common discussion. All should desire and be vigilant that in our dealing with others, a profound sense of social justice and charity be observed and that special privileges, as if owed to our status, not be sought. (C 50)

### ***Formal Command***

**16** A command is formal, which means that it imposes a grave obligation of conscience, if it is expressly given as such by the Superior General or Provincial Superior, with the consent of their councils, in writing or at least in the presence of two witnesses; the Superiors should rarely, cautiously, and prudently order in virtue of a formal command and only for a grave reason. (C 58)

*CR 197; 198*

### ***According to the Letter and the Spirit***

**17** With all their strength, they should observe perfectly, both in regard to matter and manner, and according to their implied intention, the orders of the Superiors, as well as the prescripts of the Constitutions and the other laws of the Church and the Congregation, with attention always to their purpose and spirit and not to the letter alone, for “the written law kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:6)”. (C 60)

*CR 199; 201; IN I, 11*

### ***Accepting Duties***

**18** Each one should strive without refusal to accept the duties or offices which are lawfully entrusted to him and diligently to fulfill them as “good works which God has prepared that we might walk in them” (Eph 2:10). If however should, by chance, something be imposed on someone that is too burdensome or if anyone should perceive that something is harmful to himself or to others, or that he needs some help or that the command itself is without just foundation, he should reverently and humbly let the Superior know about it, modestly assenting to his decision. (C 60)

*CR 200; 211*

### ***Attitude toward Superiors***

**19** Members are to beware lest they dare to do or say anything against the Superiors or criticize their acts or words, thus causing scandal to others. (C 60)

*CR 207*

### ***Suggestions Spontaneously Offered***

**20** At the right time, they should spontaneously present to the Superiors appropriate information, considerations and their own suggestions and projects, useful for promoting the glory of God and the good of their neighbor, so that they be able to better direct the entire activity of the community. (C 60)

*CR 210; PC 14*

### ***Recourse***

**21** A member who has been refused something by his immediate Superior may have recourse to the Superior of the higher level, mentioning, however, the refusal and explaining the reasons for making recourse. The Superior to whom the recourse is made should not grant a positive answer unless the prior Superior has been consulted. (C 60)

*CR 212*

### ***Positions Of Honor Not To Be Sought***

**22** No one is permitted, either directly or indirectly, to seek out or to strive after any position in the Congregation nor any dignity or office outside the Congregation. Everyone is bound to refuse ecclesiastical or secular offices offered to him, unless, for grave reasons, he is obliged to accept them by a Major Superior with the consent of his council. (C 60)

*CR 203; 204*

### ***Acquaintance and Dialogue***

**23** In governing the family of God, the Superiors should have before their eyes the character and mission of their own community in the Church; they should strive to ascertain the strength, talents and needs of the members, and the difficulties in the given circumstances of the times and the place; and let them undertake fraternal dialogue for hearing the opinions of the members about common matters. (C 63)

*CR 213; PC 14*

### ***Manner of Governing***

**24** Aware that they can err, Superiors should always take into consideration the teachings of the Gospel and the Church and the prescripts of the Constitutions; let them weigh carefully in the Lord the motivations and reasons for their decisions and reveal them, whenever possible, to the members; in fulfilling whatever office has been commissioned by them, let them prudently grant appropriate freedom, according to the maturity and capability of each confrere. Mindful, however, of their responsibility before God and the Congregation, let them assume the fortitude necessary to decide and to command whatever should be done. (C 63)

*CR 213; DS 25 I 1911; PC 14*

## **PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. When, in the history of your religious vocation, did you have the most forceful experience of the profession of the evangelical counsels as the bond of bridal\* love with God?
2. Which of the following categories of human relations best describes present experience of your vows: engagement, new marriage, old couple, marital routine, bachelorhood?
3. Do you live your vows in the paschal context? What way of practicing the evangelical counsels immerses you anew into the mystery of death and resurrection of Christ?
4. How much do you value the gift of chastity? Is it for you the place of meeting and seeing God?
5. How do you come to terms with the sins against chastity, do you find the expression “sacrilege” adequate? Do you fight and in what way with the “robbers of purity”? What means do you apply to protect it? Is zealous prayer to the Holy Spirit, Our Lady and other patron saints among them?
6. Where your treasure is, there your heart is also. What does your relation to material possessions tell you about your heart? To what extent is it a sign of love for the One who was born, lived and died in poverty?

7. Do the interior and furnishing of your cell certify that it is inhabited by someone who gives up superfluous and unnecessary things?
8. To what extent do you perceive the vow of obedience as the “easy yoke” which inscribes your life into the center of the mystery of redemption and ties your fate to that of Jesus?
9. Which of the ways of performing obedience enumerated by Father Stanislaus (you should fulfill it to the fullest, with love, eagerly, consistently, courageously, faithfully) is closest to you and which the most difficult?

## CONFERENCE XII

### CHRISTIAN RADICALISM

Radicalism does not get good press these days. In the times of pluralism, liberalism and political correctness, it is not becoming to be radical. The salons of the world greet those who can live a life of ease, who are not very serious about moral rules, and who can shut their eyes to evil, even to serious evil, in order to have a good time. Finally, radicalism functions in public opinion as a close relative to fundamentalism, and this tie ultimately disqualifies it in people's eyes. Meanwhile, healthy radicalism is a necessary element of Christianity. It is the violent who take the Kingdom of God by force (see Mt 11:12) while a lukewarm Christian makes Jesus sick (see Rv 3:16). If we wanted to remove all the passages from the Bible calling for an uncompromising fight with sin and a zealous search for God, we would have to tear off most pages starting from the Sermon on the Mount. A similar attempt at depriving our religious rules and Constitutions of any radicalism, would leave in our hands only chapters on structure and management, if not simply the covers of the noble documents. Religious Life which does not strive for "more," "better," "utterly," and "till the end" is a wasted life. Any train which is driven by the engine of compromises, lukewarmness and incompleteness never reaches the station of "Sanctity." Even the Church procedures prove that nobody can reach the glory of the altar without an official decree confirming the heroism of virtues, which, in fact, is a confirmation that a candidate lived Christianity in a radical way.

Father Stanislaus Papczynski received the decree of heroic virtues and undeniably he was a man who had a fire within. It is enough to read any part of his biography or a passage from his writings to realize that an ardent spirit dwelled in him. When he was seeking the Religious Life, he was determined to follow that path till the end, no matter the difficulties or the reluctance of his confreres, both in the Piarists and in the Korabiew Hermitage. His desire was to give his entire life to Christ, not just a part of it, and he did not retreat even at the vision of martyrdom, giving his head to the cut of the Swedish blade. Wishing to defend the truth of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he did not promise to write a few conferences and preach some sermons, but he promised to do everything, including spilling his blood, and his entire life is a proof that he would do it without hesitation. In all aspects of his Religious Life, his service to God and to people, our Founder was an uncompromising enemy of any laziness

or sluggishness: “Shake yourself free from any numbness and negligence and get to work! Why do you give yourself over to idleness? Why do you surrender to weakness? Sons of the world, to obtain transient goods, travel countless seas, expose themselves to so many dangers, sweat nights and days, take up many tasks and suffer many hardships just to maintain this mortal life. And you, who are a son of light, would you neglect eternal goods? Won’t you try to obtain eternal life, making every effort necessary? Do you grow lazy? You should know, that the Kingdom of God has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force (Mt 11:12). The heroes do it, not fools, nor idlers, but the diligent!” (IC 24r). Father Papczynski was one of those who never remain in one spot. He constantly wanted to proceed on the path of faith. Incessantly, he wanted to come closer to God, to do penance more ardently and love more deeply. Spiritual coma and laziness are the most often condemned sicknesses of the Religious Life. Frequently in his writings, we hear a calling: “Alas!” (see IC 49r, 50v, 58rv, 76v, 87v, 91r, 97r, 101r, 102v, 128v, 135r, 146v, 151r), with which he wants to draw his confreres from the state of spiritual languidness, and propel them to a more earnest love. We should set out on this road every day and, according to the desire of our Founder, run with all our strength, rather than move slowly, so as not to sweat.

Talking about radicalism in individual cases of living the Christian life, we face a particular difficulty. Traits typical of this attitude: zeal, intransigence, and heroism do not fall under one virtue that we can discuss separately, such as poverty or obedience. It is rather the practicing of all of the virtues. Another aspect of the the life of Father Stanislaus was that every path that he took was steep, and every gate that he chose was extremely narrow. Thus, a comprehensive presentation of our Founder’s radicalism would have to include almost everything that the Blessed ever did or wrote. There is no point in trying to prove or convince anyone that Father Papczynski lived a radical Christianity, since it would involve removing the hinges from the open door, which was opened publicly and solemnly by the Church in the moment of the Beatification. Yet, it is worth looking closer at three particular manifestations of his uncompromising attitude toward fulfilling his Christian and his Religious vocation, which were present in his life, and which, as it seems, we often tend to lack nowadays: the reform of morals, the renouncing of evil, and choosing God with all one’s heart. They are, in my opinion, particularly important and conclusive, since they refer to the moment of our Baptism and the words that we uttered ourselves, or through our parents or Godparents, renouncing sin and all that leads to it, and professing faith in God.

Entering the cloister means abandoning “the world” with all its desires, and embarking on the road of the pursuit of religious perfection. This decision, from the beginning of the tradition of the Consecrated Life, entails the requirement of a radical conversion of morals. St. Benedict, who laid the foundations for western monasticism, made *conversio (conversatio) morum* one of the elements of the

monastic profession (see *The Rule of St. Benedict*, Chapter 58). Each candidate joining the order made a solemn pledge, to constantly fight vices and passions, to renounce the world and its reasoning (cf. Mirosław Daniluk, SDJ, *Encyklopedia instytutów życia konsekrowanego i stowarzyszeń życia apostołskiego/Encyclopaedia of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*), Lublin 2000, 81; cf. also *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione* 106-110). For Father Stanislaus, such a profound conversion of morals is an indispensable condition for entering the Religious paths of following Christ. He writes about it briskly and succinctly: “[. . .] those who follow Christ, or want to follow Him, have to abandon everything: the world, honors, possessions, friendships, loved ones and close ones, relatives, parents and, moreover, *his life* (c.f. Lk 14:26), submitting one’s will to the will of someone else. This is, in short, the path of those who follow in the footsteps of Christ.” (IC 66r). Thorough conversion of morals should be the object of our constant concern, its neglect is hypocrisy, and makes our stay in the monastery breed condemnation, instead of the fruit of life. Pondering the Gospel on finding Jesus in the Temple, our Founder seems to ask every one of us: “And how have you been passing these years in God’s House? How frigidly, how drowsily, how arrogantly! Beware, not to follow Christ only with your Religious clothing, and yet be the thief with your morals, because then you appear worse than a lay man. The Religious state does not save anyone, but the Religious Life does.”

“You may have heard about a condemned soldier who joined a religious institution and exchanged his military uniform for a cassock, yet he did not change his morals. Thus, after he died, he returned from Hell, bringing back the Religious clothing, on the tail of a horse. May God keep you from being a Religious only by name, and not in reality. If you have not abandoned bad lay habits, and if you have not answered your vocational call, you will reach a very unhappy end.”

“The purest Joseph with his wife, the Most Holy Mary, could not find the Boy-Jesus among their friends, family and relatives. You will not find Him either in chats, reading gossip, in the world, in the streets, in the opinions alien to your way of life and in the manner of life of the lay people” (IC 12v-13r). How is it in our religious houses today? Do we really take the call to change our morals seriously and radically? Don’t we rather treat it as a demand of our life in the novitiate, which dies a quiet and gentle death a few years after the first profession? What if neglecting the simplest elements regarding order in our religious compartment, results in getting into the spiritual shallows in issues of the highest importance? Thomas Merton, in his diaries, notes the words of the Vietnam monk and poet, Thich Nhat Hanh who, when asked during the meeting with the Trappists about practicing meditation, stated: “At the beginning, Buddhist monks must not meditate. Before you can meditate, you have to learn not to slam the door.” I think that in the midst of our way of life, from the simplest tasks, like slamming the door,

to the depth of our prayer and relation with God, there is a stronger correlation than we are willing to admit. Let's not be surprised, that our spirit is lame, when even within the walls of the cloister, we still live in the way of the world. Don't we resemble an aquarist, who wonders why his fish died, yet he cannot see that instead of in a fish bowl, he kept it in a canary cage! Each life can develop only in a proper environment.

The conversion of morals entails two other requirements. A Religious is called to say a categorical "no" to evil and, without hesitation, to submit his own will to God. In the life and writings of Father Stanislaus, both a "*fiat*" said to God, and an "*apage*" (away, begone!) thrown in the face of Satan are very radical.

Intransigence in fighting all evil is revealed in a few traits. First of all, for Father Stanislaus, there is no sin which is so light, that we could shut our eyes to it, or no vice so small, that we could give up the toil to eradicate it to the root. It is of particular importance, as the Founder remarks, if we consider that the Devil's attack on the Religious starts usually with apparently little and unimportant things. "With greatest diligence, you should avoid little imperfections, and even the smallest sins. Undoubtedly, we cannot see them when they are sown by the Evil Thief. Yet, when after major falls and a large number of serious sins you will realize them and think about yourself, then you will understand, that these very little imperfections, which you allowed out of neglect, gave way to the serious ones. [ . . . ] avoid small imperfections to close off access to bigger sins, or if they have already been rampant, remove them, to keep your heart pure and your soul very clean, and to avoid, for the benefit of your salvation, any bigger trespasses in the future. This is how the Evil Spirit used to do with spiritual people, he does not ensnare them with grave sins from the start, because he knows they abhor them. He rather, does it through little shortcomings, as to which he knows what to do, so that they ignored them, and then he leads them to even the most serious falls" 9IC 22v). Father Papczynski is deeply convinced, that the alley of the eternal condemnation, is paved with small, daily, neglected imperfections, and their thin, spider web is enough for the Devil to bind a Religious (see IC 88r). Our Blessed Founder briefly defines radicalism in this uncompromising fight with evil, and all those who were given by God to achieve holiness would agree: "[ . . . ] if you are not ready to die rather than to sin, believe that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in you" (IC 57v).

A firm "not" toward evil is not enough however, to call the one uttering it, a radical follower of Christ. He himself warns us that the cleared and cleaned "empty chamber" of the human heart is willingly retaken by the evil dwellers (see Mt 12:43-45). Each true conversion is not only a rejection of sin, but also, first and foremost, a choosing God. The paths of those who search for perfect love always lead through an alternative of extremes: either to love the world and reject God, or to follow His will up to the point of rejecting the world. Our Founder offers his

“fiat” to the Heavenly Father “with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength” (cf Dt 6:5). In his meditations, he writes: “By joining the Congregation, you have given yourself to the Better Master. Thus, you should proclaim and declare war on the other. Be certain, that you will receive Heavenly assistance to conduct this war, under the condition that you will be fighting properly. God blesses the combatants whom He called to fight. Attack whatever is worldly, what comes from wrong desires, whatever self-love you possess, or what tries to force itself back into the heart once devoted to the other Master: uproot it or categorically put it aside. You should be convinced that you need to possess such desires which are in accordance with your vocation, which lead you to self-contempt, to spreading God’s glory and to religious zeal. Then you should put out in yourself, any spark of self-love. Frequently, it happens that a once extinguished fire, burns up again with a hidden flame. Similarly, any spark of self-love, will start a greater fire than before. [ . . . ] Contemplate, that when you served this world, you were prejudiced against God. You had not realized this, but this covert love for the world, was nothing else but open hatred toward the Majesty of God. You could not love both at the same time: the world and God; just as Olympus does not allow two suns, so the heart may not have two lovers. Loving the world which you served, you hated God and did not feel this. Now when you willingly became the servant of God you should give your entire heart to Him and hate the world, your previous master. Try to prove with your deeds that you love God.” (IC 78v-79r). Getting rid of one’s will, and, at the same time, giving oneself to obedience and to a true following of Christ, and seeking God’s will, is one of the most frequent threads in the writings of Father Stanislaus. Seek first his kinship over you and all these things will be given you besides, do not follow the paths of this world which seeks first “these things” and never God (cf. IC 132r)—He calls to us through his life and writings. Do you really follow Christ?—he inquires of the deepest part of your conscience. The fact that you took vows and wear a cassock does not necessarily make you a disciple of Christ. It may happen that this will include you among the followers of Judas. “He said to him, ‘Follow me.’ (Mt 9:9). Consider that a sign of true conversion, is to truly follow Christ. Judas was not converted, since although he followed Jesus, his following was a treacherous one. He was full of hypocrisy, and he thought only about his moneybag. As you can expect, the behavior of St. Matthew was different. He was a true follower of Christ because he got up and followed him. What did he get up from? From sin. Where did he follow Christ? To practicing virtues. Here is a good rule for yourself to become like Christ: to get up and follow Him. If you don’t get up you will not manage to follow Him, even though it may appear to you that you follow in His footsteps. If in the nooks and crannies of your will, you still hide the baggage of self-love and of other similar things, you are not following Christ. You are not truly imitating Christ even if you wear a cassock, even if you took the vows of obedience, chas-

tity and poverty which you are so proud of. Get up and follow Him, because if you do not get up, you will never follow in His steps.” (IC 135 v).

As mentioned above, we can find radicalism in following Christ in many, if not all aspects of Our Founder’s life. The three presented in this conference: a categorical rejection of evil, even the smallest evil, the conversion of morals and a search for God with all one’s heart, will and mind, have not been chosen accidentally. They are in their nature, a true realization of the Baptismal promises. This is the beginning and the peak of the Christian path, its very heart—the renouncing of the Devil, sin and all that leads to it, and entering the Paschal world of God’s will and love. The gift of the Religious Life was given to us, so that we could be Christians. Calling us on the path of the Evangelical Counsels, God showed each of us the best place, where we can be Christians to the fullest. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, going to the place of his martyrdom, in the letter to the Christians of Rome, writes that he wants to be a Christian, not to just say that he is one. With great zeal, he tries to convince them that only in an extremely radical experience of Christianity, that is in martyrdom, may he become a true man and a disciple of Christ. We may say, keeping the proper perspectives, that Father Papczynski similarly calls to his brothers in vocation: it is not enough to say, but to be, and to be without exception, till the end.

## TEXTS FOR MEDITATION

### **Basic Biblical Source: Rev 3:14-22**

*14 To the angel of the church in Laodicea, write this: ‘The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the source of God’s creation, says this: 15 “I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. 11 I wish you were either cold or hot. 16 So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, ‘I am rich and affluent and have no need of anything,’ and yet do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire 14 so that you may be rich, and white garments to put on so that your shameful nakedness may not be exposed, and buy ointment to smear on your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and chastise. Be earnest, therefore, and repent. 20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me. 21 I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne. 22 “Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

### **Relevant biblical verses for deepening the reading of the text:**

verse 14: Rev 1:5ff; 2 Cor 1:19-20; Jn 1:1-5; Prov 8:22-31; Is 65:16;  
verse 15-16: Rom 12:9-13; Rev 2:1-5; Rev 3:1-3; Mt 5:13-16; 2 Tim 3:1-8;  
verse 17: Hos 12:8-9; Zach 11:4-6; 1 Cor 3:18; 1 Cor 4:8;  
verse 18: Ps 12:7; Is 55:1-3; 1Peter 1:7; Mt 22:12; Lk 15:22;  
verse 19: Prov 3:11-12; 1 Cor 11:32; Hb 12:4-11;  
verse 20: Song of Songs 5:2; Is 50:2; Jn 14:23; Mt 24:33; Mk 13:28-37; Lk 12:36;  
Lk 22:29-30;  
verse 21: Rev 20:4; Mt 19:28; Rev 1:6; 1 Cor 15:28;  
verse 22: Rev 2:7

### **Other biblical texts pertaining to the topics:**

Phil 3:4-16

*...although I myself have grounds for confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he can be confident in flesh, all the more can I. Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a Pharisee, in zeal I persecuted the church, in righteousness based on the law I was blameless. (But) whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith to know him and the power of his resurrection and (the) sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ (Jesus). Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus. Let us, then, who are "perfectly mature" adopt this attitude. And if you have a different attitude, this too God will reveal to you. Only, with regard to what we have attained, continue on the same course.*

Rom 6:3-11

*Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a*

*death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.*

Mt 16:24-28

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct. Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

Lk 9:57-62

*As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "(Lord,) let me go first and bury my father." But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. 28 But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." (To him) Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."*

## **PRESENT MARIAN RELIGIOUS REGULATIONS:**

Undoubtedly, our present Constitutions are not the document encouraging mediocrity and flimsiness. Each page brings large quantifiers: completely, all, in everything, as much as possible, in each and every way, exclusively, with perfection, etc. They usually accompany the calling to love God, to get united with Him, to devote oneself to the service of Christ and the Church. Each Marian is also called to an uncompromising attitude in his fight with sin and search for sanctity. This is the path that we have to start out again on everyday. See:

**Constitutions paragraphs: 4, 5, 7, 20, 24, 25, 36, 37.**

### ***Total Consecration***

**4** Having renounced all things, as much as human frailty allows, the members should devote, give and consecrate themselves so completely to God and the things of God that God truly be the center of life for both the individual members and the entire Congregation.

*CR 4*

### ***Following of Christ***

**5** Members strive for their own evangelical perfection and the sanctification of others by courageously and faithfully following our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. By diligently searching through His Gospel and meditating upon it, they strive to know, love and imitate Christ more and more from day to day, to be imbued with and directed by the spirit of Christ, to spread the Kingdom of Christ with all their zeal and effort and to bring Christ into everything. Thus, let Christ be the guide and model of both the entire Congregation and of its individual members.

*CR 3; INI, 12; PC 5*

### ***On Behalf of the Church***

**7** Let them care for the Church, which is the Kingdom of God on earth and the spouse of Christ, in every respect with honor, love and devotion. Let them be guided by its principles and spirit, adhere faithfully to its Hierarchy, comply with its wishes and desires and be in its service with all of their strength, with all effort, and in every way possible, by bravely overcoming all obstacles and dangers and not hesitating when the necessity or the good of the Church demands it, to encounter difficulties and adversities and to expend and sacrifice themselves completely.

*CR 5*

### ***Vocation to Holiness***

**20** Mindful that in the baptism of faith they have truly been made sons of God and partakers of the divine nature, the members are obliged to maintain and to make perfect this holiness which they have received from God according to the exhortation of the divine Teacher: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

*LG 40*

### ***Striving for Holiness***

**24** Following in the footsteps of Christ and having been made in the likeness of His image, fulfilling the will of the Father in all things, they devote themselves with their whole soul to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. Always holding in great esteem their own perfection, they should foster in themselves a continuous desire for it and should exert themselves in a constant and persevering

effort to acquire it, as if always beginning anew. And, indeed, they should take great pains and use every means to advance in it daily, seizing every occasion for sanctifying themselves, never considering as sufficient what they have accomplished thus far.

*CR 162; LG 40*

### ***Fight against Sin***

**25** They should absolutely flee from and avoid all sin, which is the greatest evil and should abominate, detest and abhor it daily more and more. With all their strength they should try to diminish and eliminate the kingdom of sin, sincerely and constantly grieve over sins committed and in their awareness become more humble and distrustful of themselves, more vigilant and cautious against dangers, occasions and temptations; be made more prompt and fervent in repenting and making satisfaction for them, in making up for lost time and by responding in love to God's love for them. They should always try to have a pure conscience.

*CR 163*

### ***Union with God***

**36** In and through all things, each one should be eager to aim at the closest union with God, to be joined to Him as much as possible first in his prayer, then in all his actions, and also to be magnanimous, and in the highest degree generous and liberal in His service.

*CR 176*

### ***Holy Zeal***

**37** Zeal, which is the ardor of charity, ought to fill the whole life of the members, and it should be:

1) ***supernatural***: animated by a firm, lively faith and an invincible trust in God joined with a distrust of self;

2) ***pure***: seeking not what is one's own, but only what pertains to the greater glory of God, the salvation of souls redeemed at such a great price of the blood and life of Jesus Christ, which uniquely enriches the Church;

3) ***ardent and gentle***: which is inflamed with love for justice and hatred for evil, but is meek, knowing how to sympathize with weakness and is kind and merciful to those who err;

4) ***universal***: which embraces all people with a heart amplified by love and uses every means at its disposal, and also desires to inflame as many as possible with the fire of love;

5) ***prudent and well-ordered***: maturely considering and foreseeing the will of God in everything; considering the example and experience of others and also consulting experts, above all Superiors; selecting appropriate and efficacious

means, considering what may bear most fruit; proceeding in an orderly and methodical fashion; and never neglecting self while helping others;

6) ***industrious and active***: when need be seek occasions for work; finding opportune and suitable means and methods to meet the new necessities that might be brought by changing times; not postponing what must be done; manifesting itself through good works that are adapted to the entrusted duty and trying to do as much as possible and as well as possible;

7) ***strong, generous, and constant***: which moves one to give up his own convenience, expend himself, undertake great and difficult tasks, work and suffer tirelessly; which is not diverted by any adversities from the things which duty and obedience demand and rises to meet any misfortune; which is persevering in its efforts and brings to completion what has been begun;

8) ***disciplined***: never exceeding the limits of its status and office while totally and docilely subjecting itself to the guidance of Superiors.

*CR 177*

## PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. Radicalism is love with an undivided heart. What is your experience of such love? To what answer are you called by God?
2. How does your pursuit of the Kingdom of Heaven look against the efforts taken by the “sons of the world” to gain worldly possessions? Compare your spiritual efforts, with the ones the people close to you make to earn their living.
3. How do you react to calling the Religious Life “a striving for Christian perfection” or “the path to sanctity”? Can you, and to what extent, apply these terms to your life? What steps are you called to by God, to make now on your way of becoming a Religious, that is “a man of one love”?
4. To what extent is following the path of your vocation marked with abandoning the world, your friends, relatives, conversations, your own interests, and a secular way of life?
5. There is no sin so light or vice so small so as not to take up a fight with it. Are you convinced deep in your heart that it is better to cut off your hand and gouge out your eye than to sin? Can you point to such instances of fighting evil in your life?
6. The Religious life is a radical and uncompromising choosing of God. Is He the first to be loved in your life, the first to “be served”, the first to be sought; the one to whom you give your best time and strength? What can you do to answer His love with the first-fruits and not the remnants?

**PART III**

**DOCUMENTS, HOMILIES, SPEECHES**

# THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

ARCHDIOCESE OF POZNAN  
THE BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION CAUSE  
OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD  
STANISLAUS OF JESUS AND MARY  
(in the world: John Papczyński)  
PRIEST AND FOUNDER  
OF THE CONGREGATION OF MARIAN FATHERS  
OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE MOST B.V.M.  
(1631 – 1701)

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## THE DECREE CONCERNING A MIRACLE

The Venerable Servant of God Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary (in the world: John Papczyński) was born on May 18, 1631 in the town of *Podegrodzie*, of the Archdiocese of Kraków, in Poland. Having entered the Order of the Poor Clerics Regular of the Pious Schools of the Mother of God, he pronounced the religious vows and was admitted to the order of priesthood. Upon taking leave of the Order, he founded the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most B.V.M., for the spreading of devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God, for assisting pastors in pastoral ministry, and for commending to God in prayer, souls detained in Purgatory. He fell asleep in the Lord's peace on September 17, 1701.

The Supreme Pontiff John Paul II declared on June 13, 1992, that the Servant of God exercised the virtues to a heroic degree.

The Postulation of the Cause recently submitted to examination by this Congregation for the Causes of Saints an extraordinary healing claimed to be miraculous, that regarded an infant which Mrs. N.N., residing in Poland, in the city of N. was carrying in her womb. In the year 2000 the same woman had a first pregnancy that ended with a spontaneous miscarriage. In the month of February of the following year, she came into a new pregnancy which, on the 22nd of March, also

almost ended in a miscarriage. For this reason she was admitted to a hospital where three ultrasounds were performed, from which the latest, performed on March 30th, clearly evidenced the vitality of the fetus and the normal state of the fetal sac. She was discharged the same day; however, on the first day of April, on account of increasing abdominal pains, she was compelled to return again to the hospital. From the ultrasound examinations it was detected that the fetus had no heartbeat, for which reason the diagnosis stated was “an internal miscarriage.” In addition, the fetal sac appeared to be more reduced in comparison to the size observed during the first days. Meanwhile, from March 28 on, several members of the woman’s family and other persons began to invoke divine help through the intercession of the Servant of God Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary, in order to obtain a favorable outcome. On April 4<sup>th</sup>, a further ultrasound unexpectedly revealed the fetus to have regained a heartbeat. This event was immediately judged to have come about beyond the powers of nature. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, the child was born alive and viable.

Regarding this occurrence, which is considered to be a miracle, there was instituted during the years 2003-2004 in the Curia of N. the Diocesan Investigation, the juridical validity of which this Dicastery confirmed by means of the decree published on May 7, 2004. The Congregation’s Medical Consultation, in the session of May 12, 2005, declared that the unexpected resumption of pregnancy after a spontaneous internal miscarriage—verified by ultrasound documents, including the fact of the development toward the resulting natural conclusion of birth, without negative consequences to the fetus—cannot be explained by means of the laws of science. On September 20th that same year, there took place the Meeting of the Theologians Consultors, and on May 2, 2006 the Ordinary Session of the Fathers Cardinals and Bishops, during which the *Ponens* of the Cause was His Excellency Lino Fumagalli, Bishop of Sabina-Poggio Mirteto. Then on the following October 3<sup>rd</sup>, another Ordinary Session was held. And in both Meetings, whether of the Consultors or the Cardinals and Bishops, the doubt having been raised whether there is certainty about a miracle having been performed by divine intervention, there was given an affirmative response.

Finally, an accurate report about all these things having been made to the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, His Holiness, accepting and officially confirming the recommendations of The Congregation For The Causes Of Saints, this day declared: *It is acknowledged as a miracle performed by God through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary (in the world: John Papczyński), Priest and Founder of the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most B.V.M., namely, ‘the unexpected resumption of pregnancy by Mrs. N.N, at the 7th-8th week of gestation, following a spontaneous interruption caused by an “internal miscarriage” documented by ultrasound, with the subsequent development*

*toward the normal result of the birth, without negative consequences for the fetus which was born alive and viable on October 17, 2001.*

This decree, moreover, the Supreme Pontiff ordered to be published and entered into the Register of the Acts of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints.

Given at Rome, on the 16th day of the month of December A.D. 2006.

/-/ JOSEPH Card. SARAIVA MARTINS  
*Prefect*

(SEAL)

/-/ + EDWARD NOWAK  
tit. Archbp. of Luni  
*Secretary*

## APOSTOLIC LETTER

We,  
Fulfilling the desire of Our Brother  
Stanislaus Gądecki,  
the Archbishop of Poznań,  
and indeed of very many other Brothers in the Episcopate  
and of many faithful,  
having taken into consideration the decision of the  
Congregation for the Causes of Saints,  
by Our Apostolic Authority  
make it possible  
that the Venerable Servant of God  
Stanislaus Papczyński, a priest,  
Founder of the Congregation of Marian Fathers  
under the title of the Immaculate Conception of the  
Most Blessed Virgin Mary,  
who devoted himself to prayers and other suffrages for the deceased  
and to the Christian instruction of the people,  
may in the future be called Blessed,  
and that every year on May 18th, his feast may be celebrated  
in the places and in the manners established by the law.  
In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit  
Amen.

Given in Rome at St. Peter's  
On September 12th in the year of the Lord 2007,  
in the third year of Our Pontificate

[ - ] Benedict XVI, Pope

# LITTERAE APOSTOLICAE

Nos,  
vota Fratris Nostri  
Stanislai Gądecki,  
Archiepiscopi Posnaniensis,  
necnon plurimorum aliorum Fratrum in Episcopatu  
multorumque christifidelium explentes,  
de Congregationis de Causis Sanctorum consulto,  
auctoritate Nostra Apostolica  
facultatem facimus ut  
Venerabilis Servus Dei  
Stanislaus Papczyński, presbyter,  
conditor Congregationis Clericorum Marianorum  
sub titulo Immaculatae Conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis Mariae,  
qui suffragii orationi pro defunctis se dedit  
atque populi christianae institutioni,  
Beati nomine in posterum appelletur,  
eiusque festum  
die duodevicesima Maii  
in locis et modis iure statutis  
quotannis celebrari possit.  
In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.  
Amen.  
Datum Romae, apud Sanctum Petrum,  
die duodecimo mensis Septembris,  
anno Domini bismillesimo septimo,  
Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

Benedictus PP. XVI

## FROM SHEPHERD TO GOSPEL PREACHER AMONG THE NATIONS

*An Interview with His Eminence Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican Secretary of State to His Holiness, Papal Legate to the Beatification of Father Stanislaw Papczyński*

Interview with Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone by Beata Zajączkowska

***BEATA ZAJĄCZKOWSKA: Your Eminence is the Papal Legate to the Beatification of Father Stanislaw Papczyński. What does it mean to be a saint at the beginning of the third Millennium?***

This is my first time to be a Papal Legate to a beatification, although I took part in such celebrations on a number of occasions. For me, holiness is something like switching on the lights on people's paths, in the history of various cities, villages or of entire nations. It is undoubtedly a gift offered to the Church in every period of history. It is a gift from God since it is God who switches on all these lights that enlighten even the darkest, the most tragic periods in the history of humanity. Let us think about the martyrs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who enlightened a dramatic period of Nazism or Communism.

Saints are signs, meaning that we react to God's invitation, to the gifts and the talents that He offers to each of us. It proves that holiness has always been there, and that it will never pass away. Saints are among us and always will be, in every nation. Let me go back to my trip to Peru. Local people particularly remember a simple person, Saint Rose of Lima. She was not involved in public or academic life as was Father Papczyński, who used to teach, preach, and write books. This is a sign that we are all called to holiness.

***Does not the fact that beatifications are not held at the Vatican anymore restrict the message of the new blessed to the local Church only?***

Apart from a few exceptions, according to the will of Benedict XVI, celebrations are held where the blessed lived. In my opinion, at a certain stage of history, as it was during the pontificate of John Paul II, it was the right thing to have beatifications in the center of Christianity, at the Vatican. But in the long run, there was a risk of "stripping" various local Churches of something that was characteristic for them; charismatic or apostolic movements of monastic congregations that originated from a specific need in a given area. The beatification in a city

connected with the future blessed gives credit to such a place. The cult will most certainly be restricted to the given area. When the blessed is proclaimed a saint, this will be a gift to the entire Church. Of course, not all saints have the same inspiration and meaning for the life of the entire Church. Some of them are needed for a given area or a country and it is the right thing that the cult of such saints spreads specifically in that region and emanates from there.

***What from Papczyński's message does Your Eminence consider suitable for contemporary man?***

The cult of Father Papczyński spreads from Rwanda to the USA, which shows that we cannot forget, as it often happens, saints that lived in distant times. Many times we replaced them "with more up-to-date saints". I remember the disappointment when during my Salesian formation, St. Louis Gonzaga was replaced by a more contemporary saint, St. Dominic Savio. The variety of saints that are present in each period, as each epoch has its special gifts and charisms, should not lead to the concealment of "older saints" or even to their obliteration from our minds and memories. Father Papczyński lived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but when we study the turbulent history of those days and of Father Stanislaus's life, we can see many similarities with the contemporary world. He went from being an ordinary shepherd to a Shepherd of nations, a great preacher of the Gospel. At a crucial time in the history of Poland and of Europe, he uncompromisingly preached the Gospel and carried the message to the outside world. He persistently reminded the world that the seeds of the Gospel should not be kept only for oneself, but that they should be carried to others to bear fruit, to change society. Are not these words suitable for the present day, and not only for Poland but for the whole of Europe?

***Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone***

*In September 2006, he replaced Cardinal Angelo Sodano as the Secretary of State at the Holy See. Before that, he was the Archbishop of Genoa. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone is an excellent theologian and an outstanding specialist in Canon Law. He took part in the work on the reform of the Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1984. For many years, he used to be the Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In the year 2000, he was the one who announced the third secret of Fatima. Earlier, he had spoken many times with Sister Lucia, the only living witness of the Fatima revelations in 1917. As the Papal Legate, he took part in her funeral in 2005. Tarcisio Bertone is considered one of the most outstanding contemporary theologians, open to the world and fully aware of the needs of the contemporary Church. He is fluent in French, German, Spanish and Portuguese. A Salesian, he is 73 years old.*

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone,  
Secretary of State

**DISCOURSE**  
**DELIVERED DURING VESPERS**  
**In Licheń, September 15, 2007**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord!

At the Vigil before the Beatification of the Servant of God, Father Stanislaus Papczyński, we gather this evening in this Shrine, the Baslica of Our Lady of Licheń, who the pilgrims also venerate as Our Lady of Sorrows, Queen of Poland. Today is the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows and this magnificent painting from Licheń helps us to understand the mysterious role that Mary played by Jesus' side on Calvary. The Virgin was in fact deeply associated with the mission of the Redeemer; with her maternal suffering, she participated in the work of the redemption. At the time of the Passion, Jesus entrusted her to John, proclaiming her as the Mother of all believers, of all peoples (Cf. Jn 19: 25-27). Mother of Christ, Mary is the Mother of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, called to distribute the gift of salvation to men and women of all times.

We stop tonight to ponder the mystery of suffering and of love, of mercy and of peace, which the face of Our Lady of Sorrows passes on to us, with her eloquent silence. Today's memorial of the sufferings of Mary, which has its origins in a very ancient popular devotion in the Church, was introduced into the liturgy by Pope Pius VII, in order to commemorate the sufferings inflicted by Napoleon on the Head of the Church. Presently, this Feast is dedicated instead to Our Lady of Sorrows and her participation in the sacrifice with which Christ offers Himself to the Father for the redemption of the world.

Art depicted this pious maternal gesture in the "Pieta", an expression of the intimate martyrdom of the Mother of the Crucified. Our Lady of Sorrows proposes to us and leads us to Jesus, the only Savior of the world, who died on the Cross for us. In the face of such suffering and such love, how can we not open our hearts in compassion? How can fail to be converted to pardon and to love? The Mother of Mercy introduces us to the mystery of the Divine Mercy. She opens our hearts to listen to the Word of God and to the humble following of Christ.

The Servant of God, the beloved John Paul II, coming here on June 7, 1999, wanted to remind us that Marian Shrines are places of particular Grace, where, as it happened in the visit of Mary to St. Elizabeth, it is possible to enter into contact with Jesus by meeting His Mother. Mary, who was mother to Him thanks to her faith even before she begat Him to a life on earth, invites devotees to follow her example.

She is “Blessed because she believed” (Cf. Lk 1:45). May our Marian devotion be expressed in imitating her docile adherence to the will of the Lord, her ardent love and her unwavering hope. With these sentiments, I greet all of you present here and I thank you for your warm welcome. A special greeting to your Bishop, to the other Bishops present here, to the Rector, and to the other Marian Priests that have the Shrine under their care. An affectionate greeting to the religious sisters, to the religious brothers, and to all the devotees of Our Lady of Licheń. We are praying to the Virgin Mary tonight, asking her to be our guide and support in leading the life of a Christian. May the Virgin Mary comfort us in our everyday life and lead us on the path of complete faithfulness to God and of sincere love of our brothers. May the Virgin Mary help us to be saints.

To be saints! It was the constant aspiration of the Servant of God, Father Stanislaus Papczyński, who will be proclaimed Blessed tomorrow. He entrusted himself to the Virgin Mary, choosing her as his mother and guide on the path toward sanctity. He was particularly attracted to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception and made it the charismatic inspiration and a guiding sign for the Congregation of Marians that he founded. This evening, dear Brothers and Sisters, we can see how miraculously these two Marian mysteries interlace: The Immaculate Virgin and the Sorrowful Mother. Both point out the salvific power of Divine Grace and the Lord’s merciful love, which revives the soul of the repentant sinner. Behold the sanctity! To believe in the Love which transforms our existence; to believe in the omnipotence of God, as Mary did. Let us welcome this sweet and holy Mother into our lives, into our families, and into our communities as the Apostle John did! Let us find a place for her in our hearts and she, we can be certain, will help us to know ever more intimately, her Son Jesus and the comforting goodness of the Heavenly Father. “Really seeing the face of Mary”, said the Holy Father Benedict XVI in a homily given on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary last year, “we can see more than in other ways, the beauty of God, His goodness, His Mercy.” (August 15, 2006, “L’Osservatore Romano”, Polish edition, 27(2006) no. 12, 11).

To be saints requires, today more than in the past, to testify to Christ’s presence and the power of His merciful love in a world which so easily forgets the Lord and rejects the course of His commandments. We have to set an example for our brothers, showing them the beauty of a life with Jesus, by being His friends and disciples as was Mary, a humble handmaid and faithful disciple of the Redeemer.

John Paul II had in mind this spiritual and apostolic effort when he expressed his joy over the building of this Basilica as a votive offering of the Polish nation to the Virgin Mary to conclude the Jubilee Year 2000, "I am looking with admiration at this huge edifice. Its striking architecture is an expression of faith and love for Mary and Her Son." Your beautiful Church, the building of which involved millions of devotees of Our Lady, therefore is an invitation to express your faith and love for Jesus and for Mary.

Each Marian Shrine is, by its nature, a school of Marian piety. May it also be so for this Sanctuary, which occupies a privileged place in the Church in Poland's Marian pastoral ministry. May it be a center of authentic Marian spirituality, according to the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. In the course of the centuries, we can admire many forms in which the Poles have honored Our Lady. The history of the portrait from Licheń also shows the permanent place of Mary's presence in their lives and in their choices. The unforgettable Servant of God, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate of the Millennium, wished to remind us of of this salutary spiritual experience during the coronation of the image on August 15, 1967, "Mary, Blessed of all the nations and of the Polish Nation," he said, "clasped the Eagle to her breast, as a sign of her maternity toward our homeland. This sign had been spied on by the enemies during the political slavery. It was disturbing to the invaders, enemies of God and of our nation [...]. Is all this not meaningful for us today? Behold, the sign of our homeland was safe on the breast that fed the Savior of the world! May this victorious bond between our earthly Motherland and the Mother of the God-Man constitute the program for the future!" (*Collection of Sermons of the Primate of the Millennium*, mps, no. 7675).

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, let your temple, the sign of God's dwelling in the midst of His people, be an invitation for the devotees and the pilgrims to be "living stones" for the construction of the spiritual edifice – which is the Christian community, a house of Communion, of pardon and of reconciliation. To complete this mission, which belongs to every baptised person, let us run again to Mary, who was God's first Sanctuary, because she helps us to live in Sanctifying Grace and to become "God's Mystical Temple" as Father Stanislaus Papczyński loved to say with great steadfastness. (*Templum Dei mysticum*).

The Mother of Beautiful Love, who we here contemplate in her silent participation in Christ's Passion, may be an encouragement for all to pay attention to the sufferings of the contemporary world and to make themselves companions on the journey with those who suffer and are in need, to defend the small and the weak, protecting and supporting in every way, the dignity of every human being, from conception until their natural death.

May Mary, the icon of freedom and liberation of man, obtain for those enslaved in vice and sin, the strength to renounce evil and to open their hearts to the Divine Liberator, who on the Cross has defeated the power of darkness forever.

May Our Lady of Licheń, Protectress of family happiness, be the support and guide for families that are facing today's great challenges; may she obtain for them the light and wisdom of heart to overcome the crises which so many nuclear families are unfortunately going through.

May the Patroness of the freedom and the unity of the Polish nation, the Teacher of loyal love and concern for Church and homeland, illumine the conscience of all the citizens of your noble people, because, sustained by her maternal care, you may conserve and consolidate your Christian identity and you can enrich the other nations of Europe with your gift.

There is an inscription on the portrait of the Mother of God in Licheń: "Queen of Poland, Grant Peace to our Time". How current is this invocation in the context of the world today, where peace is often spoken about, but episodes of violence and conflict are recorded practically everywhere. Only God can give us a true peace, His peace: peace among nations, peace among families, and peace in people's hearts! Be for all, Mary, the Messenger of Divine Peace!

Dear brothers and sisters, dear devotees of Our Lady! Let us prepare ourselves to live a day of great joy tomorrow, the Beatification of the Servant of God, Father Stanislaus Papczyński. He was a fervant devotee of the Immaculate Conception, who devoted his life to the ardent preaching of the Good News. He was an Apostle of prayer, also of the prayer of suffrages for the souls of the deceased in Purgatory. May his spiritual message continue to be proclaimed and witnessed with faithfulness and enthusiasm in this Sanctuary, in which you, his spiritual sons, Marian priests and brothers exercise your pastoral ministry. May the gift of the new Blessed strengthen you even more in your devotion to Our Lady and make you carriers of the message of your Founder in the Church, in Poland and in the whole world. Obtain this for us, Mary, Sorrowful Mother of the Church and of humanity! Amen.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone

**HOMILY  
DURING THE MASS OF BEATIFICATION  
OF FR. STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI**

**Licheń, September 16, 2007**

My Brother Cardinals,  
My Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,  
Distinguished Civil and Military Authorities,  
Dear Members of the Religious Family founded by Blessed Stanislaus,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

First of all I thank the Lord because, for the second time within the space of a few months, he has given me a welcome opportunity to visit your beloved country, the homeland of Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński and of the Servant of God, John Paul II who, let us hope, may himself soon be raised to the honors of the altar. I also thank the Lord because in this very Shrine, where last night we gathered for Vespers, it falls to me today to preside at the solemn Eucharist during which, in the name of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, I have had the honor of beatifying Father Stanislaus Papczyński. It is both significant and moving that this should happen at the famous Shrine of Our Lady of Licheń, where for many years, the Marian Fathers and Brothers, the spiritual sons of the new beatus, have carried out their pastoral ministry, ever faithful to the charism of their Founder.

With these sentiments of deep gratitude towards the Lord, I would like to extend a cordial greeting to the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops present, with a particular word of thanks to Bishop Wiesław Mering of this Diocese, who has provided a truly fraternal welcome to me and to those who have accompanied me here. I respectfully greet the civil and military authorities from the locality, the region and the State, beginning with the President of the Republic of Poland, Mr Lech Kaczyński. Today we see fulfilled the wish of the Sejm [Parliament] of the Res Publica of the two nations [Poland and Lithuania], which in 1764, petitioned the Apostolic See to raise to the altars “Stanislaus Papczyński, a Pole famous for his miracles” (Volumina Legum, vol. VII, Saint Petersburg 1860, p. 168, no. 105). I greet all the priests and deacons, consecrated persons, and among them in par-

ticular, the Marian Fathers and Brothers with their Superior General, Father Jan Mikołaj Rokosz. I greet the pilgrims who have come here from various parts of the world, some of whom have travelled great distances. Lastly, I greet those who are spiritually united with us in this sublime liturgy through television and radio, and I am thinking especially of the elderly, the sick and those in prison.

The Word of God that we hear in today's liturgy for the 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time presents us with the mystery of sinful man and God's response of supreme and infinite mercy.

"The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people" (*Ex* 32:14). In the first reading, which we heard a moment ago, Moses, after making a Covenant with God, ascends Mount Sinai to receive the tablets of the Covenant and remains there to converse with the Lord for forty days. The Israelites grow tired of waiting for him, and they turn their backs upon God, forgetting the wonders He has worked to deliver them from slavery in Egypt. The scene which the sacred author describes is truly moving: when God reveals to Moses the Israelites' sin and His intention to punish them, Moses becomes their advocate and ardently implores pardon for that ungrateful and sinful people. He does not ask God for justice, knowing well that Israel has committed the gravest of sins by yielding to the temptation of idolatry, but instead he appeals to divine mercy and to the Covenant which God, on His own initiative, established with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God hears Moses' prayer: patient and merciful, He abandons His plan to punish His people, who have turned their backs on Him. How many lessons we can learn from this passage from the Book of Exodus! It helps us to discover the true face of God; it helps us to understand the mystery of His good and merciful heart. However great our sin, divine mercy is always greater, because God is Love.

A wonderful testimony to this mystery is the human and spiritual experience of the Apostle Paul. In the second reading, from his first Letter to Timothy, he confesses that Christ has touched him in the depths of his spirit and has made him who was once a persecutor of Christians into an instrument of divine grace for the conversion of many. Jesus, the true good Shepherd, does not abandon His sheep, but wants to lead them all back to the Father's flock. Dear brothers and sisters, is this not our experience too? When our sin leads us away from the right path and deprives us of the joy of God's friendship, if we then repent and return to Him, we discover not the severity of his judgment and condemnation, but the gentleness of His love which renews us within.

"Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (*Lk* 15:10). These words of Jesus, reported by Saint Luke in the Gospel passage we have just heard, offer a further confirmation of our certainty of the Lord's merciful love. Divine mercy is the good news that we must never tire of proclaiming and testifying in these difficult times. Only Christ, who knows man

intimately, can speak to his heart and restore to him the joy and the dignity of one created in God's image. And for this he needs faithful and trusted collaborators; He needs saints and He calls us to be saints, that is, true friends of Christ and heralds of His Gospel.

One true friend and tireless apostle of Christ was Blessed Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary. Born in Podegrodzie of a poor peasant family, he lived at a time when Poland was afflicted by numerous wars and plagues, falling deeper and deeper into chaos and deprivation. Formed on the sound principles of the Gospel, young Stanislaus wanted to give himself completely to God, and from his adolescent years onwards, he felt drawn towards the Immaculate Virgin Mother of Christ. Gradually the Lord transformed the little shepherd-boy, who found it so hard to study and was physically so frail, into a preacher who drew crowds through his wisdom filled with erudition and profound mysticism; into a confessor whose spiritual counsel was sought after even by the great men of Church and State; into a well-prepared teacher and an author of various works published in numerous editions; into the Founder of the first Polish Religious Institute for men, the Congregation of the Marian Clerics of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Guiding him throughout his life was Mary herself. In the mystery of her Immaculate Conception, the new *beatus* marvelled at the power of the Redemption worked by Christ. In the Immaculate Virgin, he discerned the beauty of the new creation given totally to Christ and to the Church. He became so fascinated by this truth of the faith, that he was prepared to give his life in its defence. He knew that Mary, the crowning glory of God's creation, is the confirmation of the dignity of every man and woman, loved by God and destined for eternal life in Heaven. He wanted the mystery of the Immaculate Conception to be the distinguishing mark of the Religious Community that he founded, to be its constant support and its true joy. How many times in this very place, in this Shrine of Our Lady, Mother of Sorrows, where throngs of pilgrims come together to pray, has Blessed Stanislaus's moving prayer resounded up to the present day: "Mary, you console, comfort, sustain and raise up the oppressed, those who weep, who are tempted, who are weighed down ... O sweet Virgin! Show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of your life!"

Inspired by God's love, Blessed Stanislaus burned with a strong passion for the salvation of souls and he addressed his listeners with heartfelt pleas such as this: "Turn back now to your Father! Why do you wander through the distant land of passions, deprived of the loving sentiments of the Supreme Good? Go to your Father! Christ is calling you, go to Him!" (*Inspectio cordis*, 1, 25, 2). Following the example of the Good Samaritan, he stood at the side of those wounded in spirit and eased their sufferings, he consoled them and filled them with hope

and serenity, he led them to the “inn of pardon” which is the confessional, thus helping them recover their lost or rejected Christian dignity.

Divine charity impelled Blessed Stanislaus to become an evangelist of the poor in particular, of simple folk, the socially marginalized whose spiritual needs were overlooked, and of those who were in danger of death. Knowing how widespread the scourge of alcoholism was at the time, through word and example, he taught sobriety and inner freedom as an effective antidote against all forms of dependence. Filled with profoundly patriotic love for the united Polish, Lithuanian and Ruthenian nations, he did not hesitate to condemn the way in which those in power sought their own advantage, abused the privilege of nobility and promulgated unjust laws. Today too, the new *beatus* offers a timely invitation to Poland and to Europe, in its arduous search for unity: only by building solidly upon God is reconciliation possible between people and between nations. Without God, there cannot be true social justice or stable peace.

Dear brothers and sisters, Blessed Stanislaus’s love for his fellow men extended also to the dead. After his mystical experience of the suffering of those in Purgatory, he prayed fervently for them and exhorted everyone to do the same. Alongside spreading the cult of the Immaculate Conception and proclaiming the Word of God, praying for the dead thus became one of his Congregation’s principal aims. The thought of death and meditation upon Heaven, Purgatory and Hell help us to “spend” wisely our time on earth; it encourages us to think of death as a necessary stage on our journey towards God; it leads us always to accept and respect life as a gift from God, from its conception to its natural end. What an important sign for the modern world is the miracle of the “unexpected recovery of pregnancy between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> week of gestation” which occurred through the intercession of Father Papczyński. God is the Master of human life!

The secret of life is love: the ineffable love of God, which surpasses human frailty and moves our hearts to love life, our neighbor and even our enemies. To his spiritual sons, the new *beatus* entrusted this message from the beginning, “A man without charity, a religious without charity, is a shadow without the sun, a body without a soul, he is simply a nothing. What the soul is to the body, that is what charity is in the Church, in religious orders and in religious houses.” It is hardly surprising then, that a number of his disciples, amid many hardships and crosses, were distinguished by their evangelical perfection. Suffice it to recall the Venerable Servant of God Father Kazimierz Wyszyński (1700-1755), an ardent promoter of Marian devotion, Blessed Archbishop George Matulaitis-Matulewicz (1871-1927), who carried out a providential renewal and reform of the Congregation of Marian Clerics and was a champion of reconciliation between Poland and Lithuania; the Blessed Martyrs of Rosica (Belarus), Jerzy Kaszyra (1904-1943) and Antoni Leszczewicz (1890-1943), who freely gave their lives during the Sec-

ond World War for their faith in Christ and for love of their fellow men. Even in dramatic times of persecution, the work of Blessed Stanislaus was never eclipsed. Blessed George Matulaitis-Matulewicz gave it a new impulse, bearing witness once again to the fact that Love conquers all.

Dear Marian Fathers and Brothers, today this precious spiritual heritage of your Founder is entrusted to you: welcome it and, like him, be tireless heralds everywhere of God's merciful love, keeping your gaze fixed upon Mary Immaculate, so that in each of you the divine plan may be fulfilled.

Dear pilgrims and faithful people, the Church in Poland is celebrating the elevation to the altars of this chosen son of hers. May the example of his holy life and his heavenly intercession encourage all of you to open your hearts at every moment, trusting in God's all-powerful love. Filled with joy and hope, let us give thanks to God for the gift of the new beatus and let us praise the Lord in the words of the Apostle Paul: "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim 1:17).

Cardinal Franc Rodé, C.M.  
Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life  
and Societies of Apostolic Life

## MEDITATIONS

### during Lauds on September 16, 2007 day of the Beatification of Father Stanislaus Papczynski

*“If we have died with him we shall also live with him;  
if we persevere we shall also reign with him.  
But if we deny him he will deny us.  
If we are unfaithful he remains faithful” (2 Tm 2, 11-13)*

The passage from the Letter of St. Paul to Timothy which has been proclaimed in our assembly today, splendidly introduces the context of this day of joy and great celebration of the Beatification of the Servant of God Father Stanislaus Papczynski, Founder of the Congregation of the Marian Fathers, *the father of the poor*, as he was called, *the defender of the least*. In him, in fact, we can read the incarnation of this ideal, which is proper to each baptized person, and particularly for every consecrated person.

Saint Paul had taken these verses from a liturgical hymn of one of the very first Christian communities. The “conditions” underlined here are applicable to Christians of every point in time. It is an invitation to live an identification of total unity with Christ; an invitation to live in His death and in His resurrection: that is to say in His labors and sufferings, as well as in His triumph over every death that leads to the resurrection to the true life and authentic joy.

We live in a time where questions and uncertainty seem always more numerous, where men and women of our time seem to have lost every stronghold, but Christ continues to call each one to be conformed to His image. Above all, we consecrated persons must avoid the throw-away mentality which is so widely diffused today, which makes it impossible for faith to penetrate life and even worse, life gets rid of faith. The existence and the being of the Christian must be unified to his or her central core: to stay close to Jesus Christ.

The Lord asks His consecrated persons to be witnesses in the world; to be visible and credible instruments of his presence of salvation; visible signs of his singular love for every man and for every woman. It is not only in words, but above all through a particular style of life, with a free heart and a creative spirit that you make the merciful love of God known to those you meet along your journey. To do this, as Father Papczynski wrote to his religious, it is necessary “to get up and follow Him.” *“Look to the good rule so to imitate Christ: get up and follow Him. If you do not get up you will not be able to follow Him, even if it seems to you that you are following in his footsteps. If, in the nooks and crannies of your will, you still hide the pockets of self-love and other similar things, you are not following Christ; you are not truly imitating Christ, although you wear a cassock, although you took vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, which you are so proud of. Get up and follow Him, because if you do not get up, you will never follow Him.”* (cf. *Inspectio Cordis*)

Let’s get up and imitate Him, in order to build up our “interior being” (cf. Eph 3,16) as the Apostle Paul says, seeking for intimacy with the Lord of life, faithfully maintaining our readiness for His work to be fulfilled in us. This can be done through prayer, the knowledge of the Word of God, the Eucharistic encounter and the Sacrament of Reconciliation; through the authentic witness of fraternal life in community, the readiness to obey, courage in poverty and fortitude in fruitful chastity. In this way, we will render a clear and constant witness of Christ’s Resurrection, making concrete acts of life and of love for the little ones and for the poor, like Father Papczynski, so that all will know in whom to place their true hope. In fact, “a pure and generous love”, as the Holy Father Benedict XVI wrote in his Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, “is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love.” (DCE n. 31).

Cardinal Franc Rodé, CM

**HOMILY**  
**DURING THE THANKSGIVING LITURGY**  
**AT THE TOMB**  
**OF BLESSED STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI**  
  
**in Góra Kalwaria, September 17, 2007**  
**(on the Anniversary of the Death of the Blessed)**

Your Excellency Archbishop Metropolitan,  
Your Excellencies Archbishops and Bishops,  
Most Reverend Father General and all Fathers and Brothers of the venerable Congregation of the Marian Fathers,  
Brother Priests and Religious,  
Representatives of the Authorities of all levels and honors,  
Beloved in Christ, Brothers and Sisters:

*The Lord is my shepherd* (Ps. 23:1). With the words of one of the most beautiful psalms in the Bible, we praise God in this joyful celebration. We give Him thanks for all He did for each and every one of us in His Son Jesus Christ. On this day, which you, Brothers and Sisters have so longed and prayed for, we give special thanks for the ripe fruit of Christ's grace which the Church places before us in the Beatification of Stanislaus Papczynski.

Seventy years, filled with an ardent and uncompromising search for God in prayer, mortification and service to his brothers, led Blessed Stanislaus to the joy of Heaven. A joyful psalm of pilgrims who have reached their destination, may serve as an apt description of his path from Podegrodzie, where he was born, as one of many children in the peasant family of Tomasz, a blacksmith, and Zofia, to the place of today's celebration, where his earthly remains rest. What was the path he took? How much toil did he endure? How many struggles did he endure to remain faithful to the internal voice of the Spirit and to his own conscience? Only He himself, the Good Shepherd, whom he followed till the end of his days, knows the answers to these questions. He knows the fidelity and the toil of his servant whom he led to the *Father's house* (Jn 14: 2).

The eternal rest of the saints is laborious love. You, faithful devotees of the New Blessed, you, who for years have been coming here to Marianki from all corners of Poland and remote parts of the world, know this perfectly well. Many among you and your close ones have experienced the power of his intercession. A few years before his death, in his first spiritual testimony, Father Stanislaus wrote that he leaves this world with one debt only, that of gratitude toward the inhabitants of this town and all benefactors, friends and foes. He went to the Lord, yet remained here with us as a debtor full of love to listen to and support those who come to him. His intercession opens the gates of human hearts to the flow of God's grace. Thanks to it, the chains of sins break, the fetters of bad habits crumble, and a life to be born, once possessed by the gloom of death, blooms anew.

We have waited a long time for the joy of today's thanksgiving. For you, beloved Marians, these were three centuries of prayers and efforts, so that the glow of your Founder's sanctity, which you were so convinced of, could shine through to the whole world. In this time of expectation, you were accompanied by the Marian spiritual family and many devotees of Blessed Stanislaus. In many hearts a question may arise, why so long? Let's keep in mind that God's Providence does not follow a path of human longings, and the gifts of His grace often come not when we call, but when the time is most appropriate. If now we rejoice at the Beatification of Father Papczynski, we can most forcefully claim that today is the day when the testimony of his life is needed most for the Church and the world. Beatification marks the end of the road, but more than that, it is a call to get on the road again. Dear Marians, never in the over three hundred year history of your Congregation, has the necessity to reconsider the life and charism of Your Founder been more burning. Return to the spring from which flowed each of your own vocations. Get back to living your religious consecration to the full, with your hearts undivided. With confidence, entrust your entire life, your strengths and weaknesses, to the One, *who for your sakes died and was raised up* (c.f. 2 Cor. 5:15).

Both, today's reading from the letter to the Ephesians, and a fragment of John's Gospel, are one great call for communion, profound and full of love. When we listen to the words which are almost like Jesus' testament and the last instruction left to His disciples, it is hard not to recall such strikingly similar words left to you by Your Founder. In the *Norma vitae* he wrote: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength*" (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37) *This, which Divine Wisdom wanted to be most recommended in both [Old and New] Testaments, (Mk 12:30, Lk 10:27) should be your common rule and the safest way to heaven. Concerning mutual love: let it be known that the one who excels in mutual love is more dear to the Divine Majesty. Each of you should keep in mind that the soul of his Institute is love, and to the extent that he withdraws from love, he withdraws from life.*

Dear Marians! Rejoicing in the gift of the Beatification, choose again the path on which the Gospel calls you and which your Founder showed to you. Only the one who fulfills the testimony of the Father is worthy of being called His son. The spiritual gift and mission which Blessed Stanislaus received from God, he has passed on to you, defining the aim of the created Order in the words: *But lest you remain without work in the Vineyard of the Lord, to the utmost of your strength, you will promote devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God, and with utmost zeal, piety and fervor assist the souls of the faithful departed subjected to the punishments of Purgatory... Yet, it will not be forbidden for those who would be granted such abilities, to humbly help pastors in pastoral work, if after a prior permission of the local bishops and superiors, they would be called by them.* This is a very broad and rich field to harvest. It entails many theological issues and numerous pastoral calls. It touches the beginnings of a human being and the end of man's pilgrimage, revealing a magnitude of grace and mercy of the One, who *loved His own till the end* (c.f. Jn 13:1). Certainly, it is not accidental, that the miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Stanislaus and confirmed by the Church, took place in the womb of a mother, between the life and the death of a conceived child. It is the work of God's Providence that the Beatification in which we now rejoice was given to the contemporary world in the times when God's presence and His grace are so often rejected at the thresholds of human existence. God's Vineyard needs spiritual sons of Father Papczynski, who would bear fruit while taking up and developing the charism which the Lord entrusted to him.

The Church and the world needs you also, beloved lay helpers, who in various ways participate in the spirituality and mission of the Congregation of Marians. From the charism shining through Blessed Stanislaus, draw your strength and inspiration to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to contemporary man. It is also thanks to you, that numerous works carried out by the Congregation in many countries of the world bear wonderful fruit. You received a special vocation from God. Remain faithful to it.

The Church and the world also need you, devotees of Blessed Stanislaus. Fascinated with his path of faith and having experienced his efficacious intercession before God, try to become witnesses of God's love to the world, devotees of His Mother and zealous intercessors of the deceased, but first and foremost apostles of mercy.

Here, I think particularly about you, dear inhabitants of this town, Gora Kalwaria, where the tomb of the Blessed has been located. You have always revealed great respect and ardent care toward his remains, seeking his intercession in the difficult moments of your private lives and the storms in the history of your homeland, treating Father Stanislaus as *Your saint* and *the patron of your town*. Thus, thanks to your love, he becomes a Blessed for the entire Church.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, through many different ties connected with Blessed Stanislaus: each and every one of you in an individual way is an heir to the spirit with which He lived, prayed and worked. In one of his writings entitled, *Templum Dei mysticum*, he wrote that each Christian is a temple of God. He taught how to keep this temple from becoming abandoned, dirty and neglected, and how to make God live in it, in the beauty of love, prayer and virtue, by opening up to the light and power of the Holy Spirit, and taking up the challenge of raising such a temple. May Christ dwell in your hearts. Become servants of His presence wherever He sends you, and be certain that in your toil, the intercession of Blessed Stanislaus and Mary Immaculate, whose glory he so zealously spread, will never abandon you.

*The Lord is the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep* (c.f. Jn 10:11). He leads man on the best paths and delivers him from the valley of death to give him shelter in His house for ever. To Him we give thanks today, celebrating the commemoration of His Passover. Through the power of the death and the resurrection of Christ, God's grace gained a total victory in the life of Father Stanislaus Papczynski and made him participate in the glory of heaven. May the words of the Blessed, praising the triumph of Christ over death, set our hearts on fire for further liturgical celebrations and for all our lives: *Death died at the moment when the Life gave His life on the tree. When Jesus, making a sign to death by bowing his head, delivered over His spirit, the breath of life was coming back to us. When He was dying, He was empowering us. When He triumphed over death, He was preparing for us the joy of a never ending triumph. What triumph? "Death is swallowed up in victory" – St. Paul, calling in joy, scoffs at death. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? . . . But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

In Blessed Stanislaus Papczynski, the victory of the Lord and the fullness of His life shone. May it also shine in us, for eternal life. Amen!

Cardinal Józef Glemp,  
Primate of Poland

## **KEEP VIGIL WITH MARY IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE OF LIFE**

### **The Marian Assembly in Licheń at the Vigil of the Be- atification of Stanislaus Papczyński**

on September 15, 2007.

The Assembly of Jasna Góra ascends to Heaven this evening in honor of Our Lady of Licheń, the great Shrine of our modern times. We present ourselves before Mary, our Mother and Queen, with a multitude of pilgrims, of bishops, of clergymen and brethren from the Congregation of Marians, with a numerous band of consecrated persons, and first of all, with the Founder of the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary – of the Marians, Father Stanislaus Papczyński. Yes, Father Papczyński is with us in a very special way, awaiting the solemn act of the proclamation as a blessed resident of Heaven. His Beatification in Licheń confirms the pastoral dynamism of his spiritual sons and the religious vitality of these areas of Poland which include parts of Wielkopolska, Kujawy, Pomerania and Mazovia. Blessed Archbishop George Matulewicz and the Servant of God, Fr. Kazimierz Wyszyński, as well as my predecessor primates, Cardinals Edmund Dalbor, August Hlond and Stefan Wyszyński unite themselves to this spiritual community.

The content of the Marian Assembly is a declaration taken from a text of an Evening Prayer, solemnly sung at Jasna Góra: “Mary, the Queen of Poland, I am close to you, I remember you, I keep vigil”..

“I am close to you” means remaining next to Mary in every circumstance, in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, in the midst of good people and of the envious ones, in the awareness of being in a state of grace and in temptation, in a life of moderation, and even more, during the clouding of conscience, when one must firmly hold onto the ledge, so as not to end up in the abyss. Today in our need to remain with Mary, we add those situations that characterized Father Papczyński. He loved Mary since early childhood. His trust never wavered even when he was expelled from school. He remained next to her when he had to per-

form humble services and to pasture the sheep. The Swedish occupation started when Papczyński went to school in Warsaw. Struck by a Swedish soldier, he did not lose heart. He endured until the end of the occupation; he did not flee, even when he saw that they were coming to destroy the city of Warsaw – in way similar to times of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. He remained at Mary's side and did not lose hope even when a time of misery and trial came upon the new Congregation, situated in the Marian Forest, or the Forest of Korabiew, as it was previously called. Not long after entering, the novices began to flee the place, choosing a more worldly style of life than the world of prayer and contemplation. Father Papczyński persevered in his contemplations, which were often interrupted by his numerous pastoral duties in the neighboring parishes.

The second word of the Assembly is, "I remember you". The Servant of God, Stanislaus Papczyński remained at Mary's side with his thoughts animated by the recollection of the miraculous defense of Jasna Góra; then of the unrelenting defense of Poland's borders against the Turkish army in repeated battles at Chocim; and then the famous victory on the occasion of the Battle of Vienna. He remembered what the religious way of life, which he led as a member of the Piarist community, had instilled in him. He heard of the oppressions the Jesuits' had endured in defence of the faith. Although in those times there were many martyrs of the faith, the memory of the sufferings inflicted on Father Andrzej Bobola had been engraved in his memory. His assignment as a Piarist was to teach. Father Papczyński never forgot it. He carried it out in his treatises, his lectures, and his preaching. This was his, "I remember you", directed toward Mary.

The third word of the Assembly is, "I keep vigil". Father Papczyński knew how to keep vigil praying. He could lock himself in a cell and stay up praying in ecstasy, isolated from the world. This was his vigil. Being close to God he was always close to Mary, close to the world, where God lives together with the saints and the angels. Father Papczyński was very close to the souls in Purgatory. He had seen many people leaving the world after battles and during rampant plagues. He was convinced that their souls went to Purgatory and that they also keep constant vigil.

Taking as our example, the life of Blessed Father Papczyński, let's keep vigil with Mary in every circumstance of our lives. Amen.

Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz,  
Metropolita of Krakow

**HOMILY**  
**DURING A MASS OF THANKSGIVING**  
**FOR THE BEATIFICATION**  
**OF FR. STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI**

**in the Chapel of the Bishops of Krakow,**  
**September 19, 2007**

*Immaculata Virginis Conceptio sit nobis salus et protectio - May the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception be our refuge and protection.*

Dear Marian Fathers! May this invocation, which Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński encouraged his spiritual sons to repeat, be the motto of our thanksgiving for this remarkable personality in the history of the Church in Poland and of our homeland. As the founder of the Marian Fathers and a great venerator of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, he has taken his place in the pantheon of saints of the Church in Poland and the world.

By an Act of Divine Providence, Blessed Stanislaus was closely associated with the Diocese of Krakow as he was born there. He established his bonds with Krakow through the Krakow Piarists while living in their residence in Kazimierz. During difficult moments in his life, he always sought help from the Bishop of Krakow, Mikołaj Oborski. This was the place where the charismatic idea about founding a new congregation was preconceived.

We also have to remember that it was the Pope from Krakow, The Holy Father, John Paul II, who resumed the process of Beatification of Stanislaus Papczyński and on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1992 at a Vatican Consistory in Rome, proclaimed a decree on his heroic virtues. In this way, the beatification process, which was ongoing for almost 300 years, entered into a new stage.

Today, in the Chapel of the Bishops of Krakow, we would like to express our gratitude to God for Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński and for his legacy.

2. The life of Bl. Stanislaus Papczyński was full of contradictions, as were the lives of many other saints.

Without going into the details of his life story which you all know so well, I would merely like to point out some of the facts that support my earlier statement.

The Blessed was the son of a farmer from Podegrodzie near Nowy Sącz, yet he managed to graduate from a Jesuit College in Lvov. He started his religious career with the Piarists, while ending it as the Founder of the Congregation of Marianists, the first Polish male order. As a Piarist, he was a confessor to King Jan III Sobieski and the Apostolic Nuncio to Poland, Antonio Pignatelli, who was later to become Pope Innocent XII. While in his mother's womb, Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński was entrusted to the care of our Blessed Mother. Her intercessory prayers helped him in a miraculous way to pass unharmed through various dangers.

3. In his times, Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński became famous as a preacher, a zealous promoter of the Gospel, and a great venerator of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Last Sunday, during the ceremony of the Beatification in Licheń, His Eminence Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone spoke in his homily about the great love that Papczyński had for the Blessed Mother: *In the mystery of her Immaculate Conception, the new beatus marvelled at the power of the Redemption wrought by Christ. In the Immaculate Virgin, he discerned the beauty of the new creation given totally to Christ and to the Church. He became so fascinated by this truth of the faith, that he was prepared to give his life in its defense*" (Homily in Licheń, September 16, 2007). Through his ministry as a preacher and confessor, and particularly in his dedication to fight addiction to alcohol, a great national shortcoming already at that time, Bl. Stanislaus Papczyński led the human person to the beauty and dignity bestowed on him by his Creator and Redeemer.

4. Dear Marian Fathers, I am happy that today, together with all of you, I have this opportunity to show my gratitude to God for the grace of the Beatification of your Founder, Bl. Stanislaus Papczyński, an outstanding personality of his time. As I participated in the ceremony of his Beatification, so perfectly prepared that it may be held up as an example for other Church events of this kind in Poland, three thoughts occurred to me and I would like to share them with you.

Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński was a great venerator of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. I urge you to proclaim Mary Immaculate with ardent enthusiasm. Your Founder entrusted the Congregation of Marian Fathers to the Mother of God. Following the example of the Blessed, learn how to depend on God with full trust and confidence, repeating Mary's "fiat": *Be it done unto me according to thy word!*

Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński held in reverence the Poor Souls in Purgatory. Being faithful to your Founder, try to revive the prayer for the Poor Souls in Purgatory. The practice of this prayer restores faith in eternal life in people's hearts and a yearning for the supreme happiness of Heaven. Today, greed overpowers our yearning for Heaven and makes us satisfied with worldly goods, putting the heavenly ones behind us. This leads to the Culture of Consumerism and deprives our souls of this longing for eternal life and happiness. Awaken then a desire for

Heaven in the hearts of the faithful, and inspire them with prayer for the intentions of the Poor Souls in Purgatory.

The third thought I would like to share with you is a concern for the dedication to the Divine Mercy set by the Holy Father John Paul II, the great Apostle of the Divine Mercy. I express my appreciation for your concern about the dedication to the Divine Mercy and I urge you to spread this dedication worldwide, and especially in the United States and England, as you have always been doing. I urge you to not forget that the essence of the Divine Mercy mystery is also expressed in the Sacrament of Penance so ardently advocated by your Founder. Encourage people to make frequent confessions and serve the contemporary human person with your pastoral care.

On this occasion, I would like to express my appreciation for your contribution to the life of the Church in Krakow in the form of parochial ministry and of the prudent and responsible service at the *Tygodnik Powszechny* weekly, as well as of your intellectual collaboration with the Holy Father.

Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński was always faithful to God, both, in happy times and in times of trials and misfortunes. Today, we express our gratitude to our Merciful Father for everything He cared to offer, urging you to show your devotion to God and the Church by being faithful to the spiritual legacy of your Blessed.

Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski,  
the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education

**Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński  
and the Primacy of Spiritual Values and Evangelization**

**HOMILY  
DELIVERED DURING THE MASS  
OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE BEATIFICATION  
OF FATHER STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI**

**Rome, Saint Mary Major Basilica,  
December 5, 2007**

Is 25: 6-10a; 2 Corinthians 4: 1-2. 5-7; Mt 15: 29-37

Excellencies,  
Dear Marian Fathers,  
Beloved Brothers in the Priesthood,  
Religious Sisters,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are gathered in this magnificent Basilica of Saint Mary Major, to thank God for the Beatification of Father Stanislaus Papczyński, which took place on September 16 of this year, in the Shrine of Our Lady of Licheń. Let us call that event to mind, while we contemplate the Word of God for today's Advent Mass.

**God's Promise**

In the first reading, we have heard one of the canticles of the Prophet Isaiah in which, after the destruction of the city, the conversion of distant peoples, and the defeat of the proud, the conviction is expressed that the Lord is the only One whom we should praise. In this way, he confesses that only God is the true Lord of history. At this point, the prophet notes that the fulness of the Divine plan has not yet been completely fulfilled. He declares that God will perform still greater works. The prophet speaks of an exquisite feast prepared by God himself. He says that the Lord will reveal His face, so that the peoples will know the immensity

of his merciful love, which is not indifferent to the tiniest tears of man, nor to the experience of the fragility of every human life, in fact, he assures us, that even death will be defeated.

### **Jesus Is the Salvation of Man**

The image presented by the Prophet Isaiah becomes particularly comprehensible and moving to the soul, while St. Matthew, in today's Gospel, relates the words of Jesus: *My heart is moved with pity for the crowd*, uttered in the midst of the lame, the deformed, the blind, the mute, and the hungry. In this context, we can see how God's promise is being fulfilled. The Lord is faithful, and He knows the trials of the man whose life is in danger. Not only does God know all these things, but He is also the only One capable of resolving the dramatic situation of man and who accomplishes the miracle of the multiplication of the bread.

After the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, the first community of His disciples could understand the profound meaning of this Miracle of the Teacher. This was the announcement of the Eucharist. They recognized that Jesus' concern for man goes beyond the immediate satisfaction of his temporal needs. Their eyes are opened when the Lord gives Himself to them as food for Eternal Life.

### **The Church Proclaims True Salvation**

The Church at that time had already understood that its main task was not to solve temporal problems. In fact, the greatest misery of man is to go through life without a knowledge of the gratuitous love of God, particularly revealed in his having given His only begotten Son for our salvation. The Church, indeed, was, is, and will always be, united with all people of good will and is also committed to the works of mercy. However, it is also even more convinced, that the primary need, is to announce God's Word to men and women, so that they believe in His immeasurable Mercy.

The Church wants to take care of the poor, the afflicted, the meek, and of those who hunger and thirst for justice in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. That is why the Church evangelizes! It evangelizes ever anew, because the greatest sickness that can strike man is that of putting himself in the place of God, and of organizing his life based on the principle: *I alone know what is good and what is bad for me*.

The Church also desires that all of its faithful, the pastors and their communities, would continually experience the grace of conversion, and of welcoming the Gospel as the vital principle of their conduct.

The perspective of evangelization is as follows: to announce Jesus Christ to other people, but above all, to cooperate with the unfolding of God's plans, so that

what God Himself has intended, would be fulfilled in us and in those to whom we proclaim the Gospel.

***Seek First the Reign of God (Mt 6, 33) in the Teachings of Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński***

It seems that today, we should not only be roused by gratitude in our hearts to God for His promises, but also to thank Him because His signs confirm that truly, one can be blessed, that is, experiencing happiness springing from the power of His Word, and from the nourishment that He gives us, and from responding to God's call to announce the Gospel.

This evening, we look at Father Stanislaus Papczyński, who on September 16 of this year, according to the will of Benedict XVI, was proclaimed Blessed at the Marian Shrine in Licheń (Poland). We turn back in our minds to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, remembering however, that the reputation for sanctity of Blessed Stanislaus has perdured until our day in the Congregation of Marian Fathers which he founded, in associations, in parishes connected with this Institute of the Consecrated Life, and among many faithful.

Blessed Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary heard the same Word of God that we also hear. He obeyed it. He said: *Contemplate the fact that Jesus, just as when he stayed among men and treated sinners in a friendly manner; in the same way, He communes with us as well today. He does not refuse them His Body and Blood, despite their insufficient preparation, following [...] the sequence: 'the good go, the irreverent go' (Inspectio cordis).* He also observed in a different place: *Reflect that Servants of God uselessly worry about food, drink, clothing and other things; however, would it ever be possible, that the One who covers the earth with grass, the birds with feathers, the trees with leaves and bark would not take care of His servant's garment? It would not be suitable, if you, for this reason, would murmur against the Moses of the New Testament (Inspectio cordis).*

The words, just cited, of Blessed Stanislaus are not abstract meditations, because he himself, during the seventy years of his life, experienced poverty, first in a family with many children, in which he was born on May 18, 1631 in Podgrodzie near Stary Sącz in Poland, then in Lvov (present day Ukraine), where he studied at the Jesuit College, and finally, for thirty years in a small religious community. What's more, having access to the powerful of this world, he did not avoid staying with poor and simple people. In fact, material poverty was not a justification for not accepting the promise contained in the Word of God of God's solicitude; on the contrary, it was the motive for entrusting everything to Providence. That is why he dared to say: *Think rather, how to persevere in His grace, to fulfill His will, and then everything will be given to you. The one that is covered, refreshed and nourished by grace, is not naked or in want or hungry. Employ*

*yourself first of all to obtain grace.* ( *Inspectio cordis*). In this regard, a rhetorical and provocative question from Jesus comes to mind: *What shall a man profit, if he shall gain the whole world, and loses his soul? O what will a man be able to give in exchange for his own soul?* (Mt 16: 26).

### **The Support of the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception**

At a certain moment in the life of Blessed Stanislaus, the grace and the desire to persevere on his path found a particular support in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of Christ. In this truth of the Faith, he discerned both the presence of God as well as the special role of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This mystery was the source of his recognition, admiration, and adoration of God. Toward Mary on the other hand, there was love, veneration and the desire to live as she did. This can clearly be seen in these words which he wrote: *It was the right thing [...] to say that there would be conceived, really by the work of the Holy Spirit, the One who was full of grace, full of the Holy Spirit. O, if only one could say about your deeds that they come from the Holy Spirit, that they have been done in the Holy Spirit! It is truly a great happiness to acquire the Holy Spirit, it is an even greater happiness, to possess the Holy Spirit, it is an even greater happiness to act according to the Holy Spirit, and it is the greatest happiness to come to the end of one's days in the Holy Spirit (Inspectio cordis).*

Blessed Stanislaus was therefore happy when the Church approved The Rule of the Ten Evangelical Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Decem beneplacitorum*) as the norm of life of the Marian Fathers. Even though it is no longer binding on the reformed Congregation today; nevertheless, it constitutes an extraordinary patrimony of Marian piety which consists in the imitation of the Mother of Jesus. To some extent, it is incorporated in the current Marians' motto: For Christ and the Church: *Pro Christo et Ecclesia*. Who, in fact, more than Mary, lived for Christ and the Church?

### **Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński Exhorts Us to Evangelization**

The fact that the Word of God fulfills and makes man happy, is confirmed by the Motto of the Marians as well as, in the past, by the rule of the Imitation of the Immaculate Mother of Christ, as well as by the witness of the life of Blessed Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary, and the witness of the lives of other Marians, Blessed George Matulaitis-Matulewicz from Lithuania and the Blessed Martyrs from Belarus, Antoni Leszczewicz and George Kaszyra. Above all, therefore, they call us to conversion, to have the courage to go to the new poor of our times (John Paul II to the Marians), and to have a new enthusiasm for evangelization.

It was also an eloquent sign that Benedict XVI carried out, on the occasion of the above mentioned Beatification, toward the Marians at Our Lady's Shrine in Licheń, and toward those that visit that place, to consign the Book of the Gospels with the following dedication: *Listen and preach the Gospel following the example of the Immaculate Mother of Christ..* Today we could add: following also the example of Blessed Stanislaus.

It is worthwhile to recall here, that the first book written by Father Papczyński was a textbook on rhetoric. He mastered the theoretical art of oratory and from the time he was a deacon, he preached willingly, in such a way that he gained a reputation as one of the best preachers in the Republic of Poland. Today, he would probably invest mind and heart to find new forms of evangelization, of preaching the Word of God and of guiding souls, in the awareness, that the greatest poverty is the absence of God.

### **Conclusion**

Dear Marians, spiritual sons of the new Blessed, undertaking the labor of the evangelization of the world of today, fix your gaze on the example of your Founder. By renouncing his own self, he made a total gift of himself to Christ and in the ministry of evangelization, he proclaimed the good news of love of the living God, whom he not only pointed to with words but, above all, thanks to the witness of his own life, he became a credible sign of the Kingdom of God. Just as the Holy Spirit did for Blessed Stanislaus, may He make you capable of a zealous pursuit of the means and the methods suitable for our times, to reach that depth of the soul that has need of the Savior. In this work of evangelization, seek to insert, with ever great efficacy, the numerous community of lay collaborators associated with you, always taking care of their solid formation, to be in conformity with the Marian charism. The Beatification of your Founder opens before you new perspectives and new challenges that spring from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the needs of the Church. Listen intently to His voice.

Today's celebration also encourages all of us to insert ourselves into the great work of evangelization, in the effort to proclaim the Gospel, there, where we live and where we work, each one according to his own vocation in the Church, in a way that the Word of the Good News gets carried everywhere, to free man from sin and from sinful tendencies, and to plant hope which springs from faith in Jesus Christ. May we also be helped in this work, by the one who Blessed Stanislaus loved and imitated in a particular way, Mary, who supports us in our faith and *shines before the pilgrim People of God, as a sign of sure hope and consolation* (LG 68).

Very Rev. Jan M. Rokosz, M.I.C.,  
Superior General of the Congregation  
of Marian Fathers

**ADDRESS WELCOMING THE PAPAL LEGATE,  
HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL TARCISIO BERTONE  
ON THE EVE OF THE BEATIFICATION  
OF FATHER STANISLAUS PAPCZYNSKI**

**Lichen, 15 September 2007**

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings,  
announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation... (Is 52:7).*

With these words of the Prophet Isaiah, filled with joy, affection and humility, on behalf of the Marian Fathers and Brothers, I welcome Your Eminence to our house. I ask you to accept our deepest loyalty, honor and love. Truly, by God's Providence, Your Eminence is for us the herald of the Good News, bringing us the Apostolic Letter of the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, which speaks of including our founder, Venerable Stanislaus Papczynski, among the Blessed. Our Congregation has been awaiting these glad tidings for over 300 years.

From a human perspective, the Congregation of Marians should not exist. Wherever we set up religious houses, we were persecuted by lay authorities (in Portugal, Rome, Poland, and Lithuania). In 1908, in Mariampol, Lithuania, there was only one old and infirm Marian Father, who was convinced that along with his death, the Congregation would cease to exist. God did not allow the work which He Himself had initiated in Father Stanislaus Papczynski to perish. A graduate from our school in Mariampol, a professor of the Spiritual Academy in St. Petersburg, Blessed George Matulewicz-Matulaitis, working under cover, risking his life, renewed and reformed the Order, giving it a new apostolic dynamism. This strengthens our belief that the Church today needs our charism. Nowadays, over 500 Marian priests and brothers work for Christ and the Church in 18 countries on all continents.

I extend a most cordial welcome to our most honored guests: Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops from Poland and abroad. Among them, let me mention

the Bishop of this Diocese — Bishop Wieslaw Mering; the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, and the Head of the Polish Episcopate, Archbishop Jozef Michalik. I greet the General and Provincial Superiors, the representatives of different religious communities in Poland and abroad, in particular, the Superior General of the Piarist Fathers. Ties of religious vows and love connected Father Papczynski with this community.

I thank each and every one of you for your presence and for sharing our joy and thanksgiving for the gift of the Beatification of our Founding Father. I wish you all a good stay which would be fruitful both for the spirit and the body at the Shrine of Our Lady of Lichen.

Very Rev. Jan M. Rokosz, M.I.C.

**ADDRESS AT THE CLOSING  
OF THE BEATIFICATION CEREMONY  
OF FATHER STANISLAUS PAPCZYNSKI**

**Lichen, 16 September 2007**

Blest are the eyes because they see and blest are the ears because they hear (...) Many a prophet and many a saint longed to see what you see but did not see it, to hear what you hear but did not hear it. (Mt 13:16).

The words of Jesus Christ uttered to the crowds at the Lake of Genesaret seem to be addressed to us. We are happy. Our Founder, Father Stanislaus Papczynski has been raised to the Honors of the Altar. The Congregation of Marian Fathers has been awaiting this moment for almost three hundred years. Today, the prayers of those who have always believed that he was a saint and that the example of his life should be set as an inspiration and ideal to follow for all Christians, have been heard. It is very meaningful to behold his picture which has been hung from this Basilica erected as a house of prayer and evangelization for the Third Millennium of Christianity.

We feel greatly honored that Our Holy Father Benedict XVI is represented here by the Secretary of State of the Holy See, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone. I am very grateful to your Eminence for proclaiming Father Stanislaus Blessed and for addressing us with a very moving message. Later today, His Eminence will be the first to honor the new Blessed and will pray at his tomb for the Church in Poland and for the Congregation of Marians. In the hands of Your Eminence, we render our deepest reverence for Benedict XVI. We thank the Holy Father for the greetings we received from Him during the Angelus and a very symbolic gift for the Sanctuary. It is the Book of the Gospels with the dedication: *Dear Marian Fathers, listen to and proclaim the Holy Gospel following the example of the Immaculate Mother of Christ.* This gift inspires us to a zealous evangelization, following the example of Blessed Stanislaus, who as a tireless preacher, proclaimed the Good News to the poor and to the rich.

Father Papczynski inspired his fellow citizens to have a love for their homeland and he forcefully condemned Polish national vices. For many, he is consid-

ered another Piotr Skarga. Today, the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Kaczynski, together with the representatives of the government, take part in the beatification. Mr. President, we thank you for your presence which is significant! We pray that the new Blessed will support you in guiding the ship of our nation toward better times.

From the bottom of my heart I thank the guests from the Vatican, the representatives of various dicasteries, under the leadership of the Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, His Eminence Cardinal Franc Rodé, whose presence is particularly dear to us.

I express my gratitude to all the persons involved in the beatification process of our Founder who come from the Dioceses of Poznan, Warsaw, Elk and many dicasteries in the Holy See.

I extend my thanks to the Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops and priests for attending today's celebration, who came from different countries where the Marian Fathers work: from Eastern and Western Europe, North and South America and also Asia and Africa.

It is a great joy for us to see so many Shepherds of the Church in Poland, led by the Primate, Cardinal Jozef Glemp and the head of the Polish Episcopate, Archbishop Jozef Michalik. I am particularly grateful to the Bishop of this Diocese, Bishop Wieslaw Mering, who has extended his pastoral care to us. We are happy to see so many Consecrated Religious present, together with their General and Provincial Superiors. It is a very significant symbol of brotherhood and unity among Consecrated Persons.

My greetings go to all the devotees of Blessed Stanislaus coming from near and far. Let me mention the pilgrims from Marian parishes in Poland and abroad and the pilgrims from dioceses and parishes particularly connected with the new Blessed: from the Diocese of Tarnow and Podegrodzie where Father Papczynski was born; from the Diocese of Lowicz and Puszcza Marianska, where the Blessed founded the Congregation of Marians, from the Archdiocese of Warsaw and Gora Kalwaria, where the tomb of the Blessed is situated, and from the Diocese of Elk where the miracle through the intercession of Father Stanislaus took place, which opened for him the way to the altar.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of the devotees of Our Lady of Lichen and parishioners who in erecting the Basilica, expressed their faith and love for God and Mary Immaculate. My greetings go to the lay helpers of the Congregation who, in many different ways, fulfill the charism of Father Papczynski; I greet all who are with us through radio and television. From the bottom of my heart I thank all who prepared this celebration with great effort and deep commitment.

With particular affection I greet my dear Marian confreres, both these who are present here as well as those who could not attend the ceremony. Faith in the Com-

munion of the Saints allows us to unite with our confreres who did not manage to see this day, but who now share with us from the joy of heaven. Today, more than at any time before, we feel united in great joy, thanksgiving and a desire to live our vocation with renewed enthusiasm and zeal. May the joy of this day bring the fruit of holiness into our lives, as well as a new zeal to proclaim the Gospel.

Father Stanislaus Papczynski lived over three centuries ago. We ask ourselves: why are we the ones who have received the grace of his Beatification, though so many generations waited for it to take place? If God planned to bring Father Papczynski to the Glory of the Altar now, it means that his figure is particularly timely for our age; that the Blessed has something important to tell us. The words of His Eminence strengthened us in this conviction. Let's receive Father Papczynski and his prophetic vision as God's gift for the Church, for Poland and for the world.

Very Rev. Jan M. Rokosz M.I.C.

**ADDRESS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MASS  
OF THANKSGIVING  
FOR THE GIFT OF THE BEATIFICATION  
OF THE CONGREGATION'S FOUNDER  
FATHER STANISLAUS PAPCZYNSKI  
ON THE 306<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH**

**Gora Kalwaria (Marianki), September 17, 2007**

*When his days were completed, exhausted by work for God and His Church, voluntary penances, emaciated by almost a month long high fever, at the end of the Great Jubilee, provided with all the sacraments, with frequent desires and yearning for leaving behind the world in order to be with Christ, in the presence of his brothers, with inexpressible, heartfelt sentiments of love and piety, that is in a prayerful sigh, embracing the Lord's Cross, after sunset on September 17<sup>th</sup> 1701, he peacefully gave his soul to God.*

While we are gathering on the day after the Beatification of Father Founder at his tomb, I could not leave out the description of his death, passed on by his first companions. As we are celebrating the Eucharist of Thanksgiving for the grace of Father Stanislaus Papczynski's being raised to the glory of the saints, we are gathered exactly in this place, on that same day and at almost that same hour 306 year ago, when our Blessed Father entered through death into the glory of Heaven. It is impossible not to notice in this, a sign of God's Providence which Father Papczynski entrusted to the future of the Congregation of the Marian Fathers. That Providence has led us through three centuries, and is with us at this special moment and place in the history of salvation, and will always accompany us.

With special joy, I greet all the guests from the Vatican, from the diverse dicasteries, first of all the Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, His Eminence, Cardinal Franc Rodé, who is representing His Holiness Benedict XVI. From the bottom of my heart I appreciate Your Eminence's acceptance of our invitation. The presence of Your Eminence

is for us an extraordinarily meaningful gift, a gift that gives us courage and obliges us to remain faithful to our charism and to persevere in our religious life.

I am very happy for the presence among us of this Archdiocese's Shepherd, Archbishop Kazimierz Nycz, as well as all the other Archbishops and Bishops present here today from the diverse dioceses in which the Marian Fathers work both in Poland and in the world. I greet the superiors of both male and female religious orders and congregations, especially welcoming the delegation of the Piarist Congregation with their Superior General. Through our Founder, we are united with that Community in a particular bond of brotherhood. A special welcome goes to all the residents of Marianki and Gora Kalwaria who have cared for the the tomb of Father Stanislaus with great concern and spread his memory. Even today, they are giving witness of their love toward our Blessed Father. I could not fail to mention the priests from Gora Kalwaria above all the Vicar General of the Marians, Fr. Marek Szczepaniak. Through the hands of the Mayor, Barbara Samborska, I offer my great appreciation to the city authorities for their hard work in preparing today's celebration. I send my warm regards to the lay cooperators and to the Congregation's benefactors. A welcome goes to all who are devoted to Father Stanislaus and who came from near and far.

With great joy, I welcome my fellow Marian confreres representing communities from around the world. We, the Marians, today more than ever before, are united in a prayer of thankfulness. Our faith in the communion of saints allows us to be spiritually united with our confreres that did not make it to this day, but who are celebrating this Eucharist today together with us. We embrace with gratitude, all those who dedicated a great deal of effort and gave their hearts towards carrying out the beatification process, throughout its 250 years. In the person of Fr. Jan Kosmowski, the Shrine's Director and Fr. Pawel Naumowicz Provincial Superior, I welcome all our confreres from Poland who take care of the tomb of Father Papczynski, as well as those who, together with all the lay people, prepared the celebrations yesterday and today.

For three centuries, the tomb of Father Papczynski has attracted numerous faithful because of the holiness of his life, faith in his intercession before God, and a desire to pray for his beatification. This longed for day has finally arrived. We are filled with joy and gratitude towards God and Mary Immaculate. Today we reverence Father Stanislaus as Blessed. Together with him, let us ask the God of all Good, for abundant fruits from the gift of this Beatification, which would grow in us and in the world. Together with Blessed Stanislaus and the Immaculate Virgin Mary, let us pray for the grace of holiness for each one of us to recognize and to receive the essence of Father Stanislaus's charism, for the growth of the Congregation of Marian Fathers, and for holy vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life. May the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception be our refuge and protection.

Reverend Wojciech Skóra, M.I.C.,  
Postulator General

## BIOGRAPHY OF FATHER STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI

### Rite of Beatification Licheń, September 16, 2007

The Venerable Servant of God, Stanislaus Papczyński was born on May 18, 1631 in Podegrodzie, in the Province of Sącz, in what was then the Diocese of Krakow. He died in Góra Kalwaria near Warsaw on September 17, 1701 in what was formerly the Diocese of Poznań.

His life gives an unusual witness of God's charity and wisdom, which he experienced many times, as he repeatedly mentioned during his long and difficult life. He discovered the love of God in a special way in Christ's suffering. He used to call himself a sinner and an unworthy servant, finding in Christ, his hope for salvation. He wrote, "*I regret from the bottom of my heart and I wish to repent of my sins for the love of God, which I completely immerse in the redemptive wounds of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*" (First Testament).

Experiencing God's love inflamed the Venerable Servant of God with a desire to lead a life of evangelical perfection and at the age of 23, he entered a monastery of the Piarist Order. As a priest and a religious, demonstrating a spirit of prayer and mortification, he personally achieved a profound union with God and led many persons to perfection. He dedicated his book, *The Mystical Temple of God*, to the common Christian vocation to holiness, specifically reminding the lay faithful of this truth.

Raised to venerate the Mother of God, Father Papczyński found in the mystery of Her Immaculate Conception what he felt to be the heart of Christianity: the Gift of Boundless Love to a human being, in the person of Jesus Christ, and given freely through the Trinity, accepted by Mary, as the first among believers, in unconditional love and obedience to God. He set his hopes for achieving the heavenly goods on the mystery, often crying out: *May the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception be our refuge and protection*. He saw the basics of the devotion

to the Immaculate Conception in the imitation of Mary's evangelical way of life, understood as cooperation with the Divine Grace granted by Christ.

Father Papczyński's fascination with the mystery of the Immaculate Conception originated the Congregation of Marian Fathers. He often repeated that the Holy Spirit inspired him to found the Congregation. After obtaining the legal exemption from simple vows of the Piarists on December 10, 1670, he started his work of founding this Marian Community. Despite many obstacles, and being full of an unwavering belief in the omnipotence of Divine Providence, he crowned his founder's vocation by obtaining the Papal Approval in 1699 for his Congregation under the Rule of the Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Three months before he died, he made Solemn Vows before the Papal Nuncio in Poland, and he received the vows from his spiritual sons. Before he died, he had entrusted the small Marian community to the care of, "*Jesus Christ and His Virgin Mother Mary [...] as its true and only Founders, Guides, Defenders and Patrons.*"

The Founder of the Marian Order earned himself the nickname "Father of the Poor." Among simple, spiritually neglected people, Father Stanislaus carried out his apostolic work with great dedication. He also consecrated his life to other corporal and spiritual works of mercy. In his ardent prayers, he pleaded for health and the grace of conversion. For these reasons, he was recognised as a saint during his lifetime.

Among the poor, he showed a special love for those who were dying and for those who had died on battlefields, because of epidemics and poverty. Father Papczyński's fervent love for the deceased came from God and was shaped during his mystical visions of Purgatory. He deeply believed that every human being was destined for glory. He was extremely devoted to this work of noble love, recommending it to his confreres in vocation, and encouraging the laity to carry it out as well. He wrote, "*Is there any greater charity than this shown to the deceased, from whom you do not expect any reward or gratitude or praise?*" (Mystical Temple of God).

In his Spiritual Testament, he wrote, "*On all those present, and on each of my future confreres and companions, I bestow the best foundation ever: The Most Gracious Divine Providence. I leave my picture to those curious, and a picture of my Lord, Jesus Christ, for them to follow.*"

Rev. Andrzej Pakuła, M.I.C.

## CONGREGATION OF THE MARIAN FATHERS. HISTORY AND SPIRITUALITY<sup>1</sup>

The Congregation of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (Congregatio Clericorum Marianorum ab Immaculata Conceptione BVM: MIC) is a clerical monastic congregation founded in 1673 in Poland by the Venerable Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary Papczyński. It was confirmed by Innocent XII on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1699 (breve “*Exponi nobis nuper*” on the Rule of Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as the last congregation in Poland of the clerics regular with the final vows. It was renovated and reformed by Blessed George Matulaitis-Matulewicz (d.1927) in 1909 – 10.

### History

The idea of the new Congregation was first presented by Stanisław Papczyński on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1670 after he had left the Piarist Order and obtained the indult to do so. He performed an act of Oblation, in which he offered himself to God and the Virgin Mary, and promised to observe the monastic vows in the Congregation of the Marian Fathers of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was convinced that the “Divine vision was engraved on his soul regarding the foundation of the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM”. He also vowed a “vow of blood”, to be ready to give his own life in defence of the truth of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM. His particular aim was, above all, to spread the cult of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM. A few years later, he further formulated the aims: prayers for the departed, particularly for those who died suddenly and without preparation, i.e. soldiers and victims of pestilence; furthermore, assisting priests in their pastoral work, especially among the “simple folk” and the religiously neglected.

Supported by Stefan Wierzbowski, Bishop of Poznań, Stanisław Papczyński settled in the Karski Estate in Lubocz, in Mazowsze (Mazuria). In 1671, he assumed the white habit in honor of the BVM. At the same time, he was working on

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<sup>1</sup> A shortened version of this article (regrettably with editorial errors) was published in: *Encyklopedia Katolicka* (Catholic Encyclopaedia), t. XI, Lublin 2007, kol. 1353-1355.

the Rule for the future Congregation. He called it the “*Norma vitae*”. To initiate his Institute, he went to a community of a handful of hermits living in Puszcza Korabiewska (today Puszcza Mariańska – Marian Forest) in 1673, where he placed before them his vision of the monastic life. The “Hermit Marians” received the approval of the Church on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1673 on the strength of a decree of Bishop Stanisław Świącicki during his visitation of the Warsaw Archdiocese in the Poznań Diocese. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1677, Stefan Wierzbowski, the Bishop Ordinary of Poznań transferred the Church of the Lord’s Cenacle in New Jerusalem, (today Góra Kalwaria), to the Marians, and on 21st April 1679, he canonically consecrated The Marian Order in the Poznań Diocese.

The first legal acknowledgement of the Holy See, together with the granting of various favors which the Marians received, came on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1681 in Pope Innocent XI’s “breve”, “*Cum sicut accepimus*”. Papal approbation was obtained in 1699, however the Marians could not receive permission to take solemn vows, without the acceptance of the monastic rule, and they could not remain within the Constitutions of the “*Norma vitae*”, as formulated by Fr. Stanisław Papczyński, though originally, they expected to obtain this confirmation (*constitutiones pro regula*). They had to accept one of the rules approved by the Holy See. They chose the “Rule of Ten Virtues” of the BVM. It was formulated by the Bl. Gilbert Nicolas (d.1532) under the direct guidance of St. Joan de Valois, and observed then by the Order of the Virgin Mary (OVM) which she founded, commonly called the “Annunciades”. Because this rule was in the jurisdiction of the Order, its choice meant that the Marians aggregated with it. Fr. Papczyński, however, anxious for the safe and stable growth of the new Order, had earlier, in 1691 asked the Franciscan Observants to take the Community under their jurisdiction to which they had consented in the same year.

After obtaining from the Franciscan Observants their permission to take the final vows on the “Rule of Ten Virtues” on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1699, the Marian Order was legally confirmed by Innocent XII on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1699. He also instructed his Nuncio in Warsaw to receive their vows. The Order then numbered about 20 members in three monasteries (the third was founded in Goźlin on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1699). The Marian attire consisted of a white habit in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM, under which, a white scapular was worn with the embroidered or embossed picture of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, decorated in blue, and at the waist a “decymka” or ten black beads of the rosary, symbolizing the ten evangelical virtues of the BVM.

Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński was Superior General till his death (17<sup>th</sup> September 1701). His vicar, then assistant, Fr. Joachim Kozłowski (d. 1730), was appointed and confirmed as such by the Founder himself during his lifetime.

In 1710, the Marians took over another foundation in Skórzec near Siedlce, but soon afterwards their growth met obstacles. As a result of inner tensions

among the young community and a general shortage of priests, Bishop Adam Rostkowski, acting on behalf of the Bishop of Poznań, Szembek, closed the novitiate around 1716, and ordered the Marians to leave the monasteries and engage in pastoral work in the parishes. The crisis was also aggravated because, although the Holy See had recognized the Marian Order after 1699, its Constitutions had not yet been confirmed. When the so called “Rostkowski Crisis “was over in 1722, Fr. Kozłowski went to Rome, where in 1723 he received Papal confirmation of the Order from Innocent XIII, together with his approval of the Constitution, formulated on the “*Norma vitae*”, and adjusted to the “Rule of Ten Virtutes of the BVM”.

The new recognition of the Order gave rise to its gradual growth. The period from 1725 – 50 was marked by the outstanding personality of the Venerable Servant of God Casimir Wyszyński (d.1755), who held many functions, among them, two terms as Superior General (1731 – 41, 1747 – 50). He initiated and directed the continued spiritual renovation of the Order, placing particular emphasis on faithfulness to the spirit of the Founder and the emulation of the Ten Virtutes of the BVM. He also started preparations for the Beatification of Fr. Papczyński. The Order experienced true growth during his office with a number of new foundations: in the Duchy of Lithuania : in Raśno and in Mariampol (1749); in Volhynia in Berezdov (1750); in Portugal in Balsamao (1745), where Fr. Wyszyński spent the last few months of his life, and died in the opinion of sanctity.

The Order continued to grow in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, so in time it became an international community. Two new monasteries were opened in Portugal; also in the former Polish Commonwealth (today Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and the Ukraine), and in 1779, the Marians settled in Italy, where in Rome they acquired a monastery and St. Vitus’s Church from the Cistercians. A noticeable growth of the Order followed, under Fr. Raymond Nowicki, Superior General (1776 – 88): there were 147 members in 13 monasteries. On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1786 Pope Pius VI granted the Marians independence from the Franciscan Observants, and on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1787, the successive confirmation of the Rule and the Constitutions, adjusted to their new legal status. During this period, at the Bishops’ request, the Marians intensified their activity, by preaching parish missions, engaging in charitable works (hospitals for the poor), and starting parish schools situated near the monasteries. Their parishes often became the centres of new parishes.

The end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century brought a period of decline for the Marians, caused by adversities and the political situation, together with persecutions by governments who were hostile to the Church. St. Vitus’s Monastery in Rome was the first to be closed down by Napoleon’s authorities in 1798. Three monasteries in Portugal were suppressed by the government in 1834. From the beginning of the

19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Order was losing members and monasteries in the Polish territories following the partitions.<sup>1</sup>

The territorial changes in Poland together with the ruthless political isolation of the occupants led to the creation of new administrative and ecclesiastical structures within the Marian Order, depending on the location of the monasteries. Thus, there emerged the Russian and Prussian Provinces in 1797. The Marians whose monasteries were under the Austrian occupation (till 1809), did not establish a provincial structure, probably because the Order's General House was already there (in Skórzec). Difficulties intensified even more, after the creation of the Kingdom of Poland, and particularly after the Insurrection against Russia in 1830.

This contributed to a decrease in the number of members. In 1835, there were by that time, only 63 religious in seven monasteries. In like manner in 1860, 71 religious in eight houses were spoken of. Further, after the repression of the Insurrection of 1863, the following year saw a gradual confiscation of all of the religious institutions in the Kingdom of Poland under Czar Alexander II. The results were disastrous for the Marians: the majority of their houses were closed down, and consequently this led to the almost complete annihilation of the Order. Between 1864 – 66, seven Marian monasteries were suppressed, eleven members were exiled to Siberia, among them, Fr. Christopher Szwernicki (d.1884), the missionary of Irkutsk and Siberia. The Churches which had previously belonging to the Marian Order were permitted to have only one priest each, to serve the community, all other priests were removed by force to the last monastery in Mariampol in Lithuania.

Here, subjected to a rigorous police control, living in prison-like, cramped quarters, it was not surprising that many Marians decided to leave the Mariampol Monastery, and to move to various dioceses to be able to continue their pastoral work there.

The remaining Marians were gradually dying out; because it was not possible to accept novices, their numbers dramatically decreased. In 1865 there were 40 of them left, in 1897 only three, and in 1908 there was only one Marian with full canonical rights – Fr. Vincent Senkus, previously chosen as Superior General.

To save the Order from extinction, it was necessary to transform it into a secret institute. This proposition was put forward in 1908 to Fr. Vincent Sękowski by a former student of the Marians in Mariampol, the Blessed George Matulaitis – Matulewicz, professor of the Catholic Academy in Petersburg. Having accepted his consent, Fr. Matulaitis - Matulewicz went to Rome in the summer 1909, with

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<sup>1</sup> There were 3 partitions of Poland between 1764 and 1795 which resulted in the end of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

the full jurisdiction received from Fr. Senkus, and petitioned the Holy See for permission to change the Marian white habits for a plain cassock worn by the diocesan clergy, and a suit which the laity would wear, for the religious brothers. At the same time, he submitted his request to open a secret novitiate in St. Petersburg. It was also necessary to adjust the Marian Constitutions “*Statua*” to the new situation in which the Community found itself, and to the “*Norma*” which the Apostolic See published in 1901. Finally, for fear of the extinction of the Order, in case of the unexpected death of Fr. Senkus, another request was made to the Holy See to permit Fr. Matulaitis – Matulewicz to take his religious vows without delay and to make the necessary preparations in the novitiate.

Having received favorable answers, Fr. Matulaitis – Matulewicz took his religious vows on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1909, and his friend, Fr. Francis Bucys (d.1951) began his canonical novitiate. This day is regarded as the date of the Renovation of the Marian Order. The renovation and reformation were canonically confirmed on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1910, on the day when Pius X approved the considerably changed Marian Constitutions:

- the final vows were changed to simple vows;
- instead of the daily Office for the Dead, the Marians had the duty of a special service for souls in purgatory (without a definition of its precise form);
- apostolic activity was extended to comprise any apostolic means;
- the monastic habit was replaced by the dress of the diocesan clergy.

The then Superior General, Fr. Senkus died on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1911, having led the renovated Order for 19 months and 12 days. At his death the Marian community had two professed, and, when Fr. J. Totoraitis (d.1914) completed his novitiate the same year as third professed, Fr. Matulaitis – Matulewicz was elected the new Superior General (14<sup>th</sup> July 1911).

The growth of the Renovated Congregation of Marians was progressing dynamically. The number of candidates was steadily increasing, initially mostly Lithuanian and Polish. To ensure the necessary religious formation, Fr. Matulaitis – Matulewicz with the approval of the Apostolic See opened a religious house and novitiate in Fribourg in Switzerland in 1911. In the same year, 10 novices started the novitiate: 7 priests, one seminarian and two lay men. However, this house was closed down in 1919 because, as a result of political changes, it was now possible to organize the religious life in Poland and in Lithuania. Beside, large numbers of candidates called for the opening of more novitiates.

The first openly functioning religious house in the USA was started in Chicago in 1913. A year earlier, the Marians started working in Warsaw, and in Bielany, where in 1915, Fr. Matulaitis – Matulewicz founded a religious house and a grammar school. In 1918, the Marian Monastery in Mariampol was reactivated as the main center for the Lithuanian Community. That year, the Marians numbered 57

religious in three houses, of which, more than half of the members were in Poland. After his nomination as Bishop of Vilnius in 1918, Fr. Matulaitis – Matulewicz remained Superior General till his death. Before that, he appointed vicars general for the individual countries. In his report to the Apostolic See in 1923 on the state of the Congregation, Fr. Matulaitis – Matulewicz wrote that there were 94 religious in all, 48 residing in Poland, 31 in Lithuania and 15 in the USA. The same year, the Marians took over a former Bernardine Church and Monastery in Druja, with an aim to undertake work among the Belorussians. A year later they opened a monastery in Vilani in Latvia for pastoral work in this country. In 1925 the General Curia was moved from Mariampol to Rome where an international college was opened for Marian students.

In 1928 the Marians undertook the running of a Mission in the Byzantine- Slav Rite for Russians in Harbin in Manchuria. They set up a religious house there with Archimandrite Fabian Abrantowicz (d. 1946) as its Superior. The foundation and its schools were forcibly closed in 1948. The Marians, present in the monastery at that time were arrested and deported to Soviet labor camps where some of them died a martyr's death. The others, after regaining freedom, went to other countries where they served in the Eastern Rite in Great Britain, the USA and Australia. In 2003 the beatification process began for the Servants of God, Fabian Abrantowicz and Andrzej Cikota (d. 1952), both Superiors of the Mission, were martyred by the Communist regime.

The new Constitutions were approved in 1930 and at the same time, three new provinces were established: The American Province in the USA, Divine Providence in Poland, and St. George's in Lithuania. The Congregation then numbered 319 religious in 17 houses.

In 1939 the first Marian house was founded in Argentina. At first, the activity concentrated on pastoral care for Lithuanian emigrants. In time, it extended to new pastoral challenges among the Argentinians, like the running of parishes and catholic schools. In 1987, the Argentinian Vicariate of the BVM of Lujan was established under the jurisdiction of the St. Casimir's Province.

In 1940 the Latvian Province of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus was established. In 1948 a second USA Province of St. Stanislaus Kostka came into being. The first Province came to be called The Province of St. Casimir. While the Province of St. Casimir's principal activity was running parishes, publishing and education, the new Province concentrated mainly on the propagation of the message of the Divine Mercy. This led to the establishing of the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Stockbridge and the association of the faithful in the framework of the Marian Helpers Association, the Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy and the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception.

In 1954 the Monastery in Balsamao was recovered. It was followed by the setting up of successive religious houses (Fatima, Lisbon) from which pastoral work

in parishes extended to service in the Marian Sanctuary (Balsamao), the creation of the Divine Mercy Apostolate and the foundation of the retreat and recreational centers. In 1993 the Vicariate Province of Portugal was established, and in 2005 it re-formed into a General Vicariate.

In 1950, the first Marian religious house in Great Britain was set up for the pastoral care of Polish emigrants. It was followed by successive centers, among them Ealing in London, with various forms of apostolate, including the periodic running of the educational and cultural institution in Fawley Court. In 1970 the Province of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy was established in Great Britain, and in 2002 re-formed into a Delegacy of the Province of Poland.

1951 saw the start of the Marian pastoral work in Australia for the Russians of the Byzantine-Slav Rite, and for the Lithuanians in 1962.

1951 marked the beginning of Marian missionary work in Brazil, initially in the north. After a short time, it was felt that conditions in the tropical climate was too difficult so the mission was moved further south, to the interior (the State of Parana), and in the city parishes (Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba). With time, it extended into extra-parochial activity covering the Marian Helpers Association, the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy, a hospital for the poor and the lower and higher seminaries. In 1998 the Brazilian Province of Divine Mercy was established.

The first parish in Germany which the Marians took over in 1968 was in the Augsburg Diocese, then, at the Bishops' requests more centers came under their care. This led to the formation of the German Delegacy in 1994.

During WWII and under the Soviet occupation, the Marians suffered considerable personal losses, particularly in the Eastern territories where many of them died a martyr's death, like Fr. Antoni Leszczewicz (d.1943) and Fr. Jerzy Kaszyra (d.1943). Both were beatified in 1999. In 2003, the beatification process of the Servant of God Janis Mendriks (d.1953) was initiated.

The breaking up of the Soviet Union brought about the regeneration of the Marians in Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus and the Ukraine. There, the Congregation survived clandestinely and suffered great losses. Now, coming out of hiding, they have been organizing old, or initiating new forms of apostolic work.

In Lithuania, besides the work in parishes (among others in Vilnius), the Marians serve in the Sanctuary of Bl. G. Matulaitis-Matulewicz in Mariampol. After regaining independence, they founded a catholic secondary school in Mariampol and Marian Helpers Association (Kaunas). Because of the heavy personal losses under Soviet rule, it was necessary to re-organize the Province and establish a Vicariate.

Similarly, in Latvia, the Congregation did not give up the running of parishes (among others in Daugavpils, Rezekne, Vilani); it got back its pre-war printing press, resumed publication of catholic materials, and set up the Marian Helpers' Association.

The Marians first arrived in Africa in 1984, when they were invited to spread the cult of Mary in the Diocese of Ruhengeri in Rwanda. Initially, they concentrated on parish work. In 2004, they began to serve the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Word in Kibeho (the Gikongoro Diocese), where they opened the Center of Marian Formation. Their activity spread to Cameroon, to the Diocese Doume Bong-Mbang in 1999. After three years there, they took over the Parish of Atok where they set up the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy.

In the Ukraine, the Vicariate of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was opened in 1990. Its work, apart from pastoral care in parishes, (among others in Kharkov, Chmielnicki, Sevastopol, Górdék Podolski and Czerniowce), comprises the material rebuilding of churches, the publication of books and periodicals, and charitable works.

In 1999, in response to the shortage of priests in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic, the Marians set up the first religious house in Drietom (Slovakia), then in Brumov-Bylnica in the Czech Republic in 1993. Pastoral activity in these countries concentrated mostly on parish work, (among other places, in Prague), with some extra-parochial concerns, like serving in the Marian Sanctuary, (Hradek near Prague), and running individual, group and parish retreats. In 1994, the Czech – Slovak Vicariate of SS Cyril and Methodius was set up.

In 1993, the Belorussian Delegacy was established. Its activity was concerned at first with the reconstruction and building of Centers of Worship. With time, it extended to the running of parishes, (among them in Borisov, Druja, Minsk, and Orsha), retreat centers and the Sanctuary of the Marian Martyrs in Rosica.

In 1992, the Marians opened the first mission center in Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan).

In the Polish Province, along with the running of parishes, the Marians' pastoral concerns assumed multiple forms of extra-parochial activities like serving the Marian Sanctuaries (Licheń, Stoczek Warmiński) and associating Centers of Marian Formation to them, publishing, research and specialized activities connected with managing a hospice for the dying (Warsaw), family and addiction counseling (Licheń, Warsaw), retreat houses, the Marian Helpers Association, and the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM.

Changes which the Congregation experienced in the USA led to the merger of two American provinces and the establishing one Province of The BVM Mother of Mercy in 2006.

At the beginning of 2007, the Marians totalled 491 members – of whom, more than a half were Poles, in 50 religious houses in 18 countries.

## The Spirituality of the Marians

The spirituality of the Marians was shaped by the religious and social situation in Poland in the 17th century, and partly as a reaction to it. The positive influence of the Marian movement with its related ideas of Marian servitude, the Immaculate Conception privilege, and the Christological trend with the accent on the Passion, stood in contrast with the negative effects of the continuous wars of that period, social processes (progressive immorality of social life, drunkenness, the question of the *'liberum veto'*, neglect in the pastoral care of 'the simple folk')- all this brought about the concept of a new religious community, as initiated by Fr. S. Papczyński in 1670. Discerning the signs of the times, he collected and organized in full, the fundamental ideas of his "*Norma vitae*" which he based on the Scriptures and modelled on St. Augustine's *'Norma vitae'* ("*Reguła życia*", Lublin – Warszawa 1996), and presented them in the form of religious statutes. In these, he separated in a special manner the Chapter "*De charitate*" (O miłości"), recognizing God's love as the essence and fundamental means of achieving the goals of spiritual love, embracing all aspects of Marian love ('omnia apud vos in charitate fiant, NV, II 1.). Fr. Papczyński, in his capacity as the religious law-giver, and in his writings comprised the fundamental dimensions of Marian spirituality:

- Trinitarian - with a strong accent on imitation ('sequela') and on the near and loving presence of Christ – God-Man, suffering for the sinner and for his salvation, and also for man becoming like Him (Orator crucifixus, Krakov 1670, Christus patiens Warszawa 1690);

- Marian/Rooted in the Immaculate Conception - placing Mary's Immaculate Conception –*Bogurodzica* , (Deipara, Dei Mater ) as a singular Patroness and the life example for the Marians (imitatio Mariae). Her veneration should be propagated as the particular aim of the new community '*Norma vitae*' (Warszawa 1687).

- Eschatological - referring to the prayers for the dead victims of wars, pestilence and for those unprepared for death, and related to it, the constant memory of the last things;

- Apostolic - commanding instruction of the 'simple folk' and the religiously neglected in the truths of faith, their formation, and leading to the evangelical sanctity (*Templum Dei mysticum*, Krakov 1675 in which Fr. Papczyński expounded the comprehensive concept of sanctity of the lay people). This religious law-giver of the Congregation of Marians deepened the elements of spirituality also in his other writings, especially in his manuscript *Inspectio cordis* (critical edition, Roma 2000, in which he presented meditations for Sundays, feasts, weekdays and for other various themes. In his *Prodromus reginae artium*, (Warsaw, 1663) he also included Marian homilies alongside a criticism of inequality and social

degeneration. The acceptance of *Regula decem placitorum* (the Rule of Ten Virtues of the BVM), (Reguła dziesięciu cnót NMP, Lublin 1984) based on excerpts from the Gospel depicting Mary's life in the form of her virtues and predilections, (virtute/beneplacita), with the aim to emulate, strengthened the ecclesiotypical dimensions of Marian spirituality, and the conviction of the evangelical sources of this concept.

Marian spirituality was explored and theologically defined by the Founder's successors and disciples in two directions: the justification of the emulation of the BVM, and the strengthening of the Marians' spiritual dimension by setting it in a wider Christological and ecclesial context. The representative of the former is, above all, the Servant of God, Casimir Wyszyński and his *Gwiazda zaranna* of 1749, where in *Wstęp*, he thus justifies the emulation of Mary: "The one who is bound with Mary should imitate her virtues, and follow the path which she trod behind Christ. He left us the first and most perfect example of how to emulate His life in Mary – his dearest Mother." The author is trying to demonstrate the continuity of this idea, recalling constantly in his preaching and activity, the person of the Founder, and in his biography of Fr. Papczyński, he brings out the Marian character of the idea.

The latter exponent of the trend was represented by Bl. G. Matulaitis-Matulewicz. Through the reform of the Marian Order, and in his works, among others in *Konstytucje Zgromadzenia Księży Marianów* (Krakow 1933)(Constitutions of the Congregation of Marian Fathers), *Dziennik Duchowy* (Warsaw 1988)(Spiritual Diary), *Idea Przewodnia i duch Zgromadzenia* (Warsaw 1988)(The Leading Idea and Spirit of the Congregation), appropriate to his contemporary times. He stressed the universality of the Church and of the Congregation, and joined the Marian life-style with the idea of the universal apostleship, in the image of St. Paul the Apostle, in a harmonious manner. Instead of instructing 'the simple folk' in a simple manner, he introduced: any manner, inspired by devotion, to redeem and sanctify souls, emphasizing, "acquiring and spreading knowledge and instructing others, including the apostlate in the Eastern rite, and among the non-Catholics, especially 'where the need is the greatest'. He expressed the fundamental elements of Marian spirituality in a new way. He says in his 'Leading Idea': "The command of the Congregation resounds: 'For Christ and the Church!' Therefore let the Confraternity desiring to absorb the spirit of Christ and the Church try to seek God in everything, to please God in everything, do good in all, for the greater glory of God, to bring God into everything, so that He truly becomes the center of life for both the entire Congregation and the individual members (...) Thus, may Christ be the commander and the example, for both the entire Congregation, and its individual members, and may the Blessed Virgin Mary, our chosen Patroness, show us the way and help us: to live together and die together, to work together

and suffer together, to reign with Christ together.” The interpretation of spirituality defined by Fr. Matulewicz became the point of reference for the Marians in the last century. It also found its reflection in the latest Constitutions taking into account, the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council.

It has recently been observed, that the development of theological reflection on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception as the fruit of Divine Mercy, proceeded in conjunction with pastoral activities, as was the interpretation of the charism in the context of apostleship. It resulted in the undertaking of new initiatives regarding drug users, the dying (hospices), the Marian formation, the Divine Mercy Apostleship in the aspect of instruction and practice.

The renewed perception in the Marian spirituality of sharing the charism with laity – which was present from the beginning - that through its intervention “all who are still going on their earthly pilgrimage, and also those who, after this life are undergoing cleansing, may reach with all the saints the fullness of maturity and the eternal happiness with Christ” (see Constitutions). This bore the fruit of setting up the Marian Helpers Association. It gathers men and women forming a formal association with the Congregation, participating in many ways in Marian Spirituality, mission and the apostolate. Their number exceeds one million members in the whole world. The Association also comprises other forms like ‘*vir aggregatus*’, the Confraternity of the BVM and the Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy. Beside that, the apostolic dimension of the spirituality, also embraces running parishes and Marian Shrines (among others in Poland, Portugal, Rwanda,), Divine Mercy Apostolates, (Brazil, Cameroon, Great Britain, USA), publishing activity, (Lithuania, Poland, USA), running Catholic schools, (USA, Argentine, Lithuania), and teaching and research work in university centers.