

**Lest You Remain without Work
in the Vineyard of the Lord**

LEST YOU REMAIN WITHOUT WORK IN THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD...

Proceedings of the Committee in Charge of Preparations
of the Congregation of Marian Fathers for the Beatification of
the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński

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Church of Our Lord's Cenacle in Góra Kalwaria, Poland:
The 17th century Sarcophagus, designed by Jakub Fontana, which contains
the remains of Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński,
and a 2003 bas-relief by Witold Czopowik
which presents the Blessed Virgin Mary, Father Founder, and the Marians.

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PART I

PREPARATIONS FOR THE BEATIFICATION

INTRODUCTION

“In the first place, there is the need for *fidelity to the founding charism* and subsequent spiritual heritage of each Institute. It is precisely in this fidelity to the inspiration of the founders and foundresses, an inspiration which is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit, that the essential elements of the consecrated life can be more readily discerned and more fervently put into practice” (John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, 36).

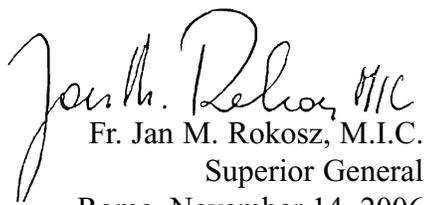
While making visits to our religious houses, I became convinced of the necessity for the Marianists to get to know more profoundly the person and writings of our Founder, the Servant of God Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński. That would consequently involve the expanding of our knowledge of the Founder’s original charism and legacy left to us, his spiritual sons. Many of the confreres who have come to know more closely the life and writings of Father Founder shared with me their fascination of his manner of faith and spiritual riches, which they discovered in his works. In view of the above, and—as we all hope for—Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński’s approaching beatification, urged the General Government to make additional efforts in promoting a deeper knowledge of the person and legacy of our Founder, which he left to his religious community.

Thus, hoping for a prompt beatification of our Founder, as well as responding to the need for a comprehensive learning and falling in love with our Marian religious spirituality, I give you, Dear Confreres, this book in English, Spanish, Polish, and Portuguese. Parts of it will be also available in Lithuanian and Italian. This book is the fruit of the works of the Committee preparing the Congregation of the Marian Fathers for the beatification of our Founder. I established this Committee on October 7, 2005. The publication of this book is meant to assist, but not exclusively, individual prayers, meditations, and spiritual reading. It also contains materials for monthly communal days of recollection and the vigils for the entire year.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book to you, Dear Confreres. May you benefit from its assistance! I particularly ask every Marian community to hold regular the days of recollection in the manner proposed by the Committee. Starting in January of 2007, each day of the month, designated communities worldwide will hold a day of recollection in spiritual unity with each other. If the designated day is not acceptable for the community for some reason, please hold it on another day, following, however, the meditations prescribed for the particular month. I also strongly recommend that you daily read “Father Stanislaus Papczyński’s selected thoughts on religious life” before lunch or supper as your regular reading, as per each house’s custom.

I offer my warmest gratitude to Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, the Committee's Chairman, and to everyone who worked at his side on preparation of this book. I also thank the Association of Marian Helpers both in the U.S. and Poland for printing of this work.

I trust that this book will contribute to our personal sanctification and that it will become a useful instrument for the strengthening our religious and Marian identity in a more sacrificial service for Christ and the Church, to which also—by its essence—the beatification of our Founder contributes.


Fr. Jan M. Rokosz, M.I.C.
Superior General
Rome, November 14, 2006

Rome, October 7, 2005
Prot. No. 207/05

DECREE

When the Church elevates a person to the glory of the altars, one that is deemed to be holy, she gives us a concrete example of Christian life. The beatification of our Founder fulfills a special role and it ought to motivate all confreres to renew their lives and to deepen the charisma left us by our Founder.

The progress made in the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński's beatification process gives us hope for his prompt beatification. In order that this important event, so long awaited by us, would be worthily and fruitfully accepted by us, a more thorough preparation of our entire community is needed. To this end

**I hereby convoke a Committee
to prepare the Congregation of Marians for the beatification of our Founder,
the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński, comprising:**

on behalf of the General Government:

FR. ANDRZEJ PAKUŁA, MIC—Chairman

FR. WOJCIECH SKÓRA, MIC—Deputy Chairman

FR. PIOTR FEDOROWICZ, MIC—General Treasurer

on behalf of the B.V.M., Mother of God Province:

Fr. John Larson, MIC

Br. Roberto Bigolin, MIC

on behalf of the Divine Providence Province:

Fr. Kazimierz Pek, MIC

Fr. Dariusz Mażewski, MIC

on behalf of St. George Province:

Br. Linas Šipavičius, MIC

on behalf of St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus Province:

Fr. Andris Ševels, MIC

on behalf of the Divine Mercy Province:

Fr. Mateusz Jastrzębki, MIC

on behalf of the Vicariate of the M.B.V.M in Portugal:

Br. João Carlos Rodrigues, MIC

on behalf of the Vicariate of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Ukraine:

Br. Nickolai Byelichev, MIC

on behalf of the Association of Marian Helpers:

Br. Andrzej Mączyński, MIC.

The goal of the Committee is:

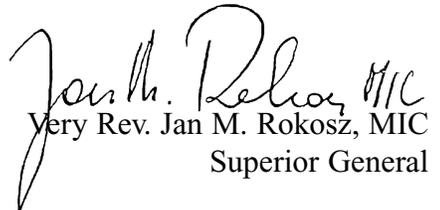
◆ To devise a program of preparing the Congregation and the faithful entrusted to its pastoral care for the impending beatification of the Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński and for living out the post-beatification year. The program shall be presented to the General Government for approval.

◆ To prepare informative and formative materials proclaiming the person and cult of the Founder of the Congregation of Marians, which can be adapted by each of our Provinces and Vicariates for implementation in their circumstances.

◆ To prepare beatification and post-beatification celebrations.

◆ To gather documentation pertaining to preparations of and actual beatification's itself.

I will personally support with my daily prayer and blessing the Committee's works and I commend them to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, hoping that the beatification of our Founder contribute to the spiritual renewal of every single Marian and the entire Congregation.


Very Rev. Jan M. Rokosz, MIC
Superior General


Fr. Zbigniew Piłat, MIC
Secretary General

CC: Each Committee member
Province and Vicariate Superiors

PREPARATIONS FOR FR. STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI'S BEATIFICATION PROGRAM OF PREPARATIONS

Introduction

The beatification of our Founder ought to become for all members of our Congregation a special time for renewal of their religious life, and specifically of the charism of the order that Fr. Papczyński founded. When the Church beatifies a person, she makes him/her a model of the Christian life for us. And this person becomes all the more a role model for all those who entered the same “way of life” that was initiated by the new Blessed, through founding this religious community. Naturally, the renewal ought to have both personal and communal aspects.

Thus, all our efforts in preparation for the beatification, as well as during the post-beatification year, ought to be directed towards the revival of our faith through the action of the Holy Spirit, as Fr. Papczyński experienced in his time. Furthermore, our priority is to get all the Marians interested in Fr. Papczyński's spirituality and in the charism of his Congregation, as seen by Fr. Papczyński. After all, it is the charism of every one of us. We shall also try to define what Fr. Founder's beatification means to us today, communally and individually. Because we are the Marians, thus we are Fr. Papczyński's spiritual sons. His beatification becomes a personal matter for each of us. In a broad sense, our actions ought to contribute above all to the renewal of our personal charisms and of our entire religious community. A renewed and more profound reflection on the charism that Fr. Papczyński lived out, and which he wanted the Congregation that he has founded to live by, would be greatly desirable for the entire Congregation.

Next we need to take actions directed at making Fr. Papczyński and his legacy more well known among other people, starting with those who are participating in our charism and mission: Associations of the lay faithful (AMH, EADM, and the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception), as well as groups of the lay faithful embraced by our ministry (parishes, shrines, church groups). Properly prepared materials will allow for a wide-spread promotion and popularization of our Founder's personality and spirituality among members of the Catholic Church, because we all realize that he was a convincing witness of faith and the power of God's grace, which is greater than the sins of this world.

I. PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

The proposed program is the fruit of the work of the Committee in charge of preparing the Congregation of Marians for the beatification of the Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński, convoked by the Superior General's Decree of October 7, 2005, Prot. No. 207/05. This program received the General Government's approval during the General Council session on September 1, 2006.

The Committee prepares the draft of the preparations program for the impending beatification and post-beatification year; generates standard documents, which shall be adapted for each Province/Vicariate; and coordinates efforts of the provincial committees. All materials will be published and freely available on Web at: www.stanislawpapczynski.org Except for the initiatives, approved and recorded in this program, each Province/Vicariate shall make their own decisions regarding the usage of proposed materials.

The Superiors of the Congregation's administrative entities shall convoke appropriate Committees in their entities. Their goal would be to prepare a program of preparations for the beatification and the post-beatification year. They will translate documents into their national language; see to the completion of the actions determined by the All-Congregational program and by their own specific program in their Provinces.

Financing principle: the General Government shall absorb all costs incurred in Rome of the beatification process and post-beatification year events, as well as costs incurred through the preparation of documents for the entire Congregation. Provinces/Vicariates will pay the expenses related to preparing their own programs and their following implementation within their jurisdiction, and that includes publications in national languages.

Individuals who took upon themselves the completion of a project pertaining to the beatification, shall present their proposals for the Committee's approval. The Committee will present the project's final version for the General Government's approval.

II. WAYS OF PRESENTING FR. STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI'S LIFE AND WORK

The Committee believes that for the sake of comprehensibility and clarity of communicated matters, it is necessary to radically emphasize the most characteristic features of his personality. Naturally, for pastoral purposes, these features may

be deepened, developed, and illustrated by examples, etc. The main features of Fr. Founder's personality and activity will be presented in booklets, which may be used for sermons, conferences, or personal meditations. The Committee proposes the following topics:

Father Founder—a Zealous, Faithful Religious, Deeply Devoted to the Consecrated Life, prepared by Fr. T. Rogalewski;

Promoter of the New Life in Christ, prepared by Fr. D. Mażewski;

Venerator and Imitator of Mary Immaculate, prepared by Fr. K. Pek;

Advocate of the Faithful Departed, prepared by Fr. A. Skwierczyński;

Apostle of Sobriety, prepared by Fr. Z. Proczek;

Man of Great Social Awareness, prepared by Fr. J. Kosmowski;

Promoter of the Holiness of the Laity, prepared by Fr. R. Drabik.

The Committee believes that new publications, prepared by these guidelines, may appear in the future.

The booklet appearance:

1. Format A6;
2. Length of work—approx. 18,000 characters;
3. Each booklet shall contain:
 - a) Calendar of Fr. Papczyński's life, prepared by Fr. W. Skóra;
 - b) brief article popularizing the timeliness of Fr. Papczyński in today's world from the point of view of the topic featured by the booklet; no footnotes;
 - c) selected document (i.e., Decree on heroic virtues, excerpts from Fr. Papczyński's writings pertaining to the featured topic, selected by Fr. A. Pakuła;
4. Each booklet will appear on-line and will be published in print by each Province for its own needs;
5. Deadline—end of September 2006;
6. We encourage all confreres to submit proposals of new topics.

III. ACTIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION:

A. Individual and communal preparations for the beatification:

After the Cardinals and Bishops in the Ordinary Session of the Congregation for the Saints would make the positive decision, we shall start an intensive spiritual preparation for the beatification. All confreres shall receive a booklet containing:

1. Introductory Letter of the Superior General;
2. Decree convoking the Committee in charge of preparing the Congregation of Marians for the beatification of our Founder, the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński;
3. Program for Days of Recollection;
4. Program of Preparations for the Beatification;
5. Fr. Founder's Biography
6. Calendar of the Life of the Marian Founder
7. Decree proclaiming the heroic virtues
8. Fr. Founder's Selected Writings about the Religious Life
9. Selected articles about Fr. Papczyński.

The plan for the days of recollection is prepared in such a way that every day one Marian community prays for a good preparation and experience of the impending (as we all hope) beatification of our Founder. We designated days of the month to every community in such a way so that there would be a continuance of prayerful vigil. The Committee is convinced that it will help the entire Congregation, as well as its individual members in their successful preparation for receiving and experiencing the grace of our Founder's beatification.

B. Post-beatification period

Acting on the conviction that the grace of beatification is an opportunity granted to our Congregation to renew the charism of our religious life and to ascertain the holiness of the road, which our Founder trod and which we, his spiritual sons, also follow, the Committee proposes to undertake the work of the spiritual renewal of the Marians and faithfulness to their charism, to which extent the following may be applied:

1. Annual retreats specifically oriented towards Fr. Papczyński's spirituality and renewing the Charism. The task of preparing such retreats will be assigned by the Provincial Superior.

2. Quinquennalia (conducted in view of the same goal and on the same basis as the Days of Recollection). In the post-beatification period, Major Superiors may organize Days of Recollection for a larger number of confreres, while giving a chance for confreres from other Provinces to also participate.

3. For the Days of Recollection in the post-beatification year, conferences in the spirit of Fr. Papczyński's spirituality shall be prepared in writing for the entire year. The duty of House Superiors would be to make sure that Days of Recollections are held regularly and accordingly to the assigned topic and method, as required by our Constitutions. The conferences will be prepared by Fr. Michał Kozak.

4. Immediately after the beatification, the translation of all of Fr. Papczyński's writing in Polish shall appear in print. This translation is already being prepared. Other Provinces also started the work of translations, and some of Fr. Papczyński's writing are already published. Translations into Polish are supervised by Fr. A. Pakuła; into English—by Br. Andrew Mączyński; into Portuguese—by Fr. M. Jastrzębski. Other Provinces shall make their own decision regarding the translation work.

5. A book containing the selection of Fr. Papczyński's texts/thoughts for daily meditation is being prepared. Father J. Kumala undertook the task of making the selections and editing the meditations.

6. As an act of thanksgiving to God for our Founder's Beatification, each Religious House community and each Province (Vicariate) shall perform a work of mercy of a practical, not only a pious nature. This may take the form of a gift/actions *ad extra* (i.e., support for an orphanage, a school, etc.) or *ad intra* (support for our missions, formation, or a gift for the Marian Solidarity Fund). The decision in this case belongs respectively to the Superior General, Provincials, and House Superiors. The Committee strongly encourages the undertaking of such a work of mercy, which is usually performed by nearly each religious community on the beatification of their founders.

7. After the Beatification, authorized superiors will proclaim a ***Post-Beatification Year***, which will comprise celebrations in all of the Congregation (the entire Congregation, the entire Province/Vicariate; the Religious House; the House Community). Thus, the following shall be ordered:

- a) Solemn Liturgical Celebrations including sermons about the newly Blessed; (*on the Congregation's level, the decision will be made by the General; on the Province's level, by the Provincial; on the parish's level, by its pastor*);

- b) One session/symposium for the Marians on the meaning and immediate interest for today of the person of the newly Blessed Fr. Founder; (Fr. K. Pek agreed to take on this task: a symposium would be held at the CUL in Lublin, probably sometime in 2007).
- c) An invitation to our lay co-workers to the celebrations, particularly people associated with our Congregation through AMH, EADM, the Confraternity.

8. In accordance with the traditional approach, during the Post-Beatification Year, we should conduct in each house chapel and each Marian Church (also, in the parishes run by us) a solemn introduction of Fr. Papeczyński's relic, accompanied by an appropriate sermon, procession, and invitation for the faithful to actively participate in the celebrations (processions with gifts, chants, prayers, etc.) It would be very good, if we can come up with a special liturgical ritual for the occasion. Our priests ought to make a proposal to the pastors of their hometown parishes to hold similar solemn celebrations there.

NOTE: In the matter concerning the form of the relic's cult, the prevailing Committee's opinion is to have the following reliquaries made:

- a) The main reliquary at the Founder's tomb on Marianki;
- b) one for the Mass of Beatification purposes (as customary);
- c) one traveling reliquary for devotional purposes (as customary);
- d) other reliquaries may be made upon special request from church communities; they shall fulfill the following requirements:
 - a written petition addressed to the General Postulator and containing a justifiable reason;
 - description (within the petition) of the place where the relic would be held and the explanation of reasonable expectations for establishing his devotion;
 - justifiable need of the faithful; relics shall not be granted to private individuals.

9. The Committee members propose that instead of the traditional cult of the relics (their solemn introduction, location in a chapel/church, etc.) we hold a similar pious event combined with the solemn unveiling of the image of the new Blessed. At some other time (or maybe, even the same day) we may receive (for the duration of 24 or 48 hrs) the traveling reliquary, which would be combined with celebrations in honor of our Blessed. Some Committee members are of the opinion that the latest instructions of the Holy See regarding the cult of the relics go along the lines of the above-proposed new manner.

IV. PROMOTION OF FR. PAPCZYŃSKI'S PERSONALITY AND MESSAGE

The following actions include different ways of promoting Fr. Stanislaus' personality and spirituality, which the Committee deems appropriate and even necessary. Some of them can be continued at a later time, that is, after the official conclusion of the Post-Beatification Year. Each Province may create its own, special forms of promotion. The Committee proposes such actions and materials that can be of use for the entire Congregation.

1. A Webpage dedicated to Fr. Papczyński will be prepared. This page <http://www.stanislawpaczynski.org> will provide free access to all materials prepared by the Committee, including the ones described by this Program. Brother A. Mączyński will be in charge of preparing and supporting this site.

2. A short book/brochure containing the biography and reports of graces received through the intercession of Fr. Papczyński; to include the Novena through his intercession for the canonization. Person in charge: Fr. W. Skóra, the General Promoter.

3. Ten catechetical talks about the new Blessed will be prepared with one that would speak exclusively about his personality. These materials, as catechetical source books, may be sent to Diocesan Curias. The need for such materials has been already voiced by the Diocese of Tarnów. Persons in charge: Frs. Rafał Zalewski and Krzysztof Trojan.

4. Ten sermons about the new Blessed will be prepared with one that would speak exclusively about his personality to benefit the lay faithful. Person in charge: Fr. T. Rogalewski. It appears that the Podegrodzie Pastor, Fr. Józef Walaszek, expressed his will to prepare the sermons.

5. A documentary about Fr. Papczyński (approximately 30 minutes long) is in progress. This is not a feature movie, thus the Congregation can have the copyrights, and soundtrack may be prepared in different languages to fit the needs of all the Marians. Persons in charge: Frs. A. Pakuła and P. Napierkowski.

6. In time for the Beatification, articles will be prepared for Catholic newspapers (and possibly others, as well), speaking of Fr. Papczyński's personality and life, his work and spirituality. Because of a tremendous differentiation between Provinces/Vicariates, this task lays within each Province/Vicariate's authority. There are Catholic programs on public radio and television in many countries or private Catholic stations. We may approach them with a proposed participation in reflecting the Beatification or in presenting the person of the new Blessed, thus cre-

ating a special event in the media (like the TV program “Between heaven and earth” in Poland or other Catholic programs on TV and radio.) Also, right before the Beatification, a press conference can be called where we could talk about Fr. Papczyński from the point of view of history, spirituality, significance of his person for today’s world, etc. Before the conference we should prepare materials for the journalists about Fr. Papczyński. Provincial Committees would do well, planning this ahead of time and to either appoint appropriate confreres to appear on television or to speak on the radio, or to contact some of our journalists-friends and ask them to undertake this task.

7. There is a tradition in some countries to have in May, special devotions to Our Blessed Mother, which include May Readings. Usually, texts are read that have been either prepared or approved by the Diocesan Curias. The Committee proposes to prepare appropriate texts for the month of May. Person in charge: Fr. J. Kumala.

8. There usually is an exhibition/showcase in each of our churches. The Committee proposes to use them to display information about Fr. Papczyński—pictures, biography, the Marian Order’s history, short commentaries, etc. The Committee will prepare the mockup of posters.

9. Prayer cards/novenas/information leaflets will be published in time for the beatification:

- a) information leaflet about Fr. Papczyński with a prayer;
- b) small prayer cards with a prayer for a special grace, prepared by Br. A. Mączyński;
- c) medium and large size images to hang on walls, prepared by Fr. W. Skóra.

10. A Beatification medal will be minted for the occasion. Br. A. Mączyński is in charge of this project.

11. The complete Beatification documentation (i.e., letters, homilies, speeches, Mass texts and others, posters, films, etc), in other words, everything that regards the Beatification and Post-Beatification events shall be collected and arranged into a book. The project is coordinated by Fr. D. Mażewski.

12. Our Religious Houses in charge of parishes ought to make a proposal during deaneries’ meetings that appropriate sermons about Fr. Papczyński be delivered in the respective deaneries on the occasion of his Beatification. Materials, mentioned by this Program, can be used for this purpose.

13. For the greater glory of God, as well as for the good of the canonization, we shall try to describe and make public the circumstances of the miracle after the proclamation of the Beatification decree. Naturally, we should obtain beforehand the agreement of all interested parties (mother of the child, doctor, etc.) Persons in charge: Frs. W. Skóra, D. Mażewski, and A. Pakuła. Preliminary consultations with the interested parties have been already conducted.

14. After the Beatification we shall establish a contact with pro-life movements and, upon presenting this incident to them, we shall propose them to hold a Day of Thanksgiving for saving the life of an unborn child through the intercession of Fr. Papczyński.

15. We should try to get the National Conference of Bishops in Poland interested in the matter and to prepare a draft of a pastoral letter (or a communiqué) of the National Conference of Bishops on the occasion of the Beatification of the Founder of the first Polish Order and an imminent personality in the history of the Catholic Church in Poland.

V. TASKS AT HAND

As we all hope, a positive opinion in the Founder's cause is near at hand. Thus, there are tasks that require our immediate attention:

1. Drafts of liturgical texts for the liturgical remembrance/feast of the new Blessed (with indication of a desirable date) must be prepared for the Congregation of the Divine Cult. We also need:

- a) To draft the main prayer; person in charge—Fr. M. Zachara;
- b) To select appropriate liturgical texts for the celebration of the liturgical remembrance/feast: First Reading, Psalm, Gospel and Prayers of the Faithful; person in charge—Fr. M. Zachara;
- c) To select appropriate excerpts from Fr. Papczyński's writings to be used during the Office of Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours, as an addition for our use only; person in charge—Fr. M. Zachara with Fr. A. Pakuła's assistance;
- d) To select a date for the remembrance of the Blessed. Customary, it is the day of his death. However, in Poland the day of September 17th is already assigned for Bl. Szeszyczny Feliński's memorial; the previous day—September 16th is also an obligatory remembrance; the following day—September 18th is a liturgical feast. Another possibility is May 18th—Fr. Papczyński's birthday,

which is being celebrated throughout the Congregation. The Committee proposes the day of May 18th. The final decision will be made by the General Government following appropriate consultations, which will include those with the Congregation for the Saints;

e) To send a petition to the Congregation, asking to include Fr. Papczyński's memorial in the liturgical calendar of our Congregation; we could also approach the Bishop of Tarnów with a proposal of introducing this memorial as obligatory for his Diocese and to the Primate of Poland—for the Archdiocese of Warsaw;

2. Exhumation—in accordance with a suggestion made by competent parties, efforts to obtain permission for an exhumation will be made after the positive opinion of the Ordinary Session of the Cardinals and Bishops of the Congregation for the Saints is given. The relics will be divided into parts specifically assigned already during this exhumation (upon the power of the Ordinary): i.e., for a reliquary for the Beatification Mass, for the place of burial, for each of our Provinces and chapels; for the Dioceses of Ełk, Tarnów, etc. It is necessary to have a larger number of relics bearing in mind future needs. NOTE: Since 300 years passed from the death of Fr. Papczyński, during which time his coffin sustained different vicissitudes (including its extraction from marshy grounds), we do not know if it still contains usable remnants, and if it does, could they be possibly used for the above-mentioned reliquaries? We shall know the answer as soon as we open the coffin, and we shall inform all the confreres about it. This task lies within the competencies of the General Postulator, Fr. W. Skóra.

3. During the Beatification, a reliquary with relics of the Blessed is traditionally carried in a procession; thus, it needs to be ready beforehand. We need:

a) a reliquary for the Beatification Mass, person in charge—Postulator General;

b) a reliquary for Marianki. Nearly all members of the General Committee believe that we shall have this reliquary placed in the niche of the existing sarcophagus; having this niche illuminated, etc. this reliquary will replace the former one. The Committee do not think advisable to move the reliquary either on top of the sarcophagus or on/at the foot of the altar. The Committee propose to prepare one/several projects of the reliquary placement inside the sarcophagus. The General Government in close consultation with the Divine Providence Province, which has the honor of being the custodian of our Founder's relic, will make the decision.

c) medium-size reliquaries for our churches/chapels, person in charge—Postulator General;

d) small-size reliquaries for private devotion (i.e., medals), in accordance with the practice of the Catholic Church, person in charge—Postulator General.

4. We will commission a Beatification painting. Since there is no authentic and well-painted likeness of Fr. Papczyński, but several more or less successful portraits, it seems that the best solution would be to commission several paintings. Presently, the General Government placed a commission to paint a picture based on the portrait from Grudziądz, with regard to other existing portraits and including in it, some new special elements for the purposes of the beatification ceremony. The painting is shown on the cover of this book. Also, Br. A. Mączyński, the General Promoter of the AMH, is overseeing the completion of another painting, which, if satisfactory, may be selected as the Beatification picture, in case the first one isn't up to our expectations. The Committee approves this painting as the alternate choice.

NOTE: It seems necessary, however, to distinguish between a picture for devotional purposes and the one for the Beatification event, which ought to reflect the personality of the new Blessed. It would be best if the painting made for the beatification fulfills both requirements. This comment is important to the extent that the painting of the new picture shall not impede in anyway the promotion of other portraits of Fr. Papczyński through prayer and novena cards, etc. Fr. A. Pakuła coordinates the project.

5. There is still the matter of Offering Gifts:

a) a gift for the Holy Father (of a liturgical character) as our token of gratitude for the Beatification, to be offered during the Holy Mass (i.e., a set of chasuble with the image of Our Lady, a set of altar linens, chalices, liturgical cross, etc.)

b) an image of the new Blessed, to be offered to the Holy See after the Beatification, person in charge: Postulator General.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious that this beatification, eagerly awaited for almost 300 years, comes as a special sign of God's goodness towards our Congregation. It is a sign of grace granted to the entire community and to each one of us personally. However, we must remember that, in human terms, the nature of God's grace is the opportunity to accept it and to live by it in accordance with its requirements, as well as its rejection or simply a lack of interest in it. It also may be the case of the grace of beatification. It may enliven our vocation and renew our charism, both communal

and personal, or it may pass unnoticed, unaccepted into the practice of our life of faith and love of God and man. Thus, concluding the presentation of the Program of Preparations for the Beatification, we must mutually encourage ourselves to make efforts towards the renewal of our life of faith and love in accordance to the model described and stipulated by our Constitutions and as we see it today in the life of our Founder. So help us God and the holy Gospels, upon which we made our religious vows before others, proclaiming in the presence of the assembled that those are our foremost signs of love for Christ and the Church.

Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, MIC
Chairman
Rome, August 29, 2006

PROGRAM OF VIGILS BEFORE THE BEATIFICATION OF FR. FOUNDER

Dear Confreres,

The “Program of Vigils” is prepared for the 12-month period and embraces all Marian communities. It also shows the community’s designated day of the month in every month and the appropriate liturgical texts for an hour-long meditation/adoration, our guiding principle being that every community should hold a prayerful vigil once a month on the designated day. Please make sure that the “vigil” takes place on your designated day/night. Naturally, if one month it should become difficult to accomplish it is better to move it to another day than to abandon your turn altogether.

The vigils’ outlines are prepared by Fr. Dr Maciej Zachara, M.I.C., a Liturgist. However, it is possible for a community to hold this prayerful meeting in a different way, should they wish so. The important part is to hold the vigil regularly, on the designated day. It is understood that a community may hold on this day their monthly day of recollection. The Polish translation of Fr. Founder’s writings is the fruit of work of Frs. W. Makoś, M.I.C., R. Pietka, M.I.C., and C. Krzyzanowski, M.I.C.

Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, M.I.C.

DESIGNATION OF VIGIL DAYS TO EACH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY:

- 1st day of each month: Rome, Melbourne, Adelaide
- 2nd day of each month: Warsaw–Stegny
- 3rd day of each month: Chicago, Puszcza Marianska
- 4th day of each month: Curitiba I, Mongaguá, Marijampole
- 5th day of each month: Nyakinama, Kibeho, Marianapolis, Kenosha
- 6th day of each month: Plano, Darien+Yorkville, Gora Kalwaria+Marianki
- 7th day of each month: Gozlin, Avellaneda
- 8th day of each month: Rosario, Kaunas+Panevezis
- 9th day of each month: Warsaw–Praga, Barysau+Zhodino
- 10th day of each month: Warsaw–Marymont, Vilani
- 11th day of each month: Skorzec, Washington

- 12th day of each month: Grudziadz: house on Mickiewicz St.+ residence in Koscielna, Chicago III
- 13th day of each month: Lichen, Rio de Janeiro
- 14th day of each month: Stoczek Warminski, Rezekne, Izvalta
- 15th day of each month: Lublin Seminary+House of Studies+Kostomloty
- 16th day of each month: Lublin II, Rdzawka
- 17th day of each month: Elblag, Vilnius
- 18th day of each month: Sulejowek, Eden-Hill+Portland
- 19th day of each month: Zakopane, Rzepiska, Atok
- 20th day of each month: Steubenville, Grzybowo
- 21st day of each month: Fawley-Court, Curitiba II, Adrianópolis
- 22nd day of each month: Curitiba III+Novo Mundo+Mafra
- 23rd day of each month: Manoel Ribas+Barra Santa Saleté
- 24th day of each month: Orsha, Druya+Rosica
- 25th day of each month: Balsamao, Hradek+Praha
- 26th day of each month: Fatima, Brumov-Bylnice+Dudince
- 27th day of each month: Khmelnicky, Vilgertshofen
- 28th day of each month: Cherniovtsy+Sevastopol, Obermedlingen+Dilingen
- 29th day of each month: London, Karaganda, Mohyliv
- 30th day of each month: Gorodok, Kharkiv, Turvo.

OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS FOR THE DAY OF RECOLLECTION

Opening Prayers

For a good preparation and experience of Fr. Founder's beatification

Let us pray that God will raise the Venerable Servant of God, Father Stanislaus Papczyński to the altars and ask his intercession for us with God.

Lord God, You called Your Servant Stanislaus to found the Order of the Immaculate Virgin. Raise him to the altars and let his work grow in his homeland and in the entire Church.

We ask You, hear us, O Lord.

O Lord Jesus, You gave us in Your Servant Stanislaus an example of devotion to the Immaculate Virgin Mary. Give us by his example the grace to imitate her virtues.

We ask You, hear us, O Lord.

O Holy Spirit, You are the inspiration of the Church's shepherds. Teach us, by the example of Your Servant Stanislaus, to be zealous in supporting them as they announce the Gospel to all the nations.

We ask You, hear us, O Lord.

O Lord, Just Judge, You filled the heart of Your Servant Stanislaus with love for the suffering souls in Purgatory. Give us a zeal to remember the departed by our prayer, penitence, and sacrifice.

We ask You, hear us, O Lord.

Most holy and undivided Trinity, You choose to live in the hearts of Your faithful servants, and after their death to reward their merits with the glory of heaven. Grant, we implore You, that Your Servant Stanislaus, who with apostolic zeal faithfully served the Church under the patronage of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, may be numbered among the Blessed, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Prayer for the Congregation, according to Bl. George 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 in 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 OUTLINE OF THE VIGIL

Version I

- a) Beginning of the day of recollection (according to the house custom).
- b) Communal reading of the Church Magisterium's documents and Fr. Founder's writings (instead of the conference).
- c) Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament (at least 30 minutes long) with reading of the designated biblical passages.

NB: The Adoration may take place immediately after the reading of the Magisterium's documents and Fr. Founder's writings. It may be also held at the community's convenience, i.e. at the end of the day of recollection.

Version II (for communities that start their day of recollection on the previous night)

- a) Beginning of the day of recollection (on the previous night).
- b) Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament (at least 30 minutes long) with reading of the designated biblical passages (on the previous night).
- c) Communal morning prayers with a time for reflection, during which the Magisterium's documents are read, followed by Fr. Founder's writings (a while later).

Version III (for communities where the Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament cannot take place for whatever reason)

- a) Beginning of the day of recollection.
- b) Communal reading of the Magisterium's documents and Fr. Founder's writings (instead of the conference).
- c) Communal morning prayers with a time for reflection, during which the biblical texts are read.

TOPICS FOR VIGIL REFLECTION FOR EVERY DAY OF THE MONTH
Topic I—EVANGELICAL VOCATION
The Word of the Lord (Mk 10:17-22)

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answered him, “Why do you call me good?” No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.’ ” He replied and said to him, “Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Church’s Documents (RD=*Redemptionis donum*, No. 3)
“And Jesus, Looking Upon Him, Loved Him”

3. “Jesus, looking upon him, loved him,”(6) and said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”(7) Even though we know that those words, addressed to the rich young man, were not accepted by the one being called, their content deserves to be carefully reflected upon, for they present the interior structure of a vocation.

“And Jesus, looking upon him, loved him.” This is the love of the Redeemer: a love that flows from all the human and divine depths of the Redemption. This love reflects the eternal love of the Father, who “so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”(8) The Son, invested with that love, accepted the mission from the Father in the Holy Spirit and became the Redeemer of the world. The Father’s love was revealed in the Son as redeeming love. It is precisely this love that constitutes the true price of the Redemption of man and the world. Christ’s Apostles speak of the price of the Redemption with profound emotion: “You were ransomed...not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot,”(9) writes St. Peter And St. Paul states: “You were bought with a price.”(10)

The call to the way of the evangelical counsels springs from the interior encounter with the love of Christ, which is a redeeming love. Christ calls precisely through this love of His. In the structure of a vocation, the encounter with this love becomes something specifically personal. When Christ “looked upon you and loved you,” calling each one of you, dear religious, that redeeming love of His was directed towards a particular person, and at the same time it took on a spousal character: it became a love of choice. This love embraces the whole person, soul and body, whether man or woman, in that person’s unique and unrepeatable personal “I.” The One who, given eternally to the Father, “gives” Himself in the mystery of the Redemption, has now called man in order that he in his turn should give himself entirely to the work of the Redemption through membership in a community of brothers or sisters, recognized and approved by the Church. Surely it is precisely to this call that St. Paul’s words can be applied: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...? You are not your own; you were bought with a price.”(11)

Yes, Christ’s love has reached each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, with that same “price” of the Redemption. As a consequence of this, you have realized that you are not your own, but belong to Christ. This new awareness was the fruit of Christ’s “loving look” in the secret of your heart. You replied to that look by choosing Him who first chose each one of you, calling you with the measurelessness of His redeeming love. Since He calls “by name,” His call always appeals to human freedom. Christ says: “If you wish...” And the response to this call is, therefore, a free choice. You have chosen Jesus of Nazareth, the Redeemer of the world, by choosing the way that He has shown you.

From Founder’s Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, f. 135r–136r)

“Jesus saw a man at his post where taxes were collected” (Mt. 9:9).

Ponder that by using the word “man,” Saint Matthew wanted to underscore his insignificance. While others called him a tax collector, he called himself only a man, since he knew that to be a man is also to be a sinner. He did not want to be counted among those who were told: “You are gods, all of you sons of the Most High” (Ps. 81:6). Besides, he was called a tax collector only because he was supervising a customhouse and collected taxes and duties from the Jews, which they, as the chosen people, did not feel, obliged to pay. Oh, what a sinner you would have to call yourself, if your sins, now known only to God, were revealed to the world. Ask Jesus to look at you in His goodness and purify you from your hidden sins.

“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, since 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 corners of your will you still hide the bags 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 go in His steps.

“Many tax collectors and those known as sinners came to join Jesus at dinner” (Mt 9:10).

Contemplate that even now, many tax collectors and sinners come to Jesus, when they come to the sacrament of reconciliation. When they sit together with Jesus at the Table and participate in the celestial feast, they become justified, they cease to be tax collectors and sinners. Will you then wonder to the point of sin, about people's trespasses? Will you feel officiously anxious when those who are sinners today, may become saints tomorrow; they who have just been worse than the evil spirits, will become more righteous than the Angels? They do not even have to toil too much: only come to Jesus and sit with Him at dinner, and right away they get purified of their sins and adorned with graces. Magdalene also came to Jesus as a sinner and left justified. Oh, what a blessed access to Jesus! Through it, we receive the ability to abandon our sins! Oh, what a Holy Sacrament this is, which turns a sinner into a loving person, a servant of the world, into a servant of God, a son of darkness into a son of light, a slave of the devil, into a freedman in Christ!

Topic II: RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION

The Word of the Lord (Rm 6:1-14)

What then shall we say? Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound? Of course not! How can we who died to sin yet live in it? 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, the,

we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies not 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.

Therefore, sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires. And do not present the parts of your bodies to sin as weapons for wickedness, but present yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life and the parts of your bodies to God as weapons for righteousness. For sin is not to have any power over you, since you are not under the law but under grace.

Church's Documents (RD, 7)

Religious Profession is a "Fuller Expression" of Baptismal Consecration

7. Your vocation, dear brothers and sisters, has led you to religious profession, whereby you have been consecrated to God through the ministry of the Church, and have been at the same time incorporated into your religious family. Hence, the Church thinks of you, above all, as persons who are "consecrated": consecrated to God in Jesus Christ as His exclusive possession. This consecration determines your place in the vast community of the Church, the People of God. And at the same time this consecration introduces into the universal mission of this people a special source of spiritual and supernatural energy: a particular style of life, witness and apostolate, in fidelity to the mission of your institute and to its identity and spiritual heritage. The universal mission of the People of God is rooted in the messianic mission of Christ Himself-Prophet, Priest and King—a mission in which all share in different ways. The form of sharing proper to "consecrated" persons corresponds to your manner of being rooted in Christ. The depth and power of this being rooted in Christ is decided precisely by religious profession.

Religious profession creates a new bond between the person and the One and Triune God, in Jesus Christ. This bond develops on the foundation of the original bond that is contained in the Sacrament of Baptism. Religious profession "is deeply rooted in baptismal consecration and is a fuller expression of it." (25) In this way religious profession, in its constitutive content, becomes a new consecration: the consecration and giving of the human person to God, loved above all else. The commitment undertaken by means of the vows to practice the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, according to the determinations proper to each religious family as laid down in the constitutions, is the expression of a total consecration to God and, at the same time, the means that leads to its achievement. This is also the source of the manner proper to consecrated persons of bearing witness

and of exercising the apostolate. And yet it is necessary to seek the roots of that conscious and free consecration and of the subsequent giving of self to God as His possession in Baptism, the sacrament that leads us to the Paschal Mystery as the apex and center of the Redemption accomplished by Christ.

Therefore, in order to highlight fully the reality of religious profession, we must turn to the vibrant words of St. Paul in the letter to the Romans: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ...we too might walk in newness of life” (26); “Our old self was crucified with him so that...we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (27); “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (28)

Upon the sacramental basis of Baptism in which it is rooted, religious profession is a new “burial in the death of Christ”: new, because it is made with awareness and by choice; new, because of love and vocation; new, by reason of unceasing “conversion.” This “burial in death” causes the person “buried together with Christ” to “walk like Christ in newness of life.” In Christ crucified is to be found the ultimate foundation both of baptismal consecration and of the profession of the evangelical counsels, which—in the words of the Second Vatican Council—“constitutes a special consecration.” It is at one and the same time both death and liberation. St. Paul writes: “Consider yourselves dead to sin.” At the same time he calls this death “freedom from the slavery of sin.” Above all, though, religious consecration, through its sacramental foundation in holy Baptism, constitutes a new life “for God in Jesus Christ.”

In this way, simultaneously with the profession of the evangelical counsels, in a much more mature and conscious manner, “the old nature is put off” and likewise “the new nature is put on, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness,” to use once more the words of the letter to the Ephesians.(29)

From Founder’s Writings (*Oblatio*)

Act of Oblation

Kazimierz near Cracow, December 11, 1670

“In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified. Amen.

I, Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński, in the flesh, son of Thomas of Podegrodzie, of the diocese of Cracow, being 40 years of age, offer and consecrate to God the Father Almighty, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in like manner to the Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, conceived without sin, my heart, my soul,

intellect, memory, will, feelings, whole mind, whole soul, interior and exterior senses, and my body, leaving absolutely nothing for myself, so that henceforth I may be the servant of the Almighty and the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

Therefore, I promise Them, that I will serve to the end of my life in chastity and in zeal, this Company of Marian Clerics of the Immaculate Conception (which, by the grace of God I intend to found). Further, I will to accommodate my manner of life to its laws, decrees, and rites that I will never cause or permit or agree, even indirectly, to be abolished or altered in any way or any dispensation from them be granted, except for a very serious and lawful necessity.

Moreover, I promise a judiciously understood obedience to His Holiness, the Vicar of Christ and to his lawful delegates, as well as to all my direct and indirect superiors and this, that I will own nothing privately, but that I will regard everything as common property.

I confess that I believe everything that the Holy Roman Church believes and what she will tell me to believe in the future; above all I proclaim that Mary, the Most Holy Mother of God, was free from original sin, from the first moment of her conception. Therefore, I promise to promote and defend her honor and to lay down my life, if necessary. So help me God and the Holy Gospels of our Lord.

Topic III: EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

The Word of the Lord (Phil 3:7-21)

Righteousness from God. *[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.*

Forward in Christ. *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.

Wrong Conduct and Our Goal. *Join with others i being imitators of me, brothers, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. for many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself.*

Church's Documents (RD, 9)

The Economy of Redemption

9. Through your profession, the way of the evangelical counsels opens up before each one of you. In the Gospel there are many exhortations that go beyond the measure of the commandment, indicating not only what is "necessary" but what is "better." Thus, for example, the exhortation not to judge, (42) to lend "expecting nothing in return," (43) to comply with all the requests and desires of our neighbor, (44) to invite the poor to a meal, (45) to pardon always(46) and many other invitations. If, in accordance with Tradition, the profession of the evangelical counsels has concentrated on the three points of chastity, poverty and obedience, this usage seems to emphasize sufficiently clearly their importance as key elements and in a certain sense as a "summing up" of the entire economy of salvation. Everything in the Gospel that is a counsel enters indirectly into the program of that way to which Christ calls when He says: "Follow me." But chastity, poverty and obedience give to this way a particular Christocentric characteristic and imprint upon it a specific sign of the economy of the Redemption.

Essential to this "economy" is the transformation of the entire cosmos through the heart of man, from within: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. . . and will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God."(47) This transformation takes place in step with that love, which Christ's call infuses in the depth of the individual-that love which constitutes the very substance of consecration: a man or

woman's vowing of self to God in religious profession, on the foundation of the sacramental consecration of Baptism. We can discover the bases of the economy of Redemption by reading the words of the first letter of St. John: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (48)

Religious profession places in the heart of each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, the love of the Father: that love which is in the heart of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world. It is love which embraces the world and everything in it that comes from the Father, and which at the same time tends to overcome in the world everything that "does not come from the Father." It tends therefore to conquer the threefold lust. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" are hidden within man as the inheritance of original sin, as a result of which the relationship with the world, created by God and given to man to be ruled by him,(49) was disfigured in the human heart in various ways. In the economy of the Redemption the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience constitute the most radical means for transforming in the human heart this relationship with "the world": with the external world and with one's personal "I" –which in some way is the central part "of the world" in the biblical sense, if what "does not come from the Father" begins within it.

Against the background of the phrases taken from the first letter of St. John, it is not difficult to see the fundamental importance of the three evangelical counsels in the whole economy of Redemption. Evangelical chastity helps us to transform in our interior life everything that has its sources in the lust of the flesh; evangelical poverty, everything that finds its source in the lust of the eyes; and evangelical obedience enables us to transform in a radical way that which in the human heart arises from the pride of life. We are deliberately speaking here of an overcoming as a transformation, for the entire economy of the Redemption is set in the framework of the words spoken in the priestly prayer to the Father: "I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to guard them from the evil one." (50) The evangelical counsels in their essential purpose aim at "the renewal of creation": "the world," thanks to them, is to be subjected to man and given to him in such a way that man himself may be perfectly given to God.

From Founder's Writings (*Rule of Life, Chapter III*)

Obedience, Poverty, Chastity

1. In first place you ought to obey God, the Roman pontiff, the bishops, superiors of your Order; then, their vicars, local officials, the bell calling you to common exercises. This you ought to do quickly, promptly, perfectly, patiently, humbly, decisively, perseveringly. Nor should you be ashamed to be subject—to men, since the Apostle [Peter] would wish us to be subject to all! creatures, more so to every authority (Rm 13:1-7; 1 Pt 2:13; 1 Tim 2:2). For there is no authority, he says, unless it is from God. He who resists this authority, resists the divine Will, which is the highest form of stupidity. You should assume the motive and example of obedience of our Redeemer himself, who “humbled himself, being made obedient unto death, even death on the Cross” (Philip 2:8) He who would refuse to imitate [Christ] would appear not to want to reign with Christ if he did not obey due authority who takes the place of Christ. The following order must be kept in obeying: the lesser power should yield to the greater power, nor should that lesser power attempt to weaken the greater. [Concerning what has been ordered:] if a previous order will clearly have been revoked, a later order should be given adherence. You should all respect the Ordinaries of the locality with due submission and be most ready to obey them. Nonetheless, in order to avoid confusion in jurisdiction and many disorders, only the superiors will attend to the just orders of the Bishops. The members, on the other hand, will obey the superiors and the laws without any reluctance and pretense. Nor should they believe they have any right or privilege to take the superior to an outside court. This is stated to avoid many quarrels, scandals and rebellions. If ever any [of these] controversies should happen, or any less notable deficiency, then it should be settled and corrected within the congregation itself, in an ordinary way, peacefully and justly. Through this rule we nonetheless do not intend to contradict anything of Canon law, nothing regarding the decrees and views of the Roman Church. If anyone among you has been found stubbornly disobedient, or a firebrand, or a wicked agitator of others, let him be restrained by the common action of all those who favor interior peace and good government (first, however, having given the possibility for a just defense and apology and due process of law having been kept). If necessary, even the force of civil authorities may be employed. Truly it is right that a servant of God be a peaceful man. Should he consider the person he should obey? Or shouldn't he consider love on account of which he obeys? You should fulfill, with divine assistance, humbly and joyfully, all penances and mortifications assigned by a superior, although they may seem burdensome. You should not murmur against the superiors, or complain, but you should love and honor them. But if anyone should have been truly burdened by some superior, let him either endure patiently what he finds oppressive for the merit of eternal life, or by himself or through another present with greatest meekness and humility, a petition to the superior, by whom he is pressed, so that he might use due

moderation in the situation.

2. The essence of your poverty is found in this: that no one keeps anything privately without the consent of the Superiors, nor would he dare to call anything his own. However, those things given for his use let him preserve them neatly, carefully and for as long as possible Let all income be turned over for common use whether it comes from alms or other sources. Let them observe absolutely and strictly the manner of collecting, saving and dispensing this income, the manner contained in the papal decrees under the penalties specified there Without the permission of the superior, let none keep with himself either money or food or drink, under the penalty of losing active and passive voice. Such permission could be granted only for some good reason and for a short time, for all ought to live on common resources and the common table. However, foreseeing all the harm [that could come from its use], this permission is to be granted chiefly and only to the aged and the sick. No member should receive anything from anybody without the permission of the superiors whether it be from a house member or an outsider; nor should he give anything to anyone. Before profession he should dispose of his inheritance and his goods in the world, if he had any. If he was hindered by something, then he should settle his affairs as quickly as possible after profession, since our Lord openly stated: None of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions (Lk 14:33b). The superiors will provide the members, as much as they will be able in the Lord, sufficiently in all things according to our norms, no superfluously however. Otherwise, on account of more rigorous want the members would be found slothful in their service of God. It is fitting for each one to be mindful that he is rather the imitator of the heavenly King in need, who, it is said, had neither his own home (Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58), nor when he was thirsty, was ashamed to have asked for water (Jn 4:7). So you once you find yourself in a situation of utmost poverty, rejoice exceedingly, because then you can be the true disciples and followers of Christ the Lord.

3. 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 be able to greatly aid 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; prudent avoiding of 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.

Topic IV: EVANGELICAL PURITYThe Word of the Lord (1 Cor 7:29-35)

I tell you, brothers, the time is running out. From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, those using the world as not using it fully. For the world in its present form is passing away.

I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. And unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

Church's Documents (VC=Vita Consecrata, No. 88)***The challenge of consecrated chastity***

88. The first challenge is that of a hedonistic culture which separates sexuality from all objective moral norms, often treating it as a mere diversion and a consumer good and, with the complicity of the means of social communication, justifying a kind of idolatry of the sexual instinct. The consequences of this are before everyone's eyes: transgressions of every kind, with resulting psychic and moral suffering on the part of individuals and families. The reply of the consecrated life is above all in the joyful living of perfect chastity, as a witness to the power of God's love manifested in the weakness of the human condition. The consecrated person attests that what many have believed impossible becomes, with the Lord's grace, possible and truly liberating. Yes, in Christ it is possible to love God with all one's heart, putting him above every other love, and thus to love every creature with the freedom of God! This testimony is more necessary than ever today, precisely because it is so little understood by our world. It is offered to everyone — young people, engaged couples, husbands and wives and Christian families — in order to show that the power of God's love can accomplish great things precisely within the context of human love. It is a witness, which also meets a growing need for interior honesty in human relationships.

The consecrated life must present to today's world examples of chastity lived by men and women who show balance, self-mastery, an enterprising spirit, and psychological and affective maturity. Thanks to this witness, human love is offered a stable point of reference: the pure love which consecrated persons draw from the contemplation of Trinitarian love, revealed to us in Christ. Precisely because they are immersed in this mystery, consecrated persons feel themselves capable of a radical and universal love, which gives them the strength for the self-mastery and discipline necessary in order not to fall under the domination of the senses and instincts. Consecrated chastity thus appears as a joyful and liberating experience. Enlightened by faith in the Risen Lord and by the prospect of the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Rev 21:1), it offers a priceless incentive in the task of educating to that chastity which corresponds to other states of life as well.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 163r–164r)

1. Ponder that chastity is a virtue of angels, rather, even more than angels, due to the fragility of the vessel in which this most expensive and very fragrant liquor is contained. Realize that you are obliged to keep chastity not only because you have loved it, but also because you pledged yourself under oath to keep it: so not only as a virtue, but also through the power of the vow. Remember, that as pure souls more than any other are pleasant to God, the souls given to unchastity are not likeable and fill Him with disgust. Now you have the time to reflect on how you have been keeping this vow.

2. Contemplate that each person is bound to keep the virtue of chastity not only on account of the positive law of God, but also the natural law. You are bound on the triple account; apart from the two mentioned above, there is also the vow. Thus, the more you were exposing yourself to the danger of breaking this vow, the more seriously you were sinning, because you were committing sacrilege. You should realize that you sinned like Lucifer who wanted to sit on the throne of God, or any other angel who rebelled against God. If, by God's will, you are free from the temptations against this virtue, know that you are either not worthy or too weak to be tried. If, in turn, you have been put through your paces, it has come from the great grace of the Great and truly foreseeing God and thus give Him the greatest thanks for that.

3. Reflect whether you have used all the means to protect this virtue. Have you curbed your eye, have you restrained your hand, have you cared for your thought to be spotless and pure? Have you restrained from soft fabrics, sophisticated meals, idleness which are robbers of purity and have you avoided indecent books? Although all these should be alien to you, as a religious person, if you have read, listened to or by other means found out that various occasions may lead you to fall into a deep abyss,

examine yourself concerning the issues which may threaten the chastity of your soul.

Topic V: EVANGELICAL POVERTY

The Word of the Lord (Mt 19:23-30)

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible." Then Peter said to him in reply, "We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

Church's Documents (VC, 89-90)

The challenge of poverty

89. Another challenge today is that of a materialism which craves possessions, heedless of the needs and sufferings of the weakest, and lacking any concern for the balance of natural resources. The reply of the consecrated life is found in the profession of evangelical poverty, which can be lived in different ways and is often expressed in an active involvement in the promotion of solidarity and charity. How many Institutes devote themselves to education, training and professional formation, preparing young people and those no longer young to become builders of their own future! How many consecrated persons give themselves without reserve in the service of the most disadvantaged people on earth! How many of them work to train future educators and leaders of society, so that they in turn will be committed to eliminating structures of oppression and to promoting projects of solidarity for the benefit of the poor! Consecrated persons fight to overcome hunger and its causes; they inspire the activities of voluntary associations and humanitarian organizations; and they work with public and private bodies to promote a fair distribution of international aid. Nations truly owe a great deal to these enterprising agents of

charity, whose tireless generosity has contributed and continues to contribute greatly to making the world more human.

Evangelical poverty at the service of the poor

90. Even before being a service on behalf of the poor, evangelical poverty is a value in itself, since it recalls the first of the Beatitudes in the imitation of the poor Christ. Its primary meaning, in fact, is to attest that God is the true wealth of the human heart. Precisely for this reason evangelical poverty forcefully challenges the idolatry of money, making a prophetic appeal as it were to society, which in so many parts of the developed world risks losing the sense of proportion and the very meaning of things. Thus, today more than in other ages, the call of evangelical poverty is being felt also among those who are aware of the scarcity of the planet's resources and who invoke respect for and the conservation of creation by reducing consumption, by living more simply and by placing a necessary brake on their own desires.

Consecrated persons are therefore asked to bear a renewed and vigorous evangelical witness to self-denial and restraint, in a form of fraternal life inspired by principles of simplicity and hospitality, also as an example to those who are indifferent to the needs of their neighbor. This witness will of course be accompanied by a preferential love for the poor and will be shown especially by sharing the conditions of life of the most neglected. There are many communities which live and work among the poor and the marginalized; they embrace their conditions of life and share in their sufferings, problems and perils. Outstanding pages in the history of evangelical solidarity and heroic dedication have been written by consecrated persons in these years of profound changes and great injustices, of hopes and disappointments, of striking victories and bitter defeats. And pages no less significant have been written and are still being written by very many other consecrated persons, who live to the full their life "hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3) for the salvation of the world, freely giving of themselves, and spending their lives for causes which are little appreciated and even less extolled. In these various and complementary ways, the consecrated life shares in the radical poverty embraced by the Lord, and fulfills its specific role in the saving mystery of his Incarnation and redeeming Death.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 164r–165r)

1. You should very carefully focus on meditating on the virtue of poverty. The deeper the greed and love of possessions are hidden, the more carefully should they be traced, uncovered and rejected. Check whether you or not you are emotionally attached to any thing, even something for which you have permission. And while large and numerous material possessions obtained legally do not do any harm to many, it may be quite the opposite with you. Even the tiniest thing, if you desire it too

emotionally or are attached to it, may harm you. For many people, it is a source of pride to have a lot of possessions but you, bound by the vow of poverty, should restrain and restrict your will from possessing even necessary things, such as clothes. As for the things you yourself recognize as irreconcilable with the virtue of poverty, consider them as poisonous snakes, which will soon bring to ruin both you and the Congregation. Immediately, get rid of them and remove them from your cell, so that a precious pearl of Evangelical poverty would not lose its value or dim its luster.

2. Judge for yourself whether you are attached to any thing in a particular way, which you could not part with, or, if you were to give it away, you would do it with regret and it would disturb your inner peace. That would be much more serious and negative than possessing the entire world without any emotional attachment to it. Check also whether or not you have provided an opportunity for someone else to violate or disregard poverty either by letting him keep something or by bringing him a thing to make him ask for permission to keep it, or even by bringing to the convent or the religious house even small things which are against the spirit of holy poverty. Further, have you hidden anything you could appropriately possess from the superior? Or maybe you have not given things you received as gifts from others for the common use or by your insistence, you have compelled the superior to agree on your exclusive use of them? Realize that just as in nakedness, you have risen from dirt, in nakedness you shall return there. For you, Christ, having left heaven, was born naked in a stable, so that you would imitate Him in this bareness. Possessing nothing, you will have everything, as the saying goes: "A naked monk or religious is a master of the entire world."

3. You should congratulate yourself that God called you to this most blessed state and for taking the most precious vow, because it provides you with the highest peace, calmness and joy. You know the opposite situation: how much suffering is endured by those who possess great riches, which they acquired with the utmost strain. They guard what they have gained with great care, fear and watchfulness. And if it happens that they lose their possessions, they suffer enormously, sometimes they even try to take their lives. So what results from this accumulation of treasures, when even with all of them, they cannot have God as the Highest Good? No one can simultaneously serve God and money (cf. Mt 6:24, Luke 16:13) and no one may follow Jesus and unite with Him when he does not go to sell everything (cf. Mt 19:21). Moreover, it is difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19:24). Otherwise, the same Gospel of truth says that the poor will inherit eternal goods: "Blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs" (Mt 5:3).

Topic VI: EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE

The Word of the Lord (Mk 14:32-39)

***The Agony in the Garden.** Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch." He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will." When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing.*

Church's Documents (VC, No.91)

The challenge of freedom in obedience

91. The third challenge comes from those notions of freedom which separate this fundamental human good from its essential relationship to the truth and to moral norms. In effect, the promotion of freedom is a genuine value, closely connected with respect for the human person. But who does not see the aberrant consequences of injustice and even violence, in the life of individuals and of peoples, to which the distorted use of freedom leads?

An effective response to this situation is the obedience, which marks the consecrated life. In an especially vigorous way this obedience re-proposes the obedience of Christ to the Father and, taking this mystery as its point of departure, testifies that there is no contradiction between obedience and freedom. Indeed, the Son's attitude discloses the mystery of human freedom as the path of obedience to the Father's will, and the mystery of obedience as the path to the gradual conquest of true freedom. It is precisely this mystery which consecrated persons wish to acknowledge by this particular vow. By obedience they intend to show their awareness of being children of the Father, as a result of which they wish to take the Father's will as their daily bread (cf. Jn 4:34), as their rock, their joy, their shield and their fortress (cf. Ps 18:2). Thus they show that they are growing in the full truth about themselves, remaining in touch with the source of their existence and therefore offering this most consoling message: "The lovers of your law have great peace; they never stumble" (Ps 118:165).

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, f. 170r–171r)

1. Focus your attention on all the virtues you should contend for with the greatest zeal, search for them with the utmost effort and practice them willingly. Enumerate all in your thought, probing them carefully, especially those, which are suitable for your vocation and perfection. Pay attention also to your shortcomings and vices, which remain in opposition to these virtues. How careful have you been in avoiding talkativeness, which destroys the virtues and distracts your spirit? How concerned have you been for keeping silence, the guardian of the same virtues and a concentration of your spirit? How have you practiced them in your life? How have you cultivated the virtues of kindness, benevolence and gentleness, the greatest adornments of a religious? How much effort have you put into obtaining patience, this hereditary virtue of Christians, and of religious in particular; and to gain courage and magnanimity which stands out with it, that it opposes all that resists perfection? How zealous have you been in fighting such vices as pusillanimity, vain fear, uncontrollable sadness, impatience and anger? How many times have you neglected and how many times have you practiced giving yourself over to the will of God (resignation), the main source of internal peace and perseverance? Have you progressed in your religious perfection, not in the sphere of honors, knowledge, positions, eminent functions, but in respect to poverty, humility, obedience, love for God, self-contempt and other virtues which constitute religious perfection? Think whether you have progressed in the spiritual exercises proportionally to the graces which God has bestowed upon you, for example in prayer, contemplation? Or have you regressed? Since according to the often-repeated opinion of the masters of spirituality: "Not to progress means to stop and not to proceed means to draw back." Who does not have such an experience from his daily life!

2. Contemplate to what you have more devoted yourself, while in the religious order: mortifications or comforts? To what have you disposed your spirit: to breaking your will or making it? To fulfilling the wishes of others, your superiors in particular, or to following your own desires? If you have been more busy pursuing your desires, be certain that a false spirit has guided you. If you did otherwise, do not have any doubts that you guided yourself in the right direction and in accordance with your vocation. To answer this call, cherish and also help the smaller new sparks of God's love for practicing the virtues to grow, favoring them with your efforts and desire for progress and actual development. If you hold yourself in contempt, you will feel how sweet is the Lord! If you detach yourself completely from the world, you will experience how bitter it is! What tastes and what smells do those people experience, who not only taste but also absorb carnal pleasures, worldly delights and drinks from

Babylon? Oh! They will draw and drink from them, only a short-lived sweetness, because of which, however, they will be thrust into the abyss of eternal bitterness. Forever they will lament indulging their nature and never erase their guilt. On the contrary, how much of the lasting sweetness is in the cross, patience, mortifications, toils, encountered misfortunes and harms borne in the spirit of following the God-Man! In them, the lovers of the cross and suffering, find an abundance of never ending joy, eternal consolations, holy and ceaseless delights, yet only after a tough fight and encounters with the world, hell and their own evil desires. You have a free hand in choosing one of the two options because you have free judgment and free will. But see for yourself how shrewdly and profitably you have already chosen one of them and you have still more to choose. You should consider the end of people's lives which can be twofold as there are two kinds of people. The punishment of eternal death is the fate of immoral people, eager for honors, leading their lives outside of the law, according to the words: "Such as these will end in disaster" (Phil 3:19). While just people, devoted to various mortifications, obedient and perseverant in their life according to the holy laws and rules, will share in the everlasting glory and happiness of the tireless seeking for God, the Highest Good, and of life without death and without end according to the words: "But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them" etc. (Ws 3:1).

3. Carefully reflect upon what fruits your mortifications have you reaped in the religious life? How has your soul benefited from such frequent participation in the holy sacraments and the constant practicing of the virtues? What profit for salvation, have the numerous spiritual books, conversations and meditations had for you? How much have you progressed in acquiring the virtues, been encouraged to good deeds and as been spurred with numerous religious speeches, holy inspirations and admonitions? What benefits have you derived from your presence in the house of God, prayers, the mortifications of your body and regular fasting? Examine your conscience for the wasted time, which flies never to return and brings you every day closer to the verge of eternity with the knowledge that you will have to enter its port soon. With what kind of holy goods will you harbor in there? If you lack the pearls of virtues, which are of value at the celestial heights, be certain that you will not be allowed to the shores of the heavenly land. If this were to happen (which God forbid!) where would you go? In the ocean of the world, your ship cannot drift without end, but has to ceaselessly look for the shore to reach: whether a happy one of the Promised Land or a miserable one of eternal damnation. May your conversation with God be filled with repentance for offenses, sins and all imperfections followed by seeing their repugnance and making holy, noble and irrevocable resolutions to practice heroic virtues, accompanied by a strong desire to improve your whole life.

Topic VII: FRATERNAL LIFE

The Word of the Lord (Acts 2:42-47)

Communal Life. *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.*

Church's Documents (VC 41)

In the image of the Trinity

41. During his earthly life, the Lord Jesus called those whom he wished in order to have them at his side and to train them to live, according to his example, for the Father and for the mission which he had received from the Father (cf. Mk 3:13-15). He thus inaugurated the new family which down the centuries would include all those ready to "do the will of God" (cf. Mk 3:32-35). After the Ascension, as a result of the gift of the Spirit, a fraternal community formed around the Apostles, gathered in the praise of God and in a concrete experience of communion (cf. Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). The life of that community and, even more, the experience of complete sharing with Christ lived out by the Twelve, have always been the model to which the Church has looked whenever she has sought to return to her original fervor and to resume with fresh evangelical vigour her journey through history. The Church is essentially a mystery of communion, "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit". The fraternal life seeks to reflect the depth and richness of this mystery, taking shape as a human community in which the Trinity dwells, in order to extend in history the gifts of communion proper to the three divine Persons. Many are the settings and the ways in which fraternal communion is expressed in the life of the Church. The consecrated life can certainly be credited with having effectively helped to keep alive in the Church the obligation of fraternity as a form of witness to the Trinity. By constantly promoting fraternal love, also in the form of common life, the

consecrated life has shown that sharing in the Trinitarian communion can change human relationships and create a new type of solidarity. In this way it speaks to people both of the beauty of fraternal communion and of the ways which actually lead to it. Consecrated persons live “for” God and “from” God, and precisely for this reason they are able to bear witness to the reconciling power of grace, which overcomes the divisive tendencies present in the human heart and in society.

From Founder’s Writings (*Rule of Life, Chapter II*)

Love

1. [St. Paul] the Teacher of the Gentiles has best compared a servant of God who is not glowing with true love to a tinkling bell and a clanging cymbal (1 Cor 13:1). For attainment of eternal life—and the value of meritorious works—is rooted in love. Therefore, more than any other good, any of you should try to gain for himself [this love], this pearl of great price, this treasure hidden in the field (Mt 13:44-46). 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 (1 Cor 16:14).

2. The commandments of God, and the Gospel counsels, the laws of the 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 [Jesus Christ] the heavenly Lawgiver said: “Anyone who loves me, will be true to my word.” (*Jn 14:23) And this is to be understood not only of his teaching and of Scripture, 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.

3. 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, daily actions and sufferings, and each and every moment, particulars, circumstances, changes. Each and every action and suffering by due submission, confidence, 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.

“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.

4. 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, secret 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).

5. You should always be mindful- of the works of mercy which, done to his members, are done to Christ the Head. On all (Mt 25:31-46) 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). These works alone will triumph at the final Judgement. (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27-35)

Topic VIII: PRIMACY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

The Word of the Lord (Rm 8:2-13)

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 Jesus 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.

Church's Documents (VC 93)

A decisive commitment to the spiritual life

93. One of the concerns frequently expressed at the Synod was that the consecrated life should be nourished from the wellspring of a sound and deep spirituality. This is a primary requirement, inscribed in the very essence of the consecrated life by the fact that, just as every other baptized person, and indeed even more so, those who profess the evangelical counsels must aspire with all their strength to the perfection of charity. This commitment is clearly evidenced in the many examples of holy founders and foundresses, and of so many consecrated persons who have borne faithful witness to Christ to the point of martyrdom. To tend towards holiness: this is in summary the program of every consecrated life, particularly in the perspective of its renewal on the threshold of the Third Millennium. The starting point of such a program lies in leaving everything behind for the sake of Christ (cf. Mt 4:18-22, 19:21,27; Lk 5:11), preferring him above all things, in order to share fully in his Paschal Mystery.

Saint Paul understood this well when he said: "Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection" (Phil 3:8,10). This is the path marked out from the beginning by the Apostles, as testified to in the Christian tradition of the East and the West: "Those who now follow Jesus, leaving everything for his sake, remind us of the Apostles who, in answer to his invitation, gave up everything. As a result, it has become traditional to speak of religious life as *apostolica vivendi forma*". The same

tradition has also emphasized in the consecrated life the aspect of a particular covenant with God, indeed of a spousal covenant with Christ, of which Saint Paul was a master by his example (cf. 1 Cor 7:7) and by his teaching, proposed under the Spirit's guidance (cf. 1 Cor 7:40). We may say that the spiritual life, understood as life in Christ or life according to the Spirit, presents itself as a path of increasing faithfulness, on which the consecrated person is guided by the Spirit and configured by him to Christ, in full communion of love and service in the Church. All these elements, which take shape in the different forms of the consecrated life, give rise to a specific spirituality, that is, a concrete program of relations with God and one's surroundings, marked by specific spiritual emphases and choices of apostolate, which accentuate and re-present one or another aspect of the one mystery of Christ. When the Church approves a form of consecrated life or an Institute, she confirms that in its spiritual and apostolic charism are found all the objective requisites for achieving personal and communal perfection according to the Gospel. The spiritual life must therefore have first place in the program of Families of consecrated life, in such a way that every Institute and community will be a school of true evangelical spirituality. Apostolic fruitfulness, generosity in love of the poor, and the ability to attract vocations among the younger generation depend on this priority and its growth in personal and communal commitment. It is precisely the spiritual quality of the consecrated life which can inspire the men and women of our day, who themselves are thirsting for absolute values. In this way the consecrated life will become an attractive witness.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, 28r–29r)

“They understood nothing of this” (Luke 18:34).

Consider how bad is the state of a mind, which does not recognize good, does not grasp it and even rejects it. The Apostles were blind like this, when they did not understand the Lord speaking about suffering and His imminent death. The reason for this lay in the fact that a virtue of love was still hidden from them, its role and perfection; that one would want to suffer and share the torments and misfortunes and bad fate of another, whether a friend or a person ill-disposed toward us. If you do not yet have a desire to help your brother and to suffer the most painful and disagreeable things, know that you have not understood the essence of the perfection of love and you are truly unlearned, not knowing all the virtues which make us enter into heaven. Ask, ask, God for the light to understand the importance of each of the virtues. Ask for recognition of what He wants you to do and what road He wants you to take to perfection. Ask and pray like this: “Give me discernment that I may live” (Ps 118:144). “Open my eyes that I may consider the wonders of your law” (Ps 118:18).

“A blind man sat at the side of the road” (Luke 18:35).

Realize that the intention of the man sitting at the side of the road, who was asking to get his sight back, was to receive either alms from passers-by or light from the Savior, about whose arrival to Jerico, he received a message earlier. And if for these two things, he endured so many burdens, still sitting at the side of the road, exposed to heat and cold, and with such perseverance, begging for the gift of external light for his eyes, calling to the Savior with such persistent cries that he irritated the ears of those who accompanied Christ; then think what perseverance in prayer you need, what persistence in enduring mortifications and the hardships of this life to receive an internal light, at least a spark of devoutness, to get, like a dog, a crumb and a bite from the table of its master; to deserve, in the end, to stay in the holy temple, in the face of this incredible Sun; and could delight in its light. Such a perseverant man is able to achieve everything, no heavenly gift can be obtained without steadfastness in prayer.

“Lord, I want to see” (Luke 18:41).

If the blind man asked only for giving him back the sight to see the world and the things created, with what desire you should ask for the light of your soul, with what persistence in prayer and—let me say—with what holy obtrusiveness you should demand to look at the very Creator and 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 a 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, as the gift and benefit of contemplation, since all the happiness of the saints comes from watching 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, and ask for it in ceaseless prayers. And when you receive it, guard it so that you would not lose it. Pay attention not to forfeit it in a multitude of things to accomplish. Remember to guard it so carefully as normal people tend to guard their physical eyes.

Topic IX: PRAYER AND ASCETICISM**The Word of the Lord (Mt 16:21-27)**

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.” He

turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

The Conditions of Discipleship. 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.”

Church’s Documents (VC 38)

Prayer and asceticism: spiritual combat

38. The call to holiness is accepted and can be cultivated only in the silence of adoration before the infinite transcendence of God: “We must confess that we all have need of this silence, filled with the presence of him who is adored: in theology, so as to exploit fully its own sapiential and spiritual soul; in prayer, so that we may never forget that seeing God means coming down the mountain with a face so radiant that we are obliged to cover it with a veil (cf. Ex 34:33); in commitment, so that we will refuse to be locked in a struggle without love and forgiveness. All, believers and non-believers alike, need to learn a silence that allows the Other to speak when and how he wishes, and allows us to understand his words”. In practice this involves great fidelity to liturgical and personal prayer, to periods devoted to mental prayer and contemplation, to Eucharistic adoration, to monthly retreats and to spiritual exercises.

There is also a need to rediscover the ascetic practices typical of the spiritual tradition of the Church and of the individual’s own Institute. These have been and continue to be a powerful aid to authentic progress in holiness. Asceticism, by helping to master and correct the inclinations of human nature wounded by sin, is truly indispensable if consecrated persons are to remain faithful to their own vocation and follow Jesus on the way of the Cross. It is also necessary to recognize and overcome certain temptations, which sometimes, by diabolical deceit, present themselves under the appearance of good. Thus, for example, the legitimate need to be familiar with today’s society in order to respond to its challenges can lead to a surrender to passing fashions, with a consequent lessening of spiritual fervor or a succumbing to discouragement. The possibility of a deeper spiritual formation might lead consecrated persons to feel somehow superior to other members of the faithful, while the urgent need for

appropriate and necessary training can turn into a frantic quest for efficiency, as if apostolic service depended primarily on human means rather than on God. The praiseworthy desire to become close to the men and women of our day, believers and non-believers, rich and poor, can lead to the adoption of a secularized lifestyle or the promotion of human values in a merely horizontal direction. Sharing in the legitimate aspirations of one's own nation or culture could lead to embracing forms of nationalism or accepting customs which instead need to be purified and elevated in the light of the Gospel. The path to holiness thus involves the acceptance of spiritual combat. This is a demanding reality, which is not always given due attention today. Tradition has often seen an image of this spiritual combat in Jacob's wrestling with the mystery of God, whom he confronts in order to receive his blessing and to see him (cf. Gen 32:23-31). In this episode from the beginnings of biblical history, consecrated persons can recognize a symbol of the asceticism, which they need in order to open their hearts to the Lord and to their brothers and sisters.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 29v–30v)

“Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit” (Mt 4:1).

Consider that once, God's Spirit inspired Christ or rather moved or prompted Him, to go into the desert. There, after a very strict fast of forty days, an evil spirit from hell tempted him. Never before, had Christ had to deal with such a tempter dwelling among people. From this, you should learn that there are many people in the world who do not experience temptations because the evil spirit considers them his own and does not reveal his power against them, does not aim bullets, does not hew wedges and does not set snares. Those who live in an order, a holy and fortified city of God, he attacks fiercely. Thus, the religious, despite their numerous mortifications, fastings and abstinence, are troubled and exposed to unusual temptations. It is so because their common adversary from hell considers them his most implacable enemies and resorts to all the possible tricks, makes the strongest efforts so as to force them out of there as from a camp fortified with God's might and protection, or tries to dig his way in, defeat and annihilate them. Thus, do not think this is any new kind of trouble, cross or religious fight when you hear that even the God-Man was tempted. Nor do not despair, of getting help from the One who led you out of the walls of Babylon to the holy desert. Remain hopeful and have trust, that you will manage to defeat the infernal enemy any time he attacks you, armed with so many disgusting thoughts, vices and wrong stimuli, as his power is much weaker than one might imagine. This dog may bark but he will not bite. While you, whenever you nourish yourself with the Holy Eucharist, acquire new strength and weapon. Certainly, the Eucharist is the mightiest weapon against any temptation.

“If you are the Son of God” (Mt 4:6).

Look at the cunningness of the devilish snake: indeed, how guilefully he assails the Christ-Man. When he sees Him fasting, he tempts Him with greediness. When he does not achieve anything, he attempts even greater impudence saying: “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down” (Mt 4:6). And when this trick does not work, he displays before Him and promises all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence and tries to push Him to idolatry, saying: All these I will bestow on you if you prostrate yourself in homage before me” (Mt 4:9). This is a typical behavior of infernal Ulysses; the same method of temptation he applies to the servants of God. He uses every, even the smallest opportunity to seduce them: greediness with the hungry, sluggishness with the tired, tantrums with the impatient, some he provides with opportunities for lasciviousness, others for impudence, pride and insolence. To the one suggesting greediness we should answer: “Not on bread alone is man to live, but on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4). To the one encouraging presumptuousness we should respond: “You should not put the Lord your God to the test” (Mt 4:7). With other temptations, other solutions should be applied, to overcome them; however, attempts of the tempter should be ridiculed and annihilated. In the end, he targets perseverance in serving God, spiritual exercises and the practicing of the virtues. He partly does it personally, partly by using dishonorable people, helpmates of his cunningness, through revealing bodily pleasures, fame, riches, honors or the waning glory of this world. With these ruses, he tries to discourage one from the service of God, to draw away from the plow, the servants consecrated to God and to lure them out of the shrine of God to the world (which is a crime close to idolatry). But here comes the sharp sword of the God’s word against this hellish, hundred-handed monster: “Scripture has it: ‘You shall do homage to the Lord, your God; him alone shall you adore’” (Mt 4:10).

3. “At that the devil left him, and angels came and waited on him” (Mt 4:11).

Consider the very positive outcome of the temptation. The evil spirit attacked, the God-Man resisted. The One has triumphed, the other has been defeated and forced to flee. The God-Man was surrounded and comforted by angels. This is how God’s Providence deals with the tempted: it allows the evil spirit to attack them, leaves them to themselves, permits blows and them to be flooded with various waves of temptations, but to their great consolation and inexplicable joy, it keeps withholds all the joy and comfort till the end: “I will see to it that the victor eats from the tree of life” (Rev. 2:7). Undoubtedly, it is the same as in the case of the great commanders of the world who, after a skillfully managed battle and a victory, give to their comrades, splendid rewards, wreaths, titles and various privileges. Similarly, our Heavenly Commander, after a good, brave and skillfully managed

battle with temptation, after a victory has been won, would bestow upon his faithful extraordinary graces: spiritual comforts, visions, revelations (oh, how undeserving you are of them!), the highest charisms and heavenly gifts.

Fight, fight heroically and persevere!

Topic X: APOSTOLATE

The Word of the Lord (Mt 28:16-20)

***The Commissioning of the Disciples.** The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

Church’s Documents (RD, 15)

Apostolate

15. From this witness of spousal love for Christ, through which the entire salvific truth of the Gospel becomes particularly visible, there also comes, dear brothers and sisters, as something proper to your vocation, a sharing in the Church’s apostolate, in her universal mission which is accomplished contemporaneously in every nation in many different ways and through many different charisms. Your specific mission is in harmony with the mission of the Apostles, whom the Lord sent “to the whole world” to “teach all nations,” (95) and it is also linked to the mission of the hierarchical order. In the apostolate which consecrated persons exercise, their spousal love for Christ becomes, in an organic way as it were, love for the Church as the Body of Christ, for the Church as the People of God, for the Church which is at one and the same time Spouse and Mother.

It is difficult to describe, or even to list, the many different ways in which consecrated persons fulfill their love for the Church through the apostolate. This apostolate is always born from that particular gift of your founders, which, received

from God and approved by the Church, has become a charism for the whole community. That gift corresponds to the different needs of the Church and the world at particular moments of history, and in its turn it is extended and strengthened in the life of the religious communities as one of the enduring elements of the Church's life and apostolate. In each of these elements, in each field—both of contemplation, so fruitful for the apostolate, and of direct apostolic action—the Church's constant blessing accompanies you, as does at the same time her pastoral and maternal solicitude, with regard to the spiritual identity of your life and the correctness of your activity in the midst of the great universal community of the vocations and charisms of the whole People of God. Through each of the institutes separately and through their organic integration in the whole of the Church's mission, special emphasis is given to that economy of the Redemption, the profound sign of which each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, bears within himself or herself through the consecration and profession of the evangelical counsels.

And thus, even though the many different apostolic works that you perform are extremely important, nevertheless the truly fundamental work of the apostolate remains always what (and at the same time who) you are in the Church. Of each one of you can be repeated, with special appropriateness, these words of St. Paul: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (96) And at the same time this "being hidden with Christ in God" makes it possible to apply to you the words of the Master Himself: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (97)

For the sake of this light with which you must "shine before men," of great importance among you is the witness of mutual love, linked to the fraternal spirit of each community, for the Lord has said: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (98)

The fundamentally community nature of your religious life, nourished by the teaching of the Gospel, by the sacred liturgy and above all by the Eucharist, is a special way of accomplishing this interpersonal and social dimension: by caring for one another, by bearing one another's burdens, you show by your unity that Christ is living in your midst. (99) Important for your apostolate in the Church is every kind of sensitivity to the needs and sufferings of the individual, which are seen so clearly and so movingly in today's world. For the Apostle Paul teaches: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ," (100) and he adds that "love is the fulfilling of the law." (101)

Your mission must be seen! Deep, very deep must be the bond, which links it to the Church! (102) Through everything that you do, and especially through everything that you are, may the truth be proclaimed and reconfirmed that "Christ loved

the Church and gave himself up for her” (103): the truth that is at the basis of the whole economy of the Redemption. From Christ, the Redeemer of the world, may the inexhaustible source of your love for the Church pour forth!

From Founder’s Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 38v–54v)

“He will give you” (John 16:23).

Contemplate the fact that not only the Apostles were given the promise that whatever they were going to ask from their Heavenly Father in the name of His Son, they would receive. In fact, it was given to all of the faithful, the religious in particular, who, by the rule of inheritance, received the Evangelical Counsels from the Apostles. Most certainly, our most Generous Lord also included you in the promise and assurance that nothing will be denied to you, when you ask in a proper way for the right thing. Since God so values people’s prayers, that even when they are uttered by the mouths of the unbelieving, they reach the Divine Majesty and never remain fruitless. We can learn about this from the story about the good centurion in the Book of Acts (see: Acts 10). 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 makes 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. And, on the contrary, what can more effectively, quickly and beautifully cultivate, weed and set new plants of graces in the garden of your soul, than the undertaking and repeated exercise of prayer. Having considered and seriously meditated on these issues, try to pray and ask your Lord that, as He had already given you His favor during the Last Supper, may He never withdraw it from you, for the sake of His glory, and the benefit of you and your brother. Together with David, urge Him in this way: “My soul weeps for sorrow; strengthen me according to your words” (Ps. 118:28) and strengthen me in the practice of prayer, which is pleasing to You and beneficial to me.

“If a man is true to my word” (John 8:51).

Consider that the evangelical lesson of Christ, the Lord, not only guards and protects people from eternal death, but also, from the earthly one. When drunkenness, gluttony, debauchery and other faults, ruin the health of mortal men, reduc-

ing the days of a longer life, weakening and depriving their bodies of strength and causing numerous diseases; the one who keeps away from these things which are forbidden by God's commandments and the admonitions of the evangelical instructions, and avoids them, more than a dog or a snake, will not suffer any of the above mentioned sicknesses or weaknesses. But God's lessons should be guarded more strongly and zealously, because they give to our souls eternal and immortal life. To understand them more easily, ask God to keep you away from any deed against His law and teaching. You, Lord, say that you are a Samaritan, that means, a guardian: you neither corrected the name thrown at you as an insult by the scoundrels nor denied it, making yourself a guardian of the entire human race. So "keep me as the apple of your eye" (Ps 16:8) from any evil, from a fall. Hide me in the shadow of your wings (cf. *ibid.*) from the flame and attacks of Myrmidons from Hell. Make me respect your instructions in return and by keeping them, may I achieve and receive eternal life. Amen.

Topic XI: RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

The Word of the Lord (Ga 2:1-10)

The Council of Jerusalem. Then after fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. I went up in accord with a revelation, and I presented to them the gospel that I preach to the Gentiles—but privately to those of repute—so that I might not be running, or have run, in vain. Moreover, not even Titus, who was with me, although he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised, but because of the false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might enslave us—to them we did not submit even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain intact for you. But from those who were reputed to be important (what they once were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those of repute made me add nothing. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter to the circumcised, for the one who worked in Peter for an apostolate to the circumcised worked also in me for the Gentiles, and when they recognized the grace bestowed upon me, James and Kephias and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas their right hands in partnership, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, we were to be mindful of the poor, which is the very thing I was eager to do.

Church's Documents (VC 46)***“Sentire cum Ecclesia”***

46. A great task also belongs to the consecrated life in the light of the teaching about the Church as communion, so strongly proposed by the Second Vatican Council. Consecrated persons are asked to be true experts of communion and to practice the spirituality of communion as “witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design”. The sense of ecclesial communion, developing into a spirituality of communion, promotes a way of thinking, speaking and acting which enables the Church to grow in depth and extension. The life of communion in fact “becomes a sign for all the world and a compelling force that leads people to faith in Christ ... In this way communion leads to mission, and itself becomes mission”; indeed, “communion begets communion: in essence it is a communion that is missionary”. In founders and foundresses we see a constant and lively sense of the Church, which they manifest by their full participation in all aspects of the Church’s life, and in their ready obedience to the Bishops and especially to the Roman Pontiff. Against this background of love towards Holy Church, “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), we readily understand the devotion of Saint Francis of Assisi for “the Lord Pope”, the daughterly outspokenness of Saint Catherine of Siena towards the one whom she called “sweet Christ on earth”, the apostolic obedience and the *sentire cum Ecclesia* of Saint Ignatius Loyola, and the joyful profession of faith made by Saint Teresa of Avila: “I am a daughter of the Church”. We can also understand the deep desire of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus: “In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love”. These testimonies are representative of the full ecclesial communion which the Saints, founders and foundresses, have shared in diverse and often difficult times and circumstances. They are examples which consecrated persons need constantly to recall if they are to resist the particularly strong centrifugal and disruptive forces at work today. A distinctive aspect of ecclesial communion is allegiance of mind and heart to the Magisterium of the Bishops, an allegiance which must be lived honestly and clearly testified to before the People of God by all consecrated persons, especially those involved in theological research, teaching, publishing, catechesis and the use of the means of social communication. Because consecrated persons have a special place in the Church, their attitude in this regard is of immense importance for the whole People of God. Their witness of filial love will give power and forcefulness to their apostolic activity which, in the context of the prophetic mission of all the baptized, is generally distinguished by special forms of cooperation with the Hierarchy. In a specific way, through the richness of their charisms, consecrated persons help the Church to reveal ever more deeply her nature as the sacrament “of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind”.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 165r–166r)***Meditation IX. On Love***

1. You should meditate now on this virtue, due to which, all of creation came into being: earth and sky, and man was created. God became man and though beyond suffering, He suffered in a body given to pain, and was cruelly killed, and though immortal, He died for you, not as God but as man. Thanks to this love, Heavenly Light, Teacher of the Truth, and the Spirit of all knowledge descended from Heaven on the Apostles and the other followers, so that the one Body of God's Church could be created out of many nations of various descent, like a body made of many limbs, and that many religious communities, societies and orders, cemented by one Spirit and love of one God, could live in the greatest unity. You should meditate upon this virtue, which suppresses unrest, averts wars, breeds peace, cherishes laws, loves a brother, embraces an enemy, wishes the best to all, and does best to everyone. So think how you are going to practice this virtue, with what fervor, steadiness, persistence and courage. Demand also from yourself its deeds, require them from your hands. Here they are:

—the love of God above all, avoiding sin and any weakness more than anything else; helping your brother as much as possible, contributing to the common good; responding to the demands of your vocation, constantly striving for a more perfect life, making efforts not to hurt anybody with thought, word, deed, suspicion or bad example, seeking to not lead anybody astray, nor to spoil anyone's morals, nor to lead anyone to condemnation;

—having a spirit of love of the good and the just, praying for those who fall and are evil; visiting the sick, teaching the uninstructed, reprimanding the deceitful, bringing help and advice to the needy and those deprived of any support, freeing captives, visiting prisoners, consoling the depressed, restraining the excessively and improperly joyful; doing to others what we desire for ourselves and refraining from what we detest and avoid, as well as not wishing or putting on them any of the above. How numerous are the deeds of noble love! How seldom you strove for and performed them!

2. Reflect on the deficiencies, which preclude God's love. You possess them when you are cold on your path to perfection which you entered out of love for God, when you do not spread God's glory, humiliate the Order, when you are content with a lower standard of perfection and give up in your strife out of negligence or meanness, when you place obstacles to the way of the Best and the Highest God from gaining free access to your heart, to being present and ruling in it, when you long for the world, praise it or even delight in it in your thoughts; when you do not want to avoid, and remove from yourself, any smaller or bigger sin, or even tiny imperfections and

opportunities for them. All of this, to a large extent, opposes the love of God and gravely offends the infinite Goodness. As for the love of your brother, you should examine whether you have not been possessed by such vices as anger, grumbling, reluctance, jealousy, hatred, suspicion, disrespect, lack of gentleness and mercy, distrust, deceit, slander or even defamation of the deceased? Haven't they ruled over you, when you unjustly accused others, or tolerated such situations, when you hideously held somebody up to ridicule, got irritated too soon, did not wish others well, did not rejoice in somebody's success, did not help someone in need, did not offer relief in poverty, scorned or neglected showing due respect, did not tolerate other's weaknesses, or did not pray for them? Maybe you envied what others possessed by decree of Providence or talents bestowed by God, or maybe you destroyed or belittled them? Maybe you belittled or defamed not only the good opinion of others, but also of their deeds? Maybe you did not keep your word, or did not work for the Community? Maybe in a case of great danger which threatened somebody's salvation, you did not even try to take to special measures to save your brother?

3. Consider that to upset someone, unjustly and with trifles, is against love. For example, when, for an important reason, you cause distress to your superiors, your equals or those lower than you, when you throw the entire Order into confusion, a province or a religious house where you stay, or make trouble yourself. Maybe you wound the eyes and souls of others, with a not fully religious and exemplary life and manners, and in this way, you violate—not to say—destroy, the tie of the most noble, most precious and most Godly virtue. Have you not been a cause of any confusion? Have you not violated the peace and the quiet inside a religious house or outside, among the lay people or people who belong to another class? Have you not neglected in your work, sharing all that is good in you, what you obtained for that purpose, thanks to God's grace and your resourcefulness? Or despite all your strength and abilities, have you not sought to avoid general harm, which threatened you? Maybe according to the number and quality of talents given to you by God and received by nature, you have not become a pride of the Order and the Religious House in which you stay, and the Church of God in particular, and you did not contribute to its development; not providing help when you should and could have done that? And while others were doing it, have you assisted them, or to the contrary, disturbed them? Meditating on the above mentioned and many other offenses against love which the Spirit of God brings your soul to realize its guilt, regret as deeply as you can, the realized transgressions, resolve to make up for them, and try to return to deeds of love. In your conversation with God, carried out with the greatest love, following your reason, delight in God and with this love, ease the feelings of your heart and awaken a double act of love for God and your brother.

Topic XII: IN FOLLOWING CHRIST WITH MARYThe Word of the Lord (Mk 3:31-35)

Jesus and His Family. *His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers [and your sisters] are outside asking for you." But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and [my] brothers?" and looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. [For] whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."*

Church's Documents (John Paul II's Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated Persons Belonging to Religious Communities and Secular Institutes on the Occasion of the Marian Year [May 22, 1988] *Ad omnes personas consecratas*)

While from a human point of view a person's consecration can be compared to "losing one's life", it is also the most direct way of "finding" it. For Christ says: "He who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 10:39). These words certainly express the radical nature of the Gospel. At the same time we cannot fail to notice how much they apply to the human being, and what a unique anthropological dimension they have. What is more fundamental for a human being—man or woman—than precisely this: finding oneself, finding oneself in Christ, since Christ is the "whole fullness" (cf. Col 2:9)?

These thoughts concerning the consecration of the person through the profession of the evangelical counsels keep us constantly within the sphere of the Paschal Mystery. Together with Mary, let us seek to be sharers in this death which brought forth fruits of "new life" in the Resurrection: a death like this on the Cross was infamous, and it was the death of her own Son! But precisely there, at the foot of the Cross, "where she stood, not without a divine plan", (4) did not Mary realize in a new way everything that she had already heard on the day of the Annunciation? Precisely there, precisely through "the sword which pierced her soul" (cf. Lk 2:35), through an incomparable "kenosis of faith", (5) did not Mary perceive completely the full truth about her motherhood? Precisely there, did she not definitively identify herself with that truth, "rediscovering her soul", the soul which, in the experience of Golgotha, she had to "lose" in the most painful way for the sake of Christ and the Gospel?

It is precisely into this complete "rediscovery" of the truth about her divine motherhood which became Mary's "part" from the moment of the Annunciation

that there fit Christ's words on the Cross, the words referring to the Apostle John, referring to a man: "Behold, your son!" (cf. Jn 19:26).

Dear brothers and sisters: let us constantly return, with our vocation, with our consecration, to the depths of the Paschal Mystery. Let us present ourselves at Christ's Cross next to his Mother. Let us learn our vocation from her. Did not Christ himself say: "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt 12:50)?

From Founder's Writings (excerpts from *Orator Crucifixus* [Crucified Preacher])

WORD III OF THE CRUCIFIED ORATOR

"He said to his mother, 'Woman, there is your son.' In turn he said to the disciple, 'There is your Mother'" (John 19: [26-27]).

The most merciful Virgin Mary is the Mother of sinners. They, in the person of John, were given to her as sons by the Redeemer.

I congratulate the pure John, that the Lord, before His Death on the Cross, entrusted to him, a virgin, the care of His Virgin Mother. At the same time, I am very happy, that in the person of John, all the sinners were offered as sons, to this most merciful Mother of God. Cornelius, a learned commentator on the Holy Bible, turns to the Mother of God, as though in the name of Christ, with these words, "O Mother! From now on, become a brave and magnanimous woman. In the place of me, be the foundation, the rock and the pillar of My Church, to support it with your might, to drive away and disperse with your perseverance, counsel and prayer, the storms of attacks rising against it, not only now but in the future, for centuries, till the end of the world."

Remain hopeful, sinners! The crucified Jesus hands over His Church to His most merciful Mother. And I have in mind the Church "in which—as Gregory the Great accounts—the good are mixed with the bad, the condemned with the chosen." We should assume that, in this way, our Lord entrusted in the person of John, to the Virgin even you, the evil ones, together with the good: He gave Her to you as a merciful Mother. "Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, there is (pointing to any one of us, both good and bad) your son. In turn he said to the disciple: (undeniably any man, the just together with the sinner) 'There is your Mother.'" /.../

The thing worth remembering, and not at all alien to my statement, was written down by the Apostle-Prophet in the twelve chapter of his Revelation. He talks there

about a Woman clothed with the sun and stepping on the moon who appeared to him. Her radiant temple adorned with a crown of twelve stars, She waited to give birth to a child. But there was also a watchful Dragon, ready to devour the beloved child of His mother as soon as it is born. The Heavenly Woman managed to happily deliver a Son—a boy. The one, to be taken from the mouth of the dragon, “was caught up to God and to his throne. The woman herself, fled into the desert” (Rev 12:5-6).

At this moment, the Commander of God’s army, Michael, comes out of the celestial court with his legion, against the dragon, defeats him, drives out and hurls him down to the earth.

With the greatest fury, the Primeval Snake received the defeat inflicted by the reinforcements of this Heavenly Woman. Thus, strengthened again, he pursues Her. Yet, She receives in time, two wings from heaven, and again flees to the desert. “When the dragon saw,” writes the Prophet, inspired by the Spirit, “that he had been cast down to the earth, he pursued the Woman who had given birth to the boy. But the Woman was given the wings of a gigantic eagle so that She could fly off to her place in the desert” (ibid., 13-14).

A very devout writer, Bernardino de Busto, in this Woman, adorned with a crown of stars, clothed in the sunlight, with Her holy feet resting on the moon, instead of a footstool, having two gigantic wings, makes us see none else but God’s Mother, the Virgin, a particular Protector and Advocate of the just, and even more, the sinners. This is how he explains the vision of John: Our Most Holy Virgin guards us under Her wings and protects us from traps. She is the Woman who was given gigantic wings. One is the wing of mercy where all the sinners flee, to reconcile with God, the other the wing of grace, under which, the just hide to persevere in grace.” /.../

Oh, the strongest and most merciful Tower of refuge! Under your protection, a sinner does not have to fear anything, anything! Oh, Mother, more merciful than we can say or think! When the sinful sons of Adam came to hide in your lap, they are free from fear and the danger of eternal death. They receive the assurance of a happy eternity.

In fact, our God, whose goodness and mercy knows no limits, so as not to be bound to punish or destroy us, in our shameful falls, according to the rule of his justice; He gave us, in His care, the Virgin Mary as our advocate with Him, just as He used to give Esther to the Jews. /.../. Esther, this deliverer of the Jews, is a type of the Virgin, most merciful Queen of heaven and earth, Advocate of sinners. /.../

Come here, o desperate sinner! You, who under the burden of your sins, are thrust to the very bottom of Hell and believe your salvation is lost. Come here! Run

to the feet of Mary! “There is your Mother.” Why do you hesitate? Why are you afraid? Why are you horrified? /.../ God, the Father of mercy, wishes us to place our entire hope for eternal life, right after Him, in our Mother. Some time ago, He already spoke about this to Catherine of Siena, a person of particular devotion, a wonderful star of the Dominican family: “Mary, a glorious Mother of my only Son, out of My goodness, for the respect of the Incarnate Word, was given this, so that not one just or sinful person, who with a pious respect, runs to Her, will by any means be torn to pieces or devoured by the infernal demon. Since She was chosen by Me, prepared and given out as the tastiest bait to catch people, especially sinners.”

I close with the words of Fulbert of Chartres: “May the sinners come” [...] to Her, “beating their breasts and crying in their hearts; they also, when they repent sincerely will receive the desired forgiveness.”

PART II

LET US GET TO KNOW OUR FOUNDER MORE CLOSELY

**CHRONICLES OF THE LIFE OF
FR. STANISLAUS OF JESUS MARY PAPCZYŃSKI**

Childhood and youth

1631

May 18 little Johnny comes into this world to parents Tomasz Papka

and Zofia, neé Tacikowska;

- 1640–1643** Johnny began grammar school at the parish in Podegrodzie, which he finished in 1643 as the 1st grade cycle (*infima*);
- 1643** He continued grammar school at a Nowy Sącz in the 2nd grade cycle (*media*);
- 1646** In a few weeks he continued his studies at the Jesuit College in Jaroslawa
- 1646—1649** applies to the Jesuit College in Lvov; where he is not accepted, he engages a paid tutor and shortly becomes seriously ill; miraculously healed, he returns to Podegrodzie in 1649;
- 1649—1650** He undertakes studies at the Piarist College in Podoliniec and completes 3 classes of grammar school (*suprema*);
- 1650—1651** He studies at the Jesuit College in Lvov, where he finishes poetics and begins rhetoric, but is forced to leave town because of the war;
- 1652—1654** Continued education in the Jesuit College in Rawa Mazowiecka, where he completes rhetoric and also high school, he also did two years of philosophy.

Piarist period

- 1654** July 2 he enters the Piarist novitiate in Podoliniec (Slovakia);
- 1655** In his second year of the novitiate, he studies theology with the Reformed Franciscans in Warsaw;
- 1656** July 22 he makes his first vows in the Piarist Order;
- 1658—1660** He teaches rhetoric at the Piarist College in Podoliniec;
- 1661** March 12 , in Brzozów near Rzeszów, he is ordained priest at the hands of the Bishop of Przemyśl, Stanislaus Tarnowski;
- 1660 –1662** He teaches rhetoric at the Piarist College in Rzeszów;
- 1663–1667** In Warsaw he is a: teacher, preacher, confessor, moderator of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Grace, prefect of the College, twice temporarily substitutes for the Rector at the religious house;
- 1667** September 27th Fr. Stanislaus reports to Rome, at the summons of the Superior General;
- 1668** the General sends him from Rome to Nikolsburg (Mikulov in Bohemia);

- 1669** In September he reports to the Piarist residence in Kazimierz, district of Krakow;
- 1670** In January he is imprisoned first in the religious house in Podoliniec, and later in Prievidzy (Slovakia); set free three months later, on March 22, he returns to Kazimierz and surrenders himself into the Bishop's protection.

Founder of the Marian

- 1670** December 11th he receives from the hands of the Vicar Provincial, Fr. M. Kraus, the papal dispensation to leave the Piarists, at the same time he makes the act of Oblation in the presence of these persons, with the intention to found the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
- 1671 –1673** He serves as chaplain at the Karski residence in Lubocza; where he puts on the white habit;
- 1673** In accord with the advise of Fr. Franciszek Wilga, a Cameldolite, and with the agreement of the Ordinary, Bishop Stefan Wierzbowski, Fr. Papczyński goes on September 30 to the Korabiew Forest and becomes the superior of a hermits' community. During his visitation on October 24, Bishop Jacek Świącicki, the archdeacon and Warsaw official, by decree confirms the first Marian monastery;
- 1677** the Diet of the Republic of Poland approves the founding of the Institute of the Marian Fathers Hermits in the Korabiew Forest;
- 1677** the Marians receive the Church of the Cenacle of the Lord in New Jerusalem (Nowa Jerozolima—presently Góra Kalwaria), where Bishop Stefan Wierzbowski transfers Fr. Papczyński from the Korabiew Forest;
- 1679** April 21 the canonical founding of the Congregation of Marian Fathers is realized by Bishop Stefan Wierzbowski in New Jerusalem;
- 1684** In June the Founder convokes the first General Chapter in the Korabiew Forest;
- 1690** Fr. Stanislaus goes to Rome seeking papal approval for the Marian Institute; there he became ill and returned home without achieving his goal;
- 1698** In the fall of this year, Fr. Papczyński sends Fr. Joachim Kozłowski to Rome, charging him to obtain papal approval for the Marian Institute;

- 1699** September 21 the Apostolic See grants approval to the Congregation of Marians, to become an Order with solemn vows, after its acceptance of the Rule of the Ten Evangelical Virtues of the B.V.M. and its aggregation into the Order of the Franciscan Brothers Minor;
- 1699** October 15 the Marians receive a third house in Gozlin;
- 1699** Pope Innocent XII sends a letter (a *breve*) to the Apostolic Nuncio in Warsaw charging him to receive the vows from the Marians;
- 1701** June 6 the Founder professes solemn vows in the hands of the Apostolic Nuncio, Francisco Pignatelli in Warsaw; on July 5 in the Cenacle of the Lord, Fr. Founder receives the profession of vows from his confreres;
- 1701** September 17 Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński dies at Góra Kalwaria and is buried there, in the church of the Cenacle of the Lord.

Beatification process and glory of holiness

- 1705** First biography of Fr. Papczyński entitled The Life of the Foudner is written by Fr. Mansueto Leporini, OFM;
- 1751** Fr. Casimir Wyszynski, as Procurator of the Congregation, goes to Rome and there begins the first steps towards the opening of the beatification process of Fr. Papczyński; he also prepares the plans of the *interrogations* and *articles* of the process;
- 1754** Fr. Casimir Wyszynski writes The Life of the Servant of God, Father Stanislaus Papczyński;
- 1764** December 20, 1764, the Diet of the Polish Republic assembled for the coronation of King Stanislaus August proposed A Petition "ad Curiam Romanam" for the canonization and beatification of Stanislaus Papczyński;
- 1767** Fr. Jacek Wasilewski, Superior General of the Marians, nominates Fr. Ludwik Zapałkowicz the procurator for conducting the process;
- 1767** June 10, the 1st session of the Poznań Information Process of Beatification Fr. Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński is held in Warsaw;
- 1767** Interruption of the process because of the imprisonment by Moscovite authorities of Bishop J. Załuski, Chairman of the Tribunal;
- 1768** Nomination of Anthony Okęcki the new Chairman and continuation

- of the process;
- 1769** Closing of the diocesan process and transferring of the acts to the Roman Congregation;
- 1772** Thirteen letters signed by Bishops, Major religious orders Superiors and State officials, petitioning for the beatification of Fr. Founder were sent to the Holy See; in addition, in the same year, six letters of similar content were also issued in Rome;
- 1772–1775** Preparation of *Informatio*, *Summarium*, and *Animadversiones Fidei Promotoris*;
- 1775** July 15 the Congregation for the Rites issued a decree approving of Fr. Papczyński's writings;
- 1775** Last document in the ongoing process is prepared; the process is interrupted;
- 1952** Continuation of the process and the nomination of a Postulator by the Marian General Chapter;
- 1992** 13 June the proclamation of the *Decree of Heroic Virtues* of Fr. Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński.

STRONG IN FAITH

SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY OF FR. STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI

As we await the beatification of the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński, it behooves us Marians, to once again look at his life and works. Since the chronicles of our Founder's life are generally well known, we will concentrate on certain aspects of his "spiritual biography" following the intuition of his first biographers—Fr. Mansueto Leporini, a Franciscan, and Fr. Casimir Wyszynski, a Marian—who convincingly characterized him as a holy man. Let us again try to discover the signs of his supernatural faith, as well as his likeness to Christ and Mary, the most perfect disciple.

The 300-year wait for the recognition by the Church of Fr. Papczyński's holiness may on the one hand, rise questions about its merit and "ability to influence" but on the other hand, it shows the enduring conviction of believers, that we are dealing with a holy man, who inspires new generations through the example of his life and the merit of his works. What does Father Founder's life and spirituality say to us Marians today?

The Experiencing of Divine Providence

Father Stanislaus Papczyński's life was above all an experience of the living God, present in human history, near to the person, of the God, who reveals Himself in the mystery of the incarnation, and in the plan of salvation He shows each one His redeeming love. He wrote of this: *"God's love for men is so great, that neither the tongue of men nor angles is able to express it, and the mind cannot comprehend it. Even if you would dismiss other acts of love and even if nothing else had been revealed to us other than this, that for the salvation of all mankind God ordained to give as a burnt offering, His only Son, and actually did this, this would in itself be sufficient proof of an infinite, selfless, and unfathomable love"* (*Inspectio cordis*).

Father Founder recognized this gratuitous love of God the Father, in the events of his life through many signs of Divine Providence. His first biographies (the trustworthiness of which has been validated during Fr. Papczyński's beatification process) evidence the conviction of the witnesses his life, that God Himself cher-

ished His servant as *the apple of His eye*. To corroborate this truth, very many testimonies are gathered in them about the mortal dangers in which little Jan [John] (the baptismal name of the Founder) met either because of an accident or illness, but from which he had been miraculously saved. This was to make clear the sublime goodness of God the Father, who concerned Himself with His child.

The oldest preserved writings of Fr. Papczyński, are from the time of his novitiate with the Piarists, around 1656, they give a indication of his gratitude to God for favors received, particularly for the spiritual graces. It was no different when he looked on his life in the face of approaching death: *“I give thanks to the Divine Majesty for graces, kindnesses, gifts, and benefits, with which I have been most generously showered”* (*First Testament*). From childhood he bore in his heart an awareness of God’s closeness and goodness, whose likeness dwells in the man of pure heart. During his studies in Nowy Sącz, when he perceived that his teacher — reputed deserving of praise for his vast knowledge — conducted himself immorally, corrupting the pupils, young John fled this school so as to escape this man’s evil influence. It was instilled in him, most probably in his family home, that the salvation of one’s soul must be placed above prosperity in this world. He was particularly grateful to God for preserving him from sin. He tried to look upon his times through the eyes of faith; that had the greatest value which led to salvation and that being pleasing to God was far more important than participating in the pleasures of this world.

The light of God’s love also flowed into Fr. Papczyński’s heart through his parents: his upright, but also exacting father Tomasz along with his mother Zofia, known for her piety and patience. It would be minimizing their role to stop only at such a general characterization. Tomasz Papka (Fr. Stanislaus changed his name to Papczyński during his time of studies) must have been regarded as an honest and trustworthy man since the people of Podegrodzie elected him time and again as their village bailiff{administrator}. Truly, directness and honesty will be the two characteristics that will mark Fr. Papczyński throughout his entire life. Thanks to his father’s resourcefulness and thriftiness, Johnny, after finishing the parish school, was able to continue his studies at colleges some distance from Podegrodzie. Tomasz also instilled in his children the virtue of hard work. When his son John did not make progress at school and consequently left, he was immediately sent to tend the sheep. Years later, the Founder of the Congregation of Marians will instill in his confreres the need to dedicate oneself to work; however, he never put it before prayer and spiritual formation: *“There are two features with which holy institutes shine—virtue and education. Virtue reveals the observance of the religious rule; education commands the benefit of the neighbor [...] Thus, no one shall shirk from prayer either mental or vocal and from any other of our communal and traditional exercises or academic works”* (*Letter to the Marians at the Korabiew Forest, April 19, 1690*).

He most probably caught from his mother, a woman shining with simplicity and piety, his love for the life of prayer. Her membership in various confraternities was without doubt a sign of her religiousness, passed down to her children. The piety of Zofia Papka likewise manifested itself in her deeply evangelical attitude of forgiveness, which Fr. C. Wyszyński noted in his biography of Fr. St. Papczyński. Insulted and beaten by her neighbor, Zofia forgave him the transgression, and by the example of her attitude she was able to calm down the impetuous young John who wished to avenge his mother. Her patience also had a beneficial influence over her husband—a man sometimes impetuous, even at times aggressive—whom she also managed to convince to forgive the offender. Young Papczyński grew up in a family circle where piety influenced concrete choices and attitudes of life.

The history of young John's "academic career" is also filled with signs of Divine Providence. He was sent to school at about the age of seven, quickly stopped studying, because of the inability to cope with their simplest demands. He returned home humiliated and was sent to tend sheep. However, during the following year something happened that totally changed his disposition toward studies. Father Papczyński's biographers attribute this to a particular intervention of Our Lady to whom he turned for help in prayer. Unbeknown to his parents, he returned to school where he learned the entire alphabet in just a couple of hours. In the course of three years he successfully completed the elementary school program and started the high school course, unexpectedly he fell into a state of distaste for studies and returned to tending sheep.

Father Papczyński's childhood shows a struggle between God's grace and the instability of his character. His departures and returns, his spells of apathy and enthusiasm, decisions to flee and then to come back, were all intertwined in a truly dramatic story. A gifted student twice returned to tend sheep, after a time of reflection, he undertook a new attempt. John came through those interruptions so well formed, that at the age of 15 he left his family home to continue his education in Jarosław and Lvov, several hundred kilometers distant from his native Podegrodzie, where the school did not offer possible advancement. Overcoming inner trials, he now had to give his full attention to matters out of his control. Twice he became seriously ill. He had to leave colleges in Podoliniec and Lvov either because of advancing epidemics or war hostilities. He also had to earn his living by tutoring. These struggles within himself and the outward difficulties had an inestimable value for the future Founder of the Marians. They formed him into a man of faith and trust, who owed everything to the grace of God, but who also was an uncompromising man, not shrinking before the most difficult of challenges. Mansueto Leporini—Fr. Papczyński's first biographer—summed it all up in a generic but definitive statement, that he declared "*to place all hope only in Divine Providence.*"

Consecrated to God

Drawn by the love God, John Papczyński determined to consecrate everything to Him. His final decision to join a religious community was made at the age of 23, although he probably thought about it several years before. He had behind him a troubled academic path, grave illnesses, hunger, poverty and distance from his family home. Overcoming these obstacles he could finally look with hope to the future. His academic achievements (completion of high school and philosophy) assured him employment and position; they presaged a happy and secure life. His family found him a promising bride, reckoning that after years of studies and wandering in the world he would finally find peace in a family nest. He, however, decided to consecrate himself to God's service on the path of religious life.

Father Papczyński's later works and decisions showed that he envisaged the religious life as the most perfect way of realizing the Gospel life. He desired to live the evangelical ideal, so as to imitate Jesus and Mary. During his youth he had the possibility of closely knowing two religious orders, from which he obtained his education—the Jesuits and Piarists. He chose the latter, less known in the Church, in addition, undergoing at that time some sort of an inner crisis. From 1646 by a decision of the Holy See religious vows could not be professed within the Piarist order. This most probably influenced John so that he did not join a religious order earlier, waiting for the overturn of the prohibition of the right to make religious vows in the Piarists. This community, whose goal was to educate the spiritually neglected and poor youngsters, was to give witness to poverty and piety, he called in his later writings; *the most holy Congregation of Pious Schools, more precious than life itself this Congregation of Pious Schools, the most beloved Association of the Poor of Our Lady (Fundatio domus recollectionis)*, and he desired to remain therein until the end of his life.

Being invested with the Piarists' habit, he received the religious name of Stanislaus of Jesus Mary. This name was mirrored in his life. The new patron of Fr. Papczyński was the holy Krakowian bishop Stanislaus—a martyr for the faith and freedom of the Church, an uncompromising defender of evangelical values. Consciously Fr. Papczyński entered the course of defending values and often put it before his personal life. The prefix "of Jesus Mary" in his religious name would resonate in his love for the Crucified Christ and Mary Immaculately Conceived.

From the beginning of his life in the Piarist order, Stanislaus Papczyński gave himself whole-heartedly in fulfilling of his vocation. In 1675, (that is four years after he left the Piarists), when writing about his life in the Congregation of Pious Schools, Fr. Stanislaus admitted: *"I greatly cherished my religious vocation that came from nowhere else but God Himself"* (*Fundatio domus recollectionis*). He

regarded his vocation to the community founded by Joseph Calasanti as a tremendous grace, and he accepted the community's way of life as his own. He wholeheartedly dedicated himself to works assigned by his superiors, seeing them as a path to holiness for himself and the faithful. As the *Decree of the Heroic Virtues* states, Stanislaus Papczyński "made such a great progress in religious life during his first year of the novitiate, that he could be sent to study theology in Warsaw in the beginning of his second year. There [...] in 1656, he made simple vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience; and, after receiving four lower ordinations, he was ordained a sub-deacon." His first years in following the way of the evangelical counsels predicted a beautiful and joyful vocation.

Submitting to strive for holiness above all else, aware of his past life's shortcomings, Stanislaus, prayed thus to the Lord before making his vows: "*Grant that, having done so many bad deeds, I may do good ones in my vocation.*" For the purpose of self-humiliation, the Servant of God described his "many bad deeds" in *Secreta Conscientiae*. This was a type of confession, in which he acknowledged the shortcomings and sins of his youth, committed before his entering the Piarist Order, he left these recollections as a second St. Augustine, so that others could condemn him (*Acts of the Information Process*). He recognized the doing of good as his primary task. There was no lack of occasions for this. Before long, Stanislaus became a teacher of rhetoric. After ordination to the diaconate and the priesthood in 1661, he promptly earned the prestige of an excellent speaker and a zealous shepherd of souls. Notwithstanding his young age, many distinguished persons—among them the Nuncio Antonio Pignatelli, future Pope Innocent XII—approached him for confession, seeking his spiritual advice. Gradually he became more proficient in teaching and wrote a 6-volume textbook on rhetoric, the short version of which—*Prodromus reginae artium* (Introduction to Rhetoric)—was reprinted many times.

A particular sign of Fr. Papczyński's religious vocation was his profound spiritual union with the Founder of the Piarists—St. Joseph Calasanti. Father Stanislaus saw in him as a living witness to the Gospel and by this—his spiritual director. The young priest Stanislaus was assigned the function of Vice-Postulator of the beatification process of the Piarists' Founder. Father Stanislaus was entrusted with procuring from ecclesiastical and civic high officials, letters of postulation for opening the beatification process in Rome. Within a year, his enthusiasm and zeal prompted many prominent persons and institutes of the Republic to produce letters supporting the sanctity of the Piarists' Founder. Thanks to this, the Holy See was able to open the beatification process in Rome. Father Stanislaus Papczyński was gaining recognition among his confreres and the faithful. He could be easily called an accomplished religious order priest.

With Christ the Crucified

The sincere desire to totally consecrate himself to God necessitated an encounter, in the life of Fr. Papczyński, with the suffering of the cross. Father Papczyński embraced it in union with the Suffering Christ. In the life Founder of the Marian's we find three stages of his characteristic participation in the Passion of Christ.

The first hardship came upon the 17-year old Johnny in Lvov, where he tried to enter the Jesuit College to complete his grammar course. Due to his insufficient academic training and the lack of letters of recommendation, he was not accepted. Instead of giving himself entirely to further studies, in order to secure a way of life, he had to give private lessons to two sons of the Lvovian townsmen for a year and a half. And as if this delay in his idle plans was insignificant, he became seriously ill with a contagious disease, because of which he found himself on the street. For many months he shared the fate of the homeless and the beggars, sleeping in the street or on a litter. He became acquainted with many humiliations and was overcome by severe physical fatigue that disabled him so that he could not even go to church on Christmas Day. It looked as if God had completely abandoned him. Some biographers compare him to the biblical Job, which does not seem a bit overstated. Overwhelmed with a fever in the middle of winter, totally covered with ulcers on his body, almost starving Johnny was first cared for by unknown man, but for his recovery from sickness he thanked the Lvovian family of Snopek, who took him into their home, despite his highly contagious disease. From this time on, Fr. Papczyński showed exceptional love toward the poor, the homeless, and the afflicted.

Several years later he experienced another cross and this occasioned by his own confreres in religious life. The first years of Fr. Papczyński's life in the Piarist Order did not give an inkling of the dramatic conclusion of his history—his leaving the Order. The conflict between the young priest and some of his superiors began in 1665 in regard to the election of the superiors. Father Stanislaus was convinced, based on the advice of experts in Canon Law, that the superiors for the Polish Province of the Piarist Order ought to be elected by the Provincial Chapter instead of being selected by the Superior General. He proclaimed his views in public, which led to dissension. Meanwhile, the new superior was elected in Rome, not in the Province, which further aggravated the situation. With time another reason for dissension emerged: the reminder by Fr. Papczyński for observing the religious order's discipline. From the time of novitiate, the Servant of God was known for his zeal in the practice of the religious life and his daily faithfulness to the rule. Any relaxation or violation in regard to these values met with his disapproval, which was labeled during one of the Polish Province Chapters as a "firebrand attitude." For these reasons, Fr. Papczyński's relations with his superiors became more and more tense, not so much because of disobedience, but because of his determination in

defense of his reasons. He felt himself misunderstood and termed this time of his life “the way of the cross.”

The account of this quarrel could probably serve as a sensational scenario for a film: accusatory letters sent to the Nuncio, to civil authorities, and to the General of the Piarists. Fr. Papczyński summoned to Rome; an very difficult and trying trip; exoneration and further accusations; kidnapping and imprisonment; several times renewed petitions for dispensation from simple vows; and finally, the peaceful unraveling of the matter on December 11, 1670: releasing from religious vows and oath of persevering in the Piarist Order. During this trying time Fr. Stanislaus authored two series of Passion sermons: *Orator crucifixus* (Crucified Orator) and *Christus patiens* (The Suffering Christ), which give witness to his following the path of faith, which he measured with eyes fixed on Christ’s Passion. Christ Himself was his guide on the thorny road of life and vocation, his companion in times of doubt and abandon, his master in forgiving the offenders and accusers. From contemplating Christ’s Passion Fr. Stanislaus drew strength for loving his enemies and staying faithful to God’s calling. Hope for his salvation he saw in Christ alone: “*I grieve from the very bottom of my heart, and I desire to grieve most perfectly, because of love for God, for my sins, all of which I place in the precious wounds of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer*” (*First Testament*).

Fr. Papczyński himself, in the *Apology for leaving the Order of the Pious Schools* gave as the primary reason of his departure, his desire to restore peace in the Province, which the *Decree of Heroic Virtues* accented as Fr. Stanislaus’s love for his Order. For many years he sought ways and means for clarifying all misunderstandings and calming emotions. He dearly loved his vocation and Order; he was fascinated by the personality of Founder—St. Joseph Calasanti. The charism of educating children and youth as well as living in the spirit of *utmost poverty* was very dear to him. Father Papczyński left the Piarists with a broken heart because he still yearned to follow the road of the Evangelical Counsels. However, he decided that peace within his beloved congregation was of greatest importance. His “way of the cross” lived out in faith and in the spirit of love brought about a blessed fruit. The subsequent 30 years of Fr. Papczyński’s life showed that love and respect for the Piarists did not die away in his heart, inasmuch as they produced concrete forms of mutual cooperation. Examples of this was: timely spiritual direction provided by the Piarists, his delivering spiritual conferences to them, the fruit of which is *Inspectio cordis* (Discerning with eyes of the heart), his financially supporting the Piarists schools, but above all, receiving by his own request in 1691 and 1696 spiritual affiliation of the Marians to the Order of the Pious Schools.

Third test of the Servant of God’s faith was related to the beginnings of the Marian Order that he had founded. It happened in 1671. In *Fundatio domus recol-*

lectionis (Founding of the retreat house), Fr. Stanislaus recalled: “I was tormented and nearly embarrassed by great dilemmas, scruples, doubts, uncertainties, fears. For who indeed, could have such a lax conscience that without it he would go from the state of a religious, even if only simple vows, to a purely lay state?” Inwardly convinced of the necessity to continue the way of life of consecration to God and of his calling to found a new religious community to honor the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, he had to make radical choices. His refusal to accept the position of the Canon at the Cathedral of Płock was at the bottom of his losing Bishop Jan Gembicki’s friendship, at the time he was bishop was the Ordinary of Płock, becoming later the Ordinary of Krakow. Bishop Michał Oborski, the Auxiliary Bishop of Krakow, formerly well disposed towards Fr. Stanislaus, quite unexpectedly withdrew his support for the idea of founding a Marian Congregation. In addition, Stefan Wierzbowski, the Bishop of Poznań, in whose diocese Fr. Stanislaus lived, despite of his regard for the latter, made the establishment of the Marian Order in his diocese dependent upon the permission of the Holy See, on which Fr. Stanislaus could not count. Confessors, with whom Fr. Papczyński sought advise, held contrary views. Not a few candidates for the Order proved to be unsuitable. Although inwardly convinced of God’s inspiration to found the Order of the Immaculate Conception, Fr. Papczyński spent the following months without any hope for its realization. In his *Fundation domus recollectionis* he declared: “I lived for almost two years in the house of a nobleman, named Karski, and was seeking ways of starting this Society of the Immaculate Conception that has been long formed in my mind through the inspiration of the Divine Spirit; however, there were no companions, whose presence is required to start such an undertaking.” Disheartened by this situation, he even thought of returning to the Piarists.

A glimmer of hope was set aflame by Fr. Franciszek Wilga, the prior of the Cameldolite monastery in Bielany, Warsaw,—his friend and spiritual director—by suggesting that he start a communal life with whatever companions he could get, and seek the canonical approval for this community later. Father Papczyński decided to follow this advise. Shortly after he joined a group of so-called hermits living in the Korabiew Forest.

Even at a first glance this appeared to be an act of true heroic trust in the Lord. The following weeks displayed the great human poverty, upon which Fr. Papczyński had to build the foundations of the Congregation of Marians. Agreeable at the outset, his first companions proved to be reluctant to seriously regard their vocation and the rule. What is more: Bishop Jacek Świącicki’s canonical visitation forcibly placed the Marians within the structure of a heremital life, which was far from Fr. Papczyński’s original intention. In time Stanisław Krajewski and others left the community, leaving Fr. Papczyński with one companion only. Those who

left at once started false rumors about the Servant of God, calling him a severe and unsympathetic man. Father Stanislaus fell to such a low state of mind in regard to the realization of his mission that in 1676 he petitioned the Piarists for readmission to their Order. Only the negative response from the Superior General, which he accepted as the ultimate sign, that he conformably take the road which he had chosen five years earlier.

Years later he would speak about the disciples uniting with the Suffering Christ: *“God desires religious in His service to follow Him in suffering. They should not only courageously but also joyfully carry whatever cross put upon them. He [Jesus] thus commands us: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself take up his cross, and follow me” (Mt 16:24). He is right, for a faithful and unusually virtuous servant stays with his Master both in joyful and hard times, in beneficial circumstances or adverse ones. Thus, the one who follows his Master going to a feast, but hurries away from Him falling under the weight of the cross is truly deserving of the stain of infamy” (Inspectio cordis).* The above-given examples allow us to place Father Founder among those faithful servants of the Suffering Christ.

Enamored with Mary Immaculate

Father Stanislaus Papczyński's first biographers gathered numerous reports of exceptional graces that poured upon him through the intercession of the Mother of God, incidents most probably recounted by the Founder himself. Let us mention at least the miraculous saving of his mother while crossing the Dunajec River, when she still carried him in her womb; or the unexpected gift of intellectual capacities granted to facilitate his school work; or special graces received during prayers and numerous recoveries from diseases. They were all expressions of Fr. Papczyński's conviction that Mary had a particular care over his life and spiritual growth.

In addition, as M. Leporini first wrote in 1705, and Fr. C. Wszyński noted in 1754, shortly after Fr. Papczyński's death a memory of his particular union with Mary Immaculately Conceived was very much alive among the Marians. Both sources confirm that Fr. Papczyński used to fly to Mary's protection in various circumstances of his life, frequently reciting this short prayer: *“Immaculata Virginis Mariae Conceptio, sit nobis salus et protectio”* [May the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception be our health and our protection]. It seems that the Marians perceived the spiritual makeup of their Founder through the prism of his relationship with Our Blessed Mother. In the narrative of the Founder's birth Fr. Wszyński concluded with an amazing statement: *“For he was a ardent venerator and propagator of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. and later the founder of a congregation under the title of the Immaculate Conception of this extraordinary Mother of God, Mary.”*

The childhood and youth of the future Founder of the Marians strengthened a conviction of Mary's love for him and for all people. As a young priest in his conferences to Marian sodalities — in a style typical of the times, which today might cause some surprise — he spoke thus: "*Truly many different virtues of the Most Blessed Virgin revealed themselves in visible ways at different occasions, yet her love for us and her invincible fortitude of spirit during the saddest times of her Son's passion manifested themselves in a particular way. As far as love is concerned, I do not doubt that she was burning with such a desire to redeem mankind, that if it were necessary, she herself would supply the nails to fix her Son to the cross for our salvation*" (*Prodromus reginae artium*).

Certainly not a unique, but an important reason for Fr. Papczyński's choosing the Piarist Order, was its Marian spirit rightly expressed in its title "Poor Priests of the Order of Pious Schools of the Blessed Mother." Father Stanislaus was absolutely fascinated by the spiritual beauty of Our Lady. He thus spoke of it in *Inspectio cordis*: "*O my soul, up to this time you have benefited from books reflecting different aspects of learning; today review a new, fresh, and unseen Book—the Most Holy Mother of God, a Book—conceived, written, and embellished by God Himself. Could you possibly find anywhere else something that is not found in Mary? Could anyone possibly give you more than what Mary has?*" This poetic passage expresses the foundations of our Founder's mariology: Mary is the archetype of God and the most perfect reflection of His beauty and goodness. On this very axiom Fr. Stanislaus will base his conviction of Mary's Immaculate Conception as a singular grace granted to the Mother of God, the first of the redeemed. By granting Mary this unique grace, God wanted to show that He could save the world without any sort of human participation! For this reason Mary should rejoice with a particular admiration and veneration. In his *Inspectio cordis* Fr. Papczyński states that she must *be more greatly honored by love than by word*. Love is the necessary key to interpreting his public oblation of self to Mary as well as his vow of blood, namely, his willingness to lay down his life in the defense of the truth of her Immaculate Conception (*Oblatio*), as well as every other work that promotes devotion to the Mother of God.

Although Fr. Stanislaus admitted that giving honor to Mary in speech was not enough, he himself took every opportunity to sing the praises of the Mother of God. His preserved sermon entitled "In Praise of the Virgin Mary Mother of God" was preached to members of a Marian Sodality. A beautiful discourse interweaves therein together with a love for Mary, referring to the Fathers of the Church, with fruits of his own meditations on the mysteries of life of the Mother of God. He praises her holiness with a clear entreaty to imitate her faith and life. "*Let no one expect to gaze on Mary in the heavenly home, who does not imitate her in this earthly exile, who did not always serve her with utmost zeal*" (*Prodromus reginae artium*). Our Founder manifested his Marian spirit in this concise manner, establishing to some extent the

Marian apostolate of his spiritual sons. This had to be a Marian spirit drawn from the word of God, deepened through knowledge of patristic works, built on meditation of the Blessed Mother's life in order to become Marian, similar to Mary in the way of thinking and acting. Father Papczyński's *Oblatio* of December 11, 1670, allows us to discover yet another important element of his Marian thought: "*I believe everything that the holy Roman Church believes and whatever she shall give us to believe in time.*" Father Stanislaus said this in relation to the truth of the Immaculate Conception. The Marian spirit of the Marians ought to be based on the Church Teachings, constantly opened into the future: into new exploration and expansion. One almost would like to say that it ought to be a continuous experience of discovering the Immaculately Conceived Mother of God and the Church.

The proclamation of Mary's holiness and immaculateness was externally expressed by the white habit, in which Fr. Stanislaus dressed himself in September of 1671, but even more so in founding of the order under the title of the Immaculate Conception. This act of honoring Mary did not result directly from Fr. Papczyński's Marian piety, because Fr. Stanislaus was convinced that God Himself wished that Our Lady be honored in her mystery of the Immaculate Conception through establishing of a new religious foundation under this very title. He frankly spoke about "*a Divine vision that was imprinted in [my] soul in regards to founding a Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M.*" (*Fundatio domus recollectionis*). In this way, Fr. Stanislaus, to some degree participated in the love of the Triune God for Mary Immaculate; looking upon her according to the pattern of God, that goes beyond the human standard of love. This is why the founding of the Congregation of Marians—beyond fulfilling God's will and creating a community for people wishing to attain holiness through their dedication to God—was above all the greatest expression of love that Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński had for Mary Immaculately Conceived.

A Friend of the Suffering Souls in Purgatory

When reflecting on Fr. Papczyński's life, we should not forget the elements that intertwine forming of his spirituality: the lessons from his story of life, the light of knowledge from the lived inner experiences. As a youth, Fr. Stanislaus found himself facing mortal danger during his stay in Lvov. However, in his testament he recalled a different instance that happened during the Polish-Swedish war also known as the "Swedish deluge": "*I confess that I leave this world professing the Roman Catholic faith for which I was ready to pour out my blood during the war with Sweden. One day my companion and I were exiting the Old Town, when a heretic soldier, his unsheathed sword in hand, attacked us near the Dominican*

Fathers. My companion (...) fled, and I, falling to my knees, stuck out my neck for the blow. However, by the decree of Divine Providence, I did not sustain any wounds although I was struck three times with great force. Afterwards, I felt great pains for an hour and a half because of that” (Second Testament). We may note that Stanislaus, still a novice, was ready to die not only of an illness, if it should happen, but also for the sake of a greater good, which was, in his opinion, the martyrdom for the Catholic faith.

Without a doubt, those two incidents made him aware of the imminence of death as well as of the unpredictability of its coming. *“Not only can no one avoid dying, but also no one can prolong his life in a natural way even for the shortest moment [...] thus everyone no matter who, should beware of this that any moment could bring the end of his life” (Inspectio cordis).* This view was proven tossed up against reality. In 17th—century Poland death reaped an abundant harvest because of numerous wars, widespread epidemics, and the poverty of people, often starving and lacking medical care. Many died ill-prepared to meet God. Death was a representative sign of the times, which Fr. Papczyński saw as an invitation to act.

A particular place within his heart and teachings reached brothers and sisters suffering in Purgatory—the poorest of the poor—for who nothing remains but to count on Divine Mercy, and who of themselves can do nothing to improve their lot. Father Papczyński received a charism of an extraordinary love for these persons. His natural sensitivity of heart and faith strengthened the mystical experiences given by God as a grace of discerning and understanding the suffering in Purgatory. It could be said that the Heavenly Father Himself pleaded for help for His sons and daughters. Much like in case of the “vision of the Order of the Immaculate Conception”, Fr. Stanislaus had been inwardly prompted to support the faithful departed.

Father Stanislaus’s three mystical experiences of the sufferings in Purgatory have been well documented. First, in 1675 when he was in the Ukraine as the army chaplain during the war against the Turks—he received a vision of deceased soldiers asking for his intercession before the Lord. Upon his return to the Korabiew Forest he called his companions to pray, make acts of contrition, and perform works of mercy for the intention of the deceased, especially victims of war. The next incident took place at the Karski’s courtyard, after he had already initiated the communal life in the Korabiew community. Fr. Papczyński had a vision of Purgatory during the meal that followed the Holy Mass. In the presence of many people, he fell into ecstasy (eyewitnesses corroborated this during the Informative Process), after which, deeply shaken, he immediately returned to the monastery. He said to his confreres, surprised by his unexpected return: *“I beg you, brothers, pray for the souls in Purgatory, because they suffer unbearable tortures.”* After this he remained for several days in his cell, fervently praying and fasting for the deceased. Finally,

the third experience of the mystery of Purgatory was granted Fr. Papczyński at the shrine of Our Lady in Studzianna, in 1676, where he made a pilgrimage with the goal of begging for the personal grace of good health. While he stayed there at the monastery of the St. Philip's Fathers his health worsened. There was fear that he might die. Precisely then—being in ecstasy—he was transported to Purgatory. He saw there the Mother of God praying for him, that he would receive a healing in order that he could further assist the dead. At the end of the vision, he quickly recovered strength and in the Studzianna Church he delivered a long sermon to the faithful on the need to assist the departed brothers and sisters. Finally, on February 11 of that same year, he accepted as one of the goals of his Order, that assistance be provided “with utmost diligence, piety, and zeal” for the Poor Souls in Purgatory, especially soldiers and victims of epidemics.

Father Papczyński's frequent appeals and personal witness intensified concern among his brethren for the faithful departed and gave it an entirely new scope. The Marian Order occupied, at this time, a very developed spirituality in regard to the last things, which above all expressed the idea of *ars bene moriendi* [art of dying gracefully], as an absolutely indispensable condition of obtaining eternal life. For this reason, Christians, and especially consecrated religious had the responsibility, to not only concern themselves with their own salvation, but also to assist dying and the deceased brethren. Equally numerous confraternities, comprising lay people, promoted various forms of support for the deceased. The Marians, as hermits, had a daily obligation to recite the Office of the dead, prescribed for them by Bishop Jacek Swiecicki during his canonical visitation, which initiated the legal establishing of the Order, but only the personal charism of Father Founder made it a constitutional element of Marian spirituality. Let's not be afraid to say that Fr. Papczyński's fervent compassion for the deceased was of a divine origin. The charism of our Founder not only augmented the holiness of the Church in purification (deceased brethren), but also had a fundamental influence upon the community of his spiritual sons. We see that the Church's decision—given through Bishop Świecicki—did not show itself sufficient, to set the spiritual assistance for the souls in Purgatory as the community's charism. This was made possible thanks to Fr. Founder's spirituality and his zealous apostolate on behalf of the “cause of noble love”—as he himself called it—in his Order and in the Church, by promoting it among the laity joined in Marian spirituality through the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception. In accordance with the explicit directive of the Holy See, the renewed Congregation of Marian Fathers must continue the work of its Founder. The life of Fr. Stanislaus, friend of the suffering in Purgatory, and his first Marian companions, show, that the mandate of the Church has to meet itself in the interior flame within itself of the gift of God granted to the Marian community in the person of its Founder, so that this charismatic mission find its fruitful fulfillment.

Promoter of the call of the laity to holiness

Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński also perceived helping others in attaining salvation and getting involved in the work of the Church as his particular mission. He shows this praise of pastors, who dedicate themselves to the spiritual formation of the faithful: “*O how admirable are Christ’s helpers, who only because of His love, sincerely and carefully place before the children, [...] all that is necessary for salvation, for leading a life in a Christian manner, [...] No work of mercy is greater and more fruitful*” (*The Mystical Temple of God*). He wished to belong to such helpers of Christ. For this reason, while staying as chaplain with the Karski family, he wrote a book entitled *Templum Dei mysticum* [The Mystical Temple of God], which may be daringly called a handbook for striving for holiness, meant also for the laity. The book was to serve one’s growth in the understanding of self and God, discovering the sure road to salvation, and the Christian model of perfection (cf. *The Mystical Temple of God*). In the opinion of historians, Fr. Papczyński’s treatise was—if not the first—then certainly one of very first Polish works promoting the vocation of laity to holiness. This work was so important in its time that it underwent several reprints.

In *The Mystical Temple of God* Fr. Papczyński expressed his firm conviction that lay people, and not only religious and priests, are called for holiness, and he also wanted to remind his contemporaries of this basic truth. He wrote: “*Man created by God and consecrated to Him through the sacrament of baptism, is His Mystical Temple. [...] Therefore, let everyone give greater attention to the magnificence of his primordial state and acknowledge in himself the image of the Holy Trinity worthy of honor and at the same time striving to this, so as to possess the honor of the divine likeness by the nobility of conduct and the exercise of virtues [...] that in the meantime, when it becomes manifest, who he is, he showed himself like to the One who wondrously formed him in His likeness in the first Adam, and yet more wondrously reformed in the second.*” The life of every person, if he offers all his thoughts and deeds to God on the altar of his heart and follows the Gospels teachings, will become a gradual path in the imitation of Christ, so as to participate in His glory. “*You, the Christians, “are the Temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:15). What a glory is yours! What a dignity!*” This universal vision of the call to holiness should be connected to the delight of the Founder of the Marian Community in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception—the grace of a new creation, which is meant for every person redeemed by Christ; as well as Mary’s personal holiness, whom he called the first *Shrine built in the center of the Church and inhabited by God* (*Inspectio cordis*). Fr. Papczyński desired that all people would attain full blessedness, because of this he proposed a road to holiness for all believers, while also imploring salvation of the deceased. In this way he became the promoter of the call to holiness for the laity—an idea definitely seized in our times by the Second Vatican Council.

It is worth mentioning here that Fr. Papczyński's longtime field of apostolic activity gathered many lay people into various confraternities. Pursuing the history of Fr. Stanislaus's engagement in this type of pastoral work, it is not hard to see that it permeated the whole priestly vocation of the Founder of the Marian Community. As a Piarist, during 1663-1667, Fr. Papczyński was the promoter of the Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Grace at the Piarist Church in Warsaw, which according to some he himself founded, and according to the opinion of others he greatly popularized. In 1671, that is the moment of his "transition" in his religious vocation, for half a year he cared for the archconfraternity of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. allied to St. Jacob's Church in the Kazimierz a borough of Krakow. As Founder of the Marian Order, he obtained from the Holy See in 1681—that is prior to the pontifical approval of his institute—a document, which was understood (at least the papal *breve* was so interpreted by Bishop Stefan Wierzbowski, and after him by our Founder and consecutive generations of the Marians), as permission to establish confraternities of the faithful allied to the Marian churches, which Fr. Stanislaus himself defined as the confraternity of the Immaculate Conception assisting the faithful departed. In promoting the idea of the confraternity he followed the accepted practice of his times: aside from seeing it as a form of personal sanctification for the laity, he perceived it as, maybe, a unique opportunity for the lay faithful to spiritually influence others and thus to include them in to the apostolate of the Church.

Father Founder

Only in line with the above narrative can the designation "Father Founder" appear to be the most complete description of the spiritual identity of the Venerable Servant of God Stanislaus Papczyński. For he received from God a most singular gift—the gift of founding a new religious community. The charism of founding belongs to the rare gifts of the Holy Spirit, through which He builds the Church and makes her capable of reading the signs of the times and to answer to its challenges. From the beginning Fr. Stanislaus recognized—in accord with the explicit inspirations of the Holy Spirit—that the most important mission for founding his institute was to advance the honor of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M.

Most probably, the idea of founding a religious community came to fruition for him in 1670. The very first time that he mentioned his desire to start such a work was in the presence of Fr. Michał Kraus, the Piarists Vicar Provincial, just after receiving permission to leave the Order on December 11, 1670, while making the so-called *Oblatio*: "*In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified. Amen. I, Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński, in the flesh, son of Thomas of Podegrodzie, of the diocese of Cracow, being 40 years of age, offer and consecrate to God the Father Almighty, the Son, and*

the Holy Spirit, and in like manner to the Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, conceived without sin, my heart, my soul, intellect, memory, will, feelings, whole mind, whole soul, interior and exterior senses, and my body, leaving absolutely nothing for myself, so that henceforth I may be the servant of the Almighty and the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Therefore, I promise Them, that I will serve to the end of my life in chastity and in zeal, this Company of Marian Clerics of the Immaculate Conception (which, by the grace of God I intend to found). Further, I will to accommodate my manner of life to its laws, decrees, and rites [...]. It's worth mentioning here that the *Oblatio* on one hand reveals Fr. Papczyński's charism as the Founder; and on the other hand, it presents in some way a synthesis of his spirituality. He made this act in the name of the most beloved Crucified Christ. Its essence was an Oblation or the total offering of himself to God and Mary Immaculate, uniting to the offering of gifts made during Holy Mass. Our Founder made this entirely, freely, solely inspired—as he later confessed in his *Fundatio domus recollectionis*—by a particular inspiration from God. Without a doubt he had been preparing for this public act for a long time. The *Oblatio* was in writing, what proves this is that Fr. Papczyński did not make such an important declaration at a moment's notice. Aware of beginning a new phase of his life—along with the receiving of the decree releasing him from simple vows in the Piarists—he confirmed before the Church his will to persevere on the way of the Evangelical Counsels. His temporal future he consecrated to the task of founding of the Order of Marians of the Immaculate Conception. This act of total entrustment of himself to the Triune God and the Mother of God constitutes the foundation of the Marian religious community.

It is fitting to mention here that Fr. Papczyński did not wish to become a reformer of religious life. If that were the case—following the general practice of the times—he would have tried to establish a reformed branch of the Piarist, for which he most probably might have obtained the agreement of the Holy See. Leaving the Order of the Pious Schools, *guided by true love and for the sake of restoring peace in the Province torn apart by the new controversy (Decree of Heroic Virtues)*, he resigned from the exclusive Piarist way of religious life. He nevertheless wished to live according to the Gospels as a consecrated religious, because he believed this way of life was closest to that of the Gospel. Thus, he was not an ideologue of the “Piarist way”, or later, of the “Marian way”, but fully aware imitator of the Crucified Christ and Mary Immaculate, to whom he offered himself totally.

In order to understand well this most important work of our Father Founder, it is worth realizing that his plan might have appeared as complete lunacy. Up until that time, no male order of Polish-origin existed. Fr. Papczyński envisioned his future institute as a community open to apostolic work, at one and the same time living an ascetic way of life. Already the situation in the Piarists had indicated that few of the Polish society of those times were inclined to agree to such a life. Maybe the major obstacle was Fr. Papczyński's lowly, not noble birth. Additionally, he was

“tempted” from many sides with various proposals promising important Church offices. Also, members of other congregations delighted in possibly seeing him in their ranks. One could say that all doors stood wide-open before Fr. Papczyński when left the Piarists, just like it was at the beginning of his religious vocation, thus offering him a chance for an ecclesiastical career. Nevertheless in Fr. Stanislaus faith was victorious in the conviction that the Lord God wished to accomplish through him an important work—proclaiming the honor of Mary Immaculately Conceived by dedicating to her an Order.

In spite of the magnitude of the task as well as of his own insignificance and inaptitude, Fr. Papczyński, provoked by the voice of God, courageously dared to begin the work of founding the Order of Marians, placing his trust in God’s power alone. The following is a moving testimony of his trust: *“In spite of innumerable difficulties barring the way, divine goodness and wisdom start and complete whatever they wish, even if the means, according to human judgment may be unfit. There is nothing impossible with God Almighty. It has been most explicitly proven in me—the poorest, most deserving of scorn for a sinner, the most wretched and most unfitting instrument [used by God] for founding of this most worthless and smallest Congregation of Marians of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary Conceived without Original sin”* (*Fundatio domus recollectionis*). To prepare himself for this new task, Fr. Stanislaus left the Diocese of Krakow and went to Lubocza, to be a chaplain at the Jacob Karski’s court. There he prepared a draft of the future Order’s constitution entitled *Norma vitae* (The Rule of Life). In search of candidates, he traveled in 1673 to Puszcza Korabiewska, where a former soldier, Stanislaus Krajewski, had been leading a “hermitic way of life” along with a few companions. On the plot of land, received from Krajewski, Fr. Papczyński built and organized the first house of his institute, calling it a “House of recollection.” On October 24, 1673, bishop Jacek Âwi cicki arrived at Puszcza Korabiewska for a canonical visitation. He confirmed the community living by “The Rule of Life” as a nucleus of the Marian Order under the guidance of Fr. Papczyński as its superior. The Bishop also gave them “Statutes” strictly hermitic and penitential in character, which was far from the character of life that the Servant of God had in mind for the Marians. Nevertheless, Fr. Papczyński accepted the Bishop’s decision in a spirit of religious obedience.

From the beginning of the Congregation’s existence, Fr. Papczyński’s fatherly love for his small community prompted him to try to get papal approval for it. Even though the Holy See decided that the Marians did not need its approval, Fr. Papczyński, just after settling down in New Jerusalem, petitioned Bishop Stefan Wierzbowski for it, and on April 21, 1679, his institute, composed of two houses, received the Bishop’s approval as a Diocesan Order. In the same year, King Jan III Sobieski granted special privileges to the small community, which most definitely strengthened its position, but its status as a Diocesan Order still left its future depend on Bishop’s good graces. Father Papczyński had a bitter taste of this after the

death of his protector and friend, Bishop Wierzbowski in 1687. He and his community had to withstand a new wave of accusations and libels seriously undermining the right to existence of an institute based on simple vows, to which the new shepherd of the diocese gave ear and almost dissolved the Marian Order. This disturbed the vocation of a great majority of members, and even the Founder himself fell into doubts as to the appropriateness of his undertaking. He turned to the Superior General of the Piarist for advice: should he continue on this new road of religious life or should he return to the Order of the Pious Schools? This third petition of Fr. Papczyński, directed to his former order, clearly shows how much spiritual darkness and inner ambivalence were for him in his mission of founding the Order of the Immaculate Conception, and how painful the burden of the responsibility for the birthing of this new endeavor. Only his deep conviction that such was God's will and his obedience to his spiritual directors enabled him to move forward.

Gravely ill and weakened by the severity of life, he undertook to obtain the papal approval for the Marian Order in 1690. To this end, being almost 60 years of age, he personally went by foot to Rome. Maybe, this dramatic and difficult pilgrimage of Father Founder, which he made in the fall and winter—a time most unfavorable for travel, strongly teaches us the depth of his love for our community, and, indirectly, for each one of us. He arrived in Rome at the unfortunate time of Pope Alexander VII's death. Ascertaining that the Holy See was not prone to approve new orders with their own rule (although many exceptions are known), Fr. Stanislaus sought support from the Franciscans of the Strict Observance, which would take the Marian Order under their spiritual care. Among the existing approved religious rules of life one seemed to be most close to him—because of its name and its immaculateness spirituality—the rule of the Monastic Order of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. (also called the Conceptionists). All that Fr. Stanislaus had to do then was to procure the papal approval, but his poor health did not allow him to remain in Rome until the election of the new pontiff. After his return to Poland, Fr. Papczyński did not cease at all in his efforts to strengthen the rights of his congregation. To this end in 1692, he wrote three times to the Holy See petitioning for approval of the Marian Order on the basis of the Conceptionist Sisters' rule of life. His efforts did not bring any positive results, because in the opinion of the Congregation of Bishops and religious, the approval of the local Ordinary was sufficient for the Marians' legal existence within the Church. In spite of this, Fr. Founder, himself already in very deteriorated health, in 1699 renewed his petition for the approval of the Marian Order and sent Fr. Joachim Kozowski to Rome as his representative. The latter, encountering difficulties with the approbation of the Marian Order on "The Rule of Life", asked the Franciscans for "The Rule of the Ten Virtues of the B.V.M." The document issued by the General of the Franciscans of the Strict Observance, granting this rule to the Marians, was

approved by Pope Innocent XII on November 24, 1699, in his letter addressed to the Apostolic Nuncio in Poland.

Although this rule had been accepted without Fr. Papczyński's agreement, it no way contradicted the specific characteristics of his institute and was later accepted by him with joy. From that time on the Marian Order became a congregation with solemn vows, free from the jurisdiction of local bishops, and that which also bound it to the confining state of hermits. The crowning date of Fr. Papczyński's almost 30-year long, nearly heroic struggle for the papal approval of the Order was June 6, 1701. On this day Fr. Founder pronounced solemn religious vows in the hands of the Apostolic Nuncio Francisco Pignatelli, pledging to preserve the rule of the *Instituto nostro non contrariam* (*Scripta historica*). Then, at the Church of the Lord's Cenacle in New Jerusalem he received the vows of his confreres. Thus he crowned the work of founding of the Marian Order.

Omnia apud vos in charitate fiant

It is worth asking: what did Fr. Papczyński see as essential to both his religious vocation and the founding of the Marian Order? The response may be found in the second part of the *Norma vitae* and his other writings. According to Father Founder, the main principle of Christian and religious life is the love of God and people. "Ponder this," he proclaimed in conferences published as a collection entitled *Inspectio cordis*. "Looking with the eyes of the heart — the measure of graces depends on the greatness of love. Thus it is like this: whoever attains greater love for the Highest Good receives greater graces and the rewards of love. O, my soul, what do you hear? What do you make of it? Are you still going to be so unwise and foolish that you won't dedicate yourself entirely to God's love in order to gain God completely? Are you still going to do your own will until you perish, and not act according to the advice of the Beloved for the good of your salvation? Will you not leave everything, so as to gain everything? Will you not rather deny yourself, so as to gain yourself and He who created you?" The road to God is to open oneself to His love, accepting and allowing it, that this love would draw us to Him, following the way of obedience, spiritual poverty, and self-renunciation. All sacrifices that men must make Fr. Stanislaus interpreted in the key to spousal love. Only for the love of God is it worth surrendering everything. *O love of God which brings infinite benefits! Through her is reached the One whom one loves! Indeed, it is good to love the Infinite God and to be loved by Him! Reading these lines it seems, that we have in hand verses from St. Augustine's Confessions. Father Stanislaus concluded his "hymn of love" with prayerful words: "O Lord, grant that I would truly love you and serve you in pure love, and when finally, seeing you in the blessed land, I will sing you the most sweet song of love: «I found Him whom my heart loves; I will take*

*hold of him and won't let him go» for ever! (cf. Sg 3 :4). This is the matter of a personal, intimate relationship with the Divine Bridegroom, where union flows from love and embraces every moment of life. "Consecrate to Divine Love all your actions and experiences of your entire life, especially your daily [...] good moments, circumstances, [...] each and every action and experience. Consecrate them with trust [...] on the altar of love—a pure heart, I say—united with the merits of Christ the Lord and his Immaculate Mother [...]" (*Norma vitae*).*

In himself a person is not capable of such a love, if it is not given him by the Holy Spirit, in whom Fr. Papczyński saw the source of a true, in other words, spiritual love (*amor spiritualis*). *"The Holy Spirit transforms the souls of sinners into the ones filled with love [...] as He did with the Apostles; as when tongues of fire appeared and came to rest over each one of them, inside their hearts were burning" (*Inspectio cordis*).*

An equally important place in Fr. Stanislaus's teaching about the road of religious perfection pertains to his appeal for fraternal charity: *"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" (*Norma vitae*).* This instruction is first and foremost concerned with the love of confreres, given by the Lord. The example of this merciful love we can find in the way Fr. Papczyński related to Stanislaus Krajewski—one of his first companions. It is sufficient to scan the pages of *Fundatio domus recollectionis* to get the idea about the problems that Krajewski brought to Fr. Founder. In 1675 a truly dramatic circumstance arose when Krajewski physically assaulted Fr. Stanislaus and fled the Korabiew monastery afterwards. Remaining outside of the Marian Order, he spread false rumors about the Founder and his little community, especially after Fr. Papczyński's settling in New Jerusalem. After a while, Krajewski founded a religious community of St. Onuphry and made an attempt of establishing a monastery in the village of Wygnanka near Lutków. His efforts failed in a short period of time, and Krajewski asked for permission to return to the Marians. Father Founder admitted him back into the community in a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. This attitude full of mercy and goodness changed Brother Stanislaus Krajewski so much that he spent his remaining years in the Marian community (died before 1685) in a total agreement with Fr. Papczyński; what is more: he made him the sole executor of his last will.

In his book *Inspectio cordis*, Father Founder wrote more emphatically: *"A man without love, a religious without love is like a shadow without sun, a body without soul, totally nothing. What a soul is for the body, that love is for the Church, religious Orders and Houses. Someone rightly said once, recommending this virtue: 'Take away the sun from the world and you take away everything; take away love*

from man and you won't leave him anything.' Love is the soul, light, and life of the Religious Life and of each human association." Those words can be seen as Fr. Founder's spiritual testament left to his confreres.

In light of the above narrative, let's take a look at the widespread rumor about the Servant of God as a man and religious of extreme severity in the observance of excessive ascetic practices, a rigorist demanding strict adherence to religious rules. This image of Fr. Stanislaus was painted by some of his Piarist superiors, and later — spread among outsiders—by his companions of the early days of the Marian community in the Korabiew Forest. It may be possible, that such an outlook on the Founder could emerge from a superficial reading of the works that Fr. Papczyński left behind.

A closer examination of Fr. Stanislaus's vision of the way to holiness allows the discovery of a deeply evangelical source of the ascetic program, which Fr. Papczyński proposed, particularly for consecrated persons. "*No one can serve two masters*" (Mt 6:24). *Consider that there are two masters: God and the world, spiritual and carnal desires; love of oneself and love of God. By joining the congregation, you gave yourself to a better Master. Thus, you ought to declare war on the other one. Be sure that you will be given help from heaven for successfully conducting this war, on one condition that you will fight properly. God gives His blessing in battle to those whom He called to combat. Thus, attack everything that is of the world, everything that belongs to evil, all that you have of self-love, or all that tries to penetrate the heart already dedicated to another Master—tear it out or thrust in away*" (*Inspectio cordis*). In this perspective, the life of faith and realization of God's calling appear as a spiritual battlefield between things of God and those of the devil; between what is holy and what is "of the world." The ascetical means and exercises should help a religious to cleanse himself of the stains of sin and to preserve within himself the divine beauty.

Father Stanislaus kept more fasts than his confreres did; he practiced flagellation more often than the rule prescribed, and he dedicated more time for night vigils. However, he did not impose any of this on his confreres. In no way did the penitential directions contained in *The Rule of Life* go beyond the limits of the generally accepted principles of asceticism of hermits of those times (the only exception is the absolute prohibition of drinking vodka or any other hard liquors!). Those directives were not the goal in itself, but only a means of the sanctification of self; and in the case of Fr. Papczyński these were often the way of interceding for the others, especially for the souls suffering in Purgatory, thus they were serving the greater love. We can clearly see that neither ascetic exercises nor piety, nor even the rule of the institute are at the center of reflections about the road of religious perfection but the love for God and people. In his first *Testament* (December 9, 1692), Fr. Stanislaus wrote: "*To my beloved Brothers in Christ I specifically recommend the love for God and the*

neighbor; unanimity of intentions, humility, patience, sobriety, and modesty; faithful fulfilling of their vocation and firm perseverance in it; unchanging devotion to the Virgin Mary conceived without stain; zealous support of the faithful departed; observance of [our] rules; religious discipline and perfection; and an ever fervent spirit. May they remember that a most sure and infallible reward is in store for them for everything that they pledged to God and to the Most Elect Virgin.”

Conclusion

Looking at Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński’s life, one recognizes in him an encounter with God in human affairs, often with heroic trust and confidence. More than reports of miracles and mystical graces attributed to Fr. Stanislaus (vision of the Purgatory, foretelling of the future, healing of the sick, or even resurrection of the dead), which were already present in his first biographies, we are astounded by his fortitude in following God’s inspiration and his struggle with difficulties. His struggles and doubts is what makes more visible the work of the Holy Spirit in life of the Founder of the Marian Order. His way of faith and vocation is closely united with his appeal for self-resignation, for trusting in the fulfillment of things that seem to be impossible, and for faithfulness until the end. How similar is he, Fr. Papczyński to her whom he so loved and honored—Mary Immaculate, the *Trusting Virgin*.

Father Papczyński’s holiness matured on the road of faith, and in some way found its consummation in the heroic work of founding of our Congregation. For the realization of this Divine charism the Founder, Father Papczyński, put all in perspective: he resigned from an ecclesiastical career, he agreed to the onus of forming ill-fitted candidates for his Order; faced painful waves of mockery, accusations, libels, and even physical suffering. He withstood physical assaults of his and the Order’s enemies. For the sake of his institute he jeopardized his reputation and bore long years of toils and waiting. Recalling the words of St. Paul the Apostle, we may say that Fr. Papczyński in pain brought forth the Congregation of the Marian Fathers. The glory of this work he left to the Lord Jesus and His Immaculate Mother in his last testament: “*I, the unworthy superior of this small Congregation, commend it for all eternity to my Lord Jesus Christ and His Most Elect Virgin Mother Mary, the most holy, as the true and only Founders, Directors, Protectors and Patrons of this small Congregation of the Immaculate Conception supporting the deceased*” (*Second Testament*, 1699/1701).

DECREE ON HEROIC VIRTUES

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF THE SAINTS

Decree
in the Diocese of Poznań

The canonization cause of the Servant of God,
Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński
Founder of the Congregation of Marians
under the title of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(1631-1701)

In answer to the question:

(Super dubio)

Is it a certain thing that the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, as well as other virtues associated with these, are present in a heroic degree in the one to whom this cause regards?

“I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for He has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, ... Like a bride bedecked with her jewels” (Is 61:10).

The above words, as if spoken by the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, for the glory of God who, by preserving her from “any stain of original fault,” has done “great things to her,” are used by the Church in the Holy Mass for the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Servant of God Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński always placed his great hope of attaining heavenly goods in this special privilege of the Blessed Mother. He often cried: *Immaculata Virginis Mariae Conceptio, sit nobis salus et protectio* [May the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary be our health and protection].

This was the reason why he founded “The Society of the Immaculate Conception,” which was supposed to promote “the cult of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Elect Virgin Mother of God.” For it is true that, as Pope John Paul II stated on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1986, “All those

who have placed their hope in Christ, gather around the Immaculate Mother of Our Savior” and that “she — the rescuer of the people — continues to come to our aid” (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX, 2, p. 1907). As he recalled her struggle with Satan, whom she fully defeated by her Immaculate Conception, the Holy Father addressed the following words to the Immaculate Virgin: “The hope of victory was given to us through your Immaculate Conception. We fly unto your protection ...” (*L'Osservatore Romano*, December 9-10, 1991, p. 5).

Mary Immaculate, “in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come” (LG, 68). And, “in the Most Blessed Virgin, the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle.” Faithful Christians are called to strive for perfection and holiness and, as they do so, they “turn their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues” (Ibid., 65). It is, therefore, no wonder that “Mary, the noble Daughter of Zion, helps all of her children, regardless of where and in what conditions they might live, *so that, in Christ, they might find the way leading to the house of the Father*” (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 47). This truth is clearly manifested in the life of the Servant of God Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński.

The Servant of God Stanislaus was born in Poland in the village of Podegrodzie, formerly belonging to the Diocese of Cracow, on May 18, 1631, as the youngest of eight children. His parents were Thomas Papka or Papiec and Sophia nee Tacikowska. At baptism, which took place on the day of his birth, he was given the name John. He received his initial Christian upbringing from his parents who were both well formed in the Catholic faith. From his earthly mother, Sophia, he learned ardent veneration of the Most Holy Virgin Mary and, thanks to her intercession, managed to overcome his initial difficulties with studies at elementary school. After he had completed elementary school, he continued his studies mostly at Jesuit colleges. However, in the academic year 1649-1650, he was taught by the Fathers of the Order of Pious Schools, where, by God’s decree and with His help, the seed of his religious and priestly vocation was sown. According to the custom of those times, he changed his last name to Papczyński and remained in the secular world for four more years, continuing his studies and waiting until the Order of Pious Schools regained the right to accept religious vows from its members. This was not possible for a while because, in 1646, that order was turned into an association without the right to make religious vows. After completing a two-year course of philosophy, he entered the Piarist novitiate in Podoliniec on July 2, 1654, and received the religious name of Stanislaus of Jesus Mary.

During the first year of his novitiate, he made such progress in the religious life that, at the beginning of his second year of the novitiate, he was sent to study

theology in Warsaw. In 1656, he took three simple vows there, that of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and, after receiving four minor orders, he also received the sub-diaconate.

In 1661, the Servant of God Stanislaus was ordained to the diaconate and to the priesthood. Even before this, he began to teach rhetoric at the colleges of his religious institute. Using the textbook which he wrote himself, he tried to teach his students the art of “speaking well and living a good life.” During his stay in Warsaw, which began in 1663, he quickly became famous as a preacher and confessor. One of his penitents was the Apostolic Nuncio, Anthony Pignatelli, later Pope Innocent XII. The Servant of God Stanislaus was an untiring promoter of devotion to the Most Holy Virgin Mary and contributed to the growth of the confraternity dedicated to her name at the Piarist church in Warsaw.

In spite of his many responsibilities associated with teaching and pastoral ministry, Fr. Stanislaus was very dedicated to the religious life of his institute. Filled with the spirit of their Founder, he fiercely defended the original religious observance at the Order of Pious Schools. He also supported the introduction of the right of the members to choose the Superiors of the Province and defended this right. He and those confreres who shared his convictions met with sharp and stubborn opposition from some of their Superiors and all those who preferred a more relaxed style of religious observance. Motivated by true charity and the desire to restore peace in the Province, which had been divided because of the aforementioned controversy, he asked, in 1669, to be allowed to leave the Order of the Piarist Fathers, which took place on December 11, 1670, on the basis of a papal *breve*.

At the same time, inspired by a “Divine vision” which made an imprint on his soul, he made it known that he intended to found a Society of Marian Clerics of the Immaculate Conception. He called this new religious family to life in 1673, in the Diocese of Poznań, especially for the purpose spreading the cult of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To this original goal of the Congregation, he added another one in 1676, that of coming to the aid of the souls suffering in Purgatory, especially the souls of soldiers who had fallen in battle and those who had died because of pestilence. These goals were clearly presented in *Norma Vitae*, which he wrote for his institute (erected canonically in 1679).

From the very beginning, the Servant of God and his Marian confreres were very eager to assist pastors in their parish ministry. Therefore, they sought to obtain permission to perform apostolic work, even though, due to circumstances at that time, their institute was founded on the law appropriate for eremitic orders. After the bishop relaxed the rigors of religious life at the second monastery, the Servant of God was able to dedicate himself to pastoral ministry, especially among the sim-

ple folk who lived in poverty and were deprived of any pastoral care. He also performed other works of mercy with regard to body and soul. God used him to free the people who came to him from various diseases and afflictions, and, as tradition maintains, often helped in a miraculous way those who were gravely ill. For those reasons, he was considered to be a saint even when he was still alive.

He distinguished himself by humility, poverty, a spirit of mortification, and other virtues. It was also his concern to lead his confreres by word and example to the heights of perfection. In his book *The Mystical Temple of God*, he presented a way of pursuing holiness for lay people.

Amidst various difficulties, he fulfilled the duties of Superior General and was the spiritual father of the Marian Institute, first at the Korabiew Forest (today Marian Forest, Puszcza Marianska), and then, from 1677 until his death, at a small monastery adjacent to the little Church of the Cenacle in Nowa Jerozolima (today Gora Kalwaria). In order to secure the legal status of his Congregation of the Immaculate Conception, he obtained papal approbation for it in 1699. He was the first Marian to make his profession of solemn vows on the Rule of the Ten Virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Soon after, due to physical exhaustion, caused by his zealous apostolic work and constant mortification, he died in the opinion of sanctity on September 17, 1701.

The beatification cause of the Servant of God Stanislaus was undertaken during the [information] process conducted in the years 1767-1769 at the Warsaw Curia. After the evidence collected during the process had been examined, a decree *super scriptis* of the Servant of God was issued in Rome in 1775. However, due to the lack of certain documents and sufficient information necessary to clarify some circumstances of his life, the *cause* was put on hold in the same year.

In subsequent years (even though the fame of Fr. Stanislaus's sanctity continued), due to constant wars and persecutions suffered by the Church and by the Polish and Lithuanian nations, there were no favorable conditions to resume efforts in the matter. In 1918, Poland and Lithuania regained their independence, but the documents were dispersed in various archives, and there was not enough time to make appropriate preparations. Thus, the Marians were not able to resume the beatification process before World War II, either. It was only in 1953, after many pleas from the Marians and the faithful, and after work on the publication of *Positio super Introductione Causae et super virtutibus* of the Servant of God Stanislaus had begun, that the resumption of the *cause* became possible.

In 1977, *Positio* was published and evaluated by historical consultants, and on March 6, 1981, the *cause* was introduced before the Apostolic See. In the years

1981-1982, a process *de non cultu* was conducted in Warsaw. The decree *super validitate Processus* (regarding the validity of the diocesan process) was promulgated in 1990. Further evaluations of *Positio super Virtutibus* were also conducted. Then, on January 22, 1991, during an Ordinary Session of the Congregation, chaired by Anthony Petti, General Promoter of the Faith, the theological consultants stated that the Servant of God practiced virtues to a heroic degree.

On March 17, 1992, after having listened to the report delivered by Paulino Limongi, Titular Archbishop of Nice in Hemimont, the Cardinals and Bishops gathered at an Ordinary Session stated that the Servant of God Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński practiced the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues, and other virtues associated with these, to a heroic degree. After the results of the research conducted by the Cardinal Prefect signed below had been presented to Pope John Paul II, the Holy Father gladly accepted the decision of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints and ordered that the decree on the Servant of God's heroic virtues be prepared.

On June 13, 1992, the Holy Father invited the Cardinal Prefect, the relators of the cause, the Secretary of the Congregation, and other people who are usually summoned in such circumstances and, in the presence of all gathered with regard to the cause and its result, solemnly announced that:

It is considered to be a certain thing that the Servant of God Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński practiced the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, and other virtues associated with these, to a heroic degree.

The Pope ordered that this decree be made public and kept in the acts of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

Given in Rome, on June 13, in the year of Our Lord 1992

Angelus Cardinal Felici, *Prefect*
L.-S.

Edward Nowak, Titular Archbishop of Lunen, *Secretary*

**“LEST YOU REMAIN WITHOUT WORK
IN THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD..”**

Father Founder’s
Selected Thoughts on the Religious Life

*“But lets 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 expiatory pains
—especially the souls of soldiers and those who died of pestilence.”*

Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus of Jesus Mary Papczyński
Founder of the Congregation of Marian Fathers

GRACE OF VOCATION

1

Who is the One who created you? He is God, the most absolute being, without any beginning or source, the most perfect Goodness and Wisdom, infinite Love and Omnipotence.

The *One Who Is* created you, and you yourself were created, one who had not existed before. You should know that you were created out of nothing, formed out of worthless matter, but due to the wisdom of the Divine Artist, you were made so beautiful, that your appearance surpasses all of creation, except for those in Heaven.

Consider also, what soul have you received? One formed in His image and likeness. He endowed you with reason, to comprehend that God is your Creator. He gave you a heart to love. He gave free will to your soul to make you prove that you

are free and not under any domination. You can strive for what you want and choose what you want, and love and follow what you have chosen. And finally, added to this Divine image, God gave memory to contemplate His blessings bestowed upon you. Remember that He is your Creator while you used to be dust and in the future, dust you shall be again. He announced this to the first Parent saying: “For you are dust and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19).

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

Contemplate the works of Providence, which even before the conception, gave the name to the Savior of the world (cf. Luke 1:31). It was the same with you, before you were born, some graces were bestowed upon you for the salvation of your soul, talents to be used, particularly your vocation to the state you are in at present, which was assigned to you by God.

How much you should admire and follow this care of the Great God the Father for you, which preceded even your birth! With what devotion you should repay Him! With what submission to God’s will, you should reciprocate! May you at least make an effort not to neglect willingly and consciously, anything which was instituted for your salvation and may you earnestly cooperate both with your vocation and with God’s grace!

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

God shows you His benevolence out of pure, disinterested love for you. That is why He did not leave you in the world to perish, but He called you to His Order. He did not administer to you who have sinned, a just punishment as He has done to many others. Any time you fall and lose the path of perfection, He patiently waits for you to improve. Every day and at every moment, He enriches you with His graces and He does this out of pure love for you.

Thus, it is right for you, also out of pure love for God, to perform good deeds and suffer all the difficulties just as [...] the Apostle who was empowered and led to endless toil, to suffering and death, by the love for God alone.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

God's goodness and wisdom, despite countless obstacles, begins and carries out whatever it wants, even though the means, by human standards, are thoroughly inadequate, since there is nothing that is impossible to the Almighty. This appeared clearly in me, the most wretched, the most disdain-worth sinner, the most shabby and inadequate tool [used by God] to set up the most miserable and littlest Congregation of the Fathers of the Immaculate Conception. I was full of: an improper spirit, no grace, little prudence, all too meager, good for dreams, rather than such a great effort. Yet, God alone, God (to whom belong eternal and everlasting glory and thanks) who, once He impelled me to do this task in His providence, that is with love, mercy, wisdom, and wonder, He has performed it Himself, and continues to do so for ever and ever.

(Fundatio Domus Recollectionis)

5

Not a small number of very respectable Orders invited me to join them, me the unwilling, and yielding for a greater perfection. God's vision, carved out in my soul, concerning the foundation of the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception, despised all, and after making it impossible for me to return to the Institute of the Pious Schools, compelled me to its aim. [...]

I stayed with the nobleman, Mr. Karski for almost two years and I was searching for ways to set up a Society of the Immaculate Conception, already formed in my mind by the Divine Spirit. And although some came up to me, both lay and religious, I was reluctant to have them join the ranks, either due to their untried virtue, or due to the lack of space.

(Fundatio Domus Recollectionis)

6

First of all, contemplate diligently and steadily the aim of your Congregation. Just as there is one common to all the most holy Orders, so also yours should be as follows: a greater growth in God's glory and care for one's own salvation, with a serious pursuit of perfection. Since "what profit would a man show if he were to gain the whole world and destroy himself in the process?" (Mt 16:26).

So as not to stand idle in God's Vineyard, you have to spread the glory of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the best of your ability and

with the utmost effort, devotion and zeal, assist the souls of the deceased believers exposed to the punishments of purgatory, in particular the souls of soldiers and those deceased as a result of a plague.

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 the superiors, they would be called by them, since such a severe contemplative life is not suitable for you, despite the fact that you were founded as hermits.

(Norma vitae)

7

There are two adornments which give splendor to holy Institutions [Orders]: virtue and education. Virtue is revealed through the obedience to the rule of the Order, education is for the benefit of our brothers. We, by God's Providence, brought to manage our tiny Order and serve it, try with great zeal, to make every effort, to recognize and accept all our brothers in God, distinguishing ourselves with perfect discipline of the religious life and the adornment of sufficient learning.

(Litterae ad Marianos in Eremo Corabieviensi)

8

Assuming that your Order is that gate of Christ, contemplate that salvation is reserved for those who come in, but also for those who go out. That is, not only do those religious approach eternal life who, once accepted within the walls of the convent, never appear in public or set a foot outside, and continually devote themselves to solitude, prayer, penance and practicing other virtues; but eternal life was also promised to those who go to the world, compelled either by obedience, or love, to bring help to the Congregation, or their brothers, although due to this, they are not able to properly fulfill the common duties of the Congregation.

Staying among the lay people, they do not have such facilities for prayer, contemplation, spiritual readings, spiritual conversations and other similar exercises as those who remain in the convent. Yet, since they left through the gate of love or obedience, they will not be deprived of their merits, and will not suffer any harm in their salvation.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

To my beloved Brothers in Christ, most urgently and persistently, I recommend love for God and your brothers, unity of minds, humility, patience, sobriety, modestly, the faithful fulfillment of one's vocation and persevering in it, due honor to the Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception, zealous support for the deceased, keeping the rules of the Order, discipline and religious perfection and an ever more fervent spirit; May they remember that because of the vows they made to God and the Most Beloved Virgin, there is secured for them a most certain and unailing reward.

Above all, I desire, my beloved, that there would be peace, harmony and mutual love among you; "Help carry one another's burdens; in that way, you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). May the God of peace and love guard you, direct you, defend you and save you for ever. To the One, in the Holy Trinity, belong eternal glory and honor and adoration, in Him Himself, and in the Word Incarnate. May He be glorified in all the chosen, for whom He has the sweetest predilection, and in particular in His Most Beloved Virgin Mother, Mother of Mercy, the one and only hope, and the refuge of all the sinners and mine.

(Testamentum Primum)

10

Finally, we strongly encourage all of you toward, love for God, devotion to the Most Beloved Virgin and the holy Patron Saints, mutual love, peace and harmony, keeping your holy vows, love for zealous prayer and due mortification, humility, patience, thankfulness and perseverance, with God's help, in your holy vocation. We also ask you not to stop in commending me, a poor old man, to God in your prayers.

(Litterae ad Marianos in Eremo Corabieviensi)

11

To my friends and - if I may say so—sons, I recommend love for God and the brothers, zeal for the Catholic faith, honor, respect and obedience toward the Most Holy See; keeping the vows, humility, patience, supporting the deceased and peace with everyone. [...]

I am leaving never to return; pray for me and I will [pray] for you, as the one who through your prayers, and acts of conciliation, will receive God's mercy. I

leave a picture of myself for the curious to look at and a picture of my Lord's life, Jesus Christ to follow.

(Testamentum Alterum)

JESUS CHRIST

1

“If anyone would serve me, let him follow me” (J 12:26). Contemplate this diligently, that the Lord wants to be followed by all the religious, who are truly attuned to the service of God, that is to an active life and suffering. As for the first, they should strictly keep the rules which were set up by God, in the form of directives concerning their behavior. Similar to David, they should desire to not waiver from the given norm of life, not in the least. Thus, he asked God with these words: “Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous deeds” (Ps 118:27).

As for the second, God wants the religious who serve Him, to follow Him in suffering. Each and every cross, of any nature, which would be placed upon them, they should carry, not only with courage, but also with joy. He recommends this by saying: “If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and begin to follow in my footsteps” (Mt 16:24). He is right: a faithful servant, the one gifted with extraordinary virtues would remain by the Lord in the same spirit, both in joyful and sorrowful moments, in favorable circumstances and in adversities. Worthy of a disgraceful stigma, is the one who follows the Lord to the Supper, but runs away from Him, falling under the weight of the cross.

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

“My burden [is] light” (Mt 11:30). Jesus is right in saying this. He Himself carries and supports with his grace the one who bears His burden, so that he can only slightly feel the weight of the burden. But when, at times, He makes this burden (e.g. suffering, persecution, temptation and every cross) disagreeable and hard, it is only for our greater benefit and merit, since He gives Himself to the bearer, according to the weight of the burden.

So take up the burden of Christ, take up the cross. Although it appears heavy to you, the Lord will make it lighter by giving you His comfort, and will reward you with the eternal sight of Himself. He calls you today to His table, not for any other reason, but only to make His burden light for you, and to give you new strength to take up other burdens, if He were to place any on you.

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

Cross—voluntary torment of the body; cross—ceaseless serious penance; cross—defamation, contempt, harm and any distress; cross—sickness, indigence, sorrow, damage to material possessions, loss of estate; cross—lack of necessities, restriction of luxuries, loss of fortune, the approach of adversities and all that causes spiritual or physical distress. He Himself calls us with His words and His example, to carry such a cross with a willing and joyful heart, out of love for Christ, especially a very painful carrying of the tree of salvation, so that we, following our Predecessor on the way of the cross, could reach with Him the legacy of everlasting joy and glory.

(Christus Patiens)

4

“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 because, although he followed Jesus, his following was a treacherous one, since 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 you to become like Christ: 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 bags 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 go in His steps.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

If you want to see Christ transfigured in Heaven, apart from the lessons from the Gospels, you should also pay attention to keeping the laws and trying to reach the stage of contemplation. It was not for no reason that Moses and Elijah appeared to Christ's apostles when they were talking to Christ. Christ turned their attention to the counsels, Moses to God's commandments, while Elijah stressed contemplation. Thus, you should learn to keep obedience, poverty and chastity, which Christ taught with His word and example. Moreover, observance of God's commandments, was also brought to your attention.

Yet, you will not reach sufficient perfection, if you do not add to this, an active pursuit of contemplation, and add to your active life, the life of the Spirit. Where there is Christ, there should also be Moses and Elijah. When you say you follow Christ, because you keep the evangelical counsels, you do not really perform anything, if you simultaneously do not keep God's commandments, and do not devote yourself to contemplation.

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

"Welcomed him to her home" (Luke 10:38). The same with you, my soul, although you are distracted by many worries and concerns, and do not devote yourself seriously to contemplation, do not be afraid to welcome and host Jesus yourself. He bestows the same love on those who give themselves to contemplation, as on those who lead an active life, if only the first as well as the second adore him with the same disposition through their service and performed functions. He rewards with the same blessings, the souls who devote themselves to ceaseless prayers, as those who serve their brothers. He granted the same blissful vision to the hermits immersed in contemplation, as to the busy workers in His vineyard.

If you do not have a quantity of the myrrh of love, if you do not have the precious oils of prayer, if do not have tears to wash His feet with Magdalene, then with Martha, offer Him your house chores and services, which you perform for your brothers, taking care of their salvation. And if you do not have even this opportunity, He will be content with your good will.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

For you, your Savior, the Good Shepherd, gave his life and breathed the last breath. He did it in particular so that you, redeemed, would not hesitate to devote your life to Him and to your brothers. He expects this from you when He says: "See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain" (Ex 25:40). On which mountain? On Golgotha. What was shown? Christ, God's Son, crucified for you and for all mankind. Look at Him, Him who you are to follow, not sparing oneself for the salvation of the brothers, treating others gently, praying for one's enemies, offering oneself to God's justice for sinners, running to God in the midst of sorrows and persevering in good deeds. This example and model was shown to you on the mountain. If you refuse to follow Him, abandon the intention to receive Christ. The one who shrinks from acting with Christ and for Christ, is unworthy of being nourished by Christ.

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

Contemplate the blessing of Redemption, when the Son of God, equal in all things to His Father, was willing to take human nature, to lead you, a revolting man, back to the house of the Father, to free you from the prison of the Eternal Abyss and Hell awaiting you. Unlimited, he was embedded in the womb of the Virgin; not subject to suffering, He suffered all His life, various persecutions, afflictions, failures: cold at birth, a knife at circumcision, importunities of climate and many discomforts during the flight to Egypt; when He was teaching, He had to resist the tongues of the unbelievers, avoid the stones, experience temptations from Hell, and in return for the good, He received all the worst.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

To teach you humility with his word and example, the Son of God descended from the womb of the Eternal Father and from the gorgeous Royal Palace, and found a dwelling in the womb of a mortal maiden (which, to the Son of God, appeared to be Heaven) and in this maiden's womb, He started teaching the superior wisdom which assumed humility of spirit, and contempt for the vain doctrine of the wise of this world.

The shortest summary of His entire teaching is the sentence: “Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart” (Mt 11: 29). His birth in a stable, the flight to Egypt, the temptation in the desert, persecution by the Jews, the washing of feet in the Cenacle, grief in the Garden of Olives, the fetters, slaps on the face, imprisonment, flagellation, derision before Herod, crowning before Pilate, the particularly degrading carrying of the cross, a slanderous and humiliating death and countless other episodes. Since it was such a practical lesson, wasn’t all this a stark and clear example of the highest degree humility?

(Inspectio Cordis)

10

When you hear that the twelve year old Jesus went with His most holy parents to the temple in Jerusalem, admire His devotion and consider your habits, deeds and behavior when you were His age. Then you started to offend God, to leave behind your playful youth, and to give in to evil and offenses. Oh, how different you were from Christ! The twelfth year of life of your Savior provided examples of astonishing devotion; in your case, it marked the beginning of all wickedness.

And now, how have you passed your years in the house of God? How dryly, how sluggishly, how impudently! Beware not to pretend to follow Christ with your religious attire, while with your habits, you resemble a scoundrel, and present yourself worse than a layman. A Religious Order does not save anyone, but Religious Life does. [...]

May God prevent you from being a Religious by name and not in fact. If you had not shed bad lay habits, and had not answered your vocational call, you would go to a similar, very unhappy end.

(Inspectio Cordis)

11

“They look[ed] for Him among their relatives and acquaintances” (Luke 2:44). Purest Joseph with his wife, the Most Holy Virgin, 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 style of life and in the manner of life of the lay people. Listen also to what Saint Augustine, the bishop of Hippo and doctor of the Church, who was looking for the

Lord just there, has to say: "I was wondering through the squares and streets of the cities of this world, looking for you (God), and I did not find you, because I was wrong in my search. I was looking outside for the One who was inside. (...) You were with me, but I was not with You; the things which removed me from you were the ones which could not exist but in You."

You should search for God inside, at home, in constant mortifications; and not on the outside in vain joys. If you truly wish to find God, nothing will come of it, if in looking for Him, you do not practice mortifications. Do you know where to find God? Where you abandon man (that is yourself). Do you know where you can find Christ? Where you lose, mortify and make an offering of your own will.

(Inspectio Cordis)

12

How much you should rejoice when you realize that you are a soldier, or even a son of the Ruler who is going to reign forever! All those who believe in Christ, are His adopted sons and heirs of the Heavenly Kingdom. Yet, more privileged are the Religious who, having taken up the evangelical counsels, make their vows in the name of the apostolic rule and try to faithfully follow the life of Jesus Christ.

When the subjects desire a king, under whose earthly reign they could enjoy peace and prosperity to the fullest, how much you should rejoice in having the Lord, who prepared for you the Eternal Kingdom, under the condition that you will not discard His yoke. Finally, when you hear that the Heavenly Kingdom will have no end, beware not to shrink from paying any price to get it, to take it even with force, seeing that people take up so many undertakings, expose themselves to dangers, lead so many wars, for conquering kingdoms that are doomed to perish!

(Inspectio Cordis)

13

Beg Christ to free you from everything in you, which does not belong to the spirit of the Order, but rather to the spirit of the demon, which has nothing in common with your style of life, and does not adorn it, to free you both from evil desires and shameful deeds.

(Inspectio Cordis)

14

Stand before God as mute, blind and seduced by the evil spirit. Mute, when you consider how frigid and dry you are in your prayer, even more, how much you lack devotion. Blind, when you think how awfully you wander, following your own will, guided by reason with the demonic mentality. How much you lack a true spirit of God, because you devote yourself so willingly to external matters, because you do not have the spirit of self-denial and service to God, because you trespass against God's commandments, virtues and rules of the Order; and finally, because you do not take up any task of the Religious, or even of a Christian, but rather, you allow the evil spirit to seduce you so easily, and once cheated, you fall even more frequently and seriously.

Thus, ask the Lord for three things: light, to thread the path of real religious perfection; speech, while filled with zealous devotion, to devote yourself to constant prayer, free from distractions; and finally, for liberation from any cruel attacks of the evil spirit, so that you could resist them in any unconquerable temptation, and in any religious activity which opposes a holy life.

(Inspectio Cordis)

15

“Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Get rid of and shake off the conviction, that you are somebody, that you can do something, that you do something. You, poor thing, who are you without Christ? What can you do without Christ? What would you do without Christ? Feel ashamed now that sometimes you took pride in your deeds, as if you could do anything by yourself, except for sin.

In the future, do not usurp and attribute to yourself, somebody's fame. Do not usurp for yourself, the glory owed to God, who is the author of all goodness for you. Like a crow, do not use somebody else's feathers and do not show off in them! It is clear to your nature, to the world, to heavens, that you are nothing, that you do not have any power, and will not do any good by yourself. Just try to grasp this, and be certain that it is so. Desire the glory not for yourself, but for the Name of God for all goodness.

(Inspectio Cordis)

16

“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” (Acts 9:4). Contemplate that usually God awakens great sinners with some strong impulses or words which, like a hammer, crush their hearts. You should also listen whether He does not call you in the same way: “Why do you persecute me?” I made you My friend through grace, you become My enemy, turning away from Me and facing vanities, gossips, amusements, worldly matters, voluptuousness. I carried the cross for you and you, doing your will, feel resentment for the cross and any mortifications. “Why do you persecute Me?”

(Inspectio Cordis)

17

The wise man, who longs for the conversion of the soul, looks out for good inspirations, accepts and fulfills them.

You, in turn, do you not neglect inspirations from God? When a thought like this or a similar one, which is inspired by God, comes to your mind: “Awake, O sleeper” (Eph 5:14), who is oppressed with the sleep of so many imperfections, won't you wake up? Won't you spring to your feet and call with regret: “The Lord truly spoke”; “I will rise then and go about the city; in the streets and crossings I will seek Him whom my heart loves” (Song of Songs 3:2); and I will try to find Him more quickly, since it was late when I started to seek Him.

(Inspectio Cordis)

18

The most merciful Savior of the world, cares for the salvation of all people, and not only does He have in consideration the happiness of the just, but also, or even mainly, of the sinners. He does it Himself when, through their frequent participation in the Holy Sacrament, through different inspirations and bountifully bestowed blessings, He turns them to Himself. Then, the sheep already branded with the seal of the devil, return to the Christ's fold and are saved.

Oh, how many times, did He call you back from afar, when you were hurt with serious sins! How many times did He draw you away with great effort, from the fold of the hellish mercenary! How many times did He look for you, like for a lost sheep,

and looking carefully, He found you and fed and gave you water and protection. But you, how many times have you abandoned such a good Shepherd through sin!

(Inspectio Cordis)

19

If the Most Merciful Lord knocks at your heart so many times with holy inspirations, and encourages you to perform good deeds, if He touches you to wake up from the dream of your sins, and admonishes you to take the path of virtue following the Commandments, and to lead a life fully in the Spirit; and if you, so often, pretend you do not hear the word of God, do not realize it or do not understand His inspirations, or care nothing for them; you should know that you are in a very bad condition, close to the unhappy ending of your life and about to be drawn to everlasting condemnation by the evil spirits.

Similarly miserable is your condition, when you listen reluctantly or pretend you are deaf, to the people who admonish you, and urge you to enter the true path of perfection, or you accept their admonitions and listen to their words, but in practice, you do not do anything. Miserable is your condition, be it because of your pride or a very strong obstinacy of your will, (which is a true sign of human condemnation) and the hardening of your heart.

So, get up for action! Be obedient to God's inspirations, accept advice, the admonitions and right orders of others, so that it does not turn out that the Blood of the Most Merciful Lord was shed for you in vain. You should desire Him, and beg that this Blood, in the present Holy Communion, be salvific and useful for you.

(Inspectio Cordis)

20

Ask the merciful Savior to bring peace when He comes to the very unsettled home of your soul. Not the peace which would free you from any adversities or any cross at all: as it is better to be tried, than to remain still (even the waters which remain still start to rot), but the peace with which you could endure all setbacks generously and with a peaceful heart, so that you could receive from Him an olive wreath of peace in the Heavenly City of Jerusalem, because having participated in the fight, and having battled the demon, the world and the flesh, you will enjoy eternal peace.

(Inspectio Cordis)

21

“A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Consider that it is not enough for a good shepherd to tire his body for the benefit of the flock, but he also has to torment his soul. The most apt and the most known example of this is Moses, the leader of Israel, who opposed the Lord of Hosts when He wanted to put to death all the people of Israel for their heavy trespasses. He offered his life for his brothers, longing to be rather crossed out of the Book of Life, than to allow the annihilation of the nation entrusted to his care (cf. Ex 32:1-14. 30-32). That is a great and admirable deed!

Yet, what Christ did for us, is incomparably greater and more admirable. I will express it briefly: He gave His own body to the most cruel, unimaginable torture and the most ignoble death; He also gave His soul for His sheep. He subjected it to such misery, pain, torment and suffering, that not only human, but also an angel's mind cannot sufficiently penetrate it, and no lips, human or angelic can express it. What then? Isn't He more worthy of our love than Moses? Isn't He the best of the shepherds?

My soul, devote this day, to glorifying this love and His blessings, offered to you; or I would even say: devote your entire life to giving thanks for the grace of salvation.

(Inspectio Cordis)

22

Are you sad? Call Jesus and He will comfort you. Are you attacked? Call Jesus and He will defend you. Do you want to be saved? Love Jesus, follow Him, adore Him, Jesus is the Savior. Are you poor? Run to Jesus and He will make you rich. Are you naked? Ask Jesus and He will clothe you. Are you ill? Beg Jesus and He will heal you. Are you simple-minded? Jesus is the Teacher. Are you surrounded by vices? Jesus is the Lord of virtues. Are you sinful? Jesus came to save sinners.

May Jesus be your contemplation, your love, your joy, your strength, your life, your Heaven. Embrace Jesus so that He would embrace you; love Jesus so that He would love you; do not abandon Jesus, so that He would not abandon you.

There is nothing in the entire world and in all of Heaven more valuable than Jesus, so there is nothing more worthy of love. Give yourself entirely to Jesus and the entire Jesus will be yours.

(Inspectio Cordis)

23

Christ! I am going wherever you call me, among the shots and fire, through the waters and deserts, thorns and rocks. Under your lead, any arduous road will be easy, Especially, when my friend love, lends its wings to me.

(Christus Patiens)

MARY**1**

I confess that I believe in whatever the Holy Roman Catholic Church believes and will announce to be believed in the future, especially, I confess that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God was conceived without original sin and I promise to spread and defend Her honor, even at the cost of my life. So help me God and this Holy Gospel.

(Oblatio)

2

The one who tries to praise Mary aims high. I could rightly claim, that to express the praise of she who exceeds the happiness and dignity of all people, all of the tongues of the world would not suffice. A hundred lips of poets could attempt to say something great, but here even a thousand would not do. The one who will try to praise the Immaculate Mother of God with devotion, rather than with words, will do the best.

(Prodromus Reginae Artium)

3

My soul, so far, you have used books from different fields of science. Today, look through a new book, fresh, previously unseen, the most Holy Mother of God; a book, which God Himself has created, written and adorned. Could you find any-

where else, anything that you would not have in Mary? Could anyone give you more than what she herself possesses? This is a book of virtues and of all perfections: divided into as many chapters as it has virtues. Browsing through this book, dedicate yourself to your study; pick flowers so very necessary for your state in life.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

“She was deeply troubled by his words” (Luke 1:29). What a spiritual lesson you receive from this wisest Virgin! Standing in awe of the Angel, she teaches that you should fear and be careful with watching any figures, even those with a holy appearance; she teaches you to avoid the contagious air of the praise of others; she teaches an attitude of the internal repugnance for self-praise. If she, exceeding all other creatures in her unusual attributes, fears to listen even to the deserved praise addressed at her, although there was nothing in her which would not match the words of the angel, how can you greedily search for praise, by what right would you desire the air of the vain honor, and would you be either bragging about yourself or rejoicing when someone else is praising you, when nothing can be found that would be praiseworthy in you.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

“Wondered what his greeting meant” (Luke 1:29). Contemplate, how the Most Holy Virgin does not accept the angel's greeting immediately, at first, she contemplates them to discern whether this is a heavenly vision and whether it is good or rather an infernal temptation and evil delusion. For the same reason, you also should pay attention to all internal impulses and before you decide to implement them, discern whether they come from God. Since the Most Holy Virgin knew that often the angel of darkness takes on the shape of the angel of light, she realized that she should not immediately trust this envoy, so as not to be deceived or, in matters of great importance, to not act too hastily. Thus, you also should think before implementing any suggestions. Discern the spirits, whether they come from God. Do not follow any internal impulse too easily, keeping in mind the innumerable examples of frauds.

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

“She was found with child through the power of the Holy Spirit” (see Matthew 1:18). The most Holy Virgin, through 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. Oh, if only you could say of your deeds, that they come from the Holy Spirit, that they were performed in the Holy Spirit! It is a great joy to possess the Holy Spirit, even greater, to act according to Him and, the greatest of all, to complete one’s days in the Holy Spirit. What should I say, to think about her, who carries in her virginal womb, the Son conceived through the Holy Spirit? Oh, the happiest of Virgins! The most blessed of Mothers! With all my heart, I congratulate you on this privilege, given to you alone, of the choir of holy women. Grant that we could live and die according to the Holy Spirit.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

“You shall conceive” (Luke 1:31). Think that upon conceiving the Son of God, the Most Holy Virgin was endowed with greater gifts and graces, and adorned with greater holiness than before. Similarly to the fruit which are the greatest decoration of the trees, she received unheard of beauty, majesty and holiness from the Most Holy Fruit of her womb. You should expect similar results, after receiving the Holy Sacrament, when you welcome into your heart, humble, obedient, courageous and patient Jesus: do not create obstacles from becoming more humble, more obedient, more courageous, and more patient than you were before.

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

“When His Mother Mary was engaged” (Matthew 1:18). It is not your part to inquire into the deep mystery of virginity united with motherhood and motherhood with virginity. You should rather wonder at what was done for your salvation. What is it? How significant is it? The Virgin remains untouched and nevertheless, she becomes a Mother; she has a groom, but is a Virgin. The Divine virginal Bridegroom makes each of them an immaculate lily, yet the Son appears in-between and receives the glory. What a strange mystery, filled with wonder, worth of praise! The Virgin did not know man, and at the same time she carries in her womb, God and Man, Man and

God; God born of the Father before all ages, with no mother, Man in time created in the Mother, with no father, through the Holy Spirit. Truly, there is no other such great mystery which we should glorify, admire and wonder about more. Among the deeds of God, nothing is more noble! You are dust and mud. See, what God has done for you! How He humiliated Himself at birth! How far the almighty power of the Father has reached! Could you not love Him for it?

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

“Mary set out, proceeding in haste into the hill country” (Luke 1:39). The Most Holy Virgin, the Mother of God offers you two complementary ways of approaching perfection. One, is to scorn deep valleys and enter the hill country, which is to always strive for a higher level of perfection and to try to reach it. The other, is to work in haste for the salvation of yourself and your brother, not allowing yourself, as is the habit of a lazy man, to waste very precious time, but to devote it to praiseworthy deeds.

(Inspectio Cordis)

10

“It was of her that Jesus was born” (Matthew 1:16). Congratulate the Most Holy Virgin on this privilege: while not spoiling the blossom of virginity, she became the Mother of God-the Savior. In the spirit of thorough submission and confidence, entrust to her all your needs, without a doubt, that finally you will receive everything in your favor. Learn also to run to her in all your doubts, anxieties, and difficulties, and to constantly give thanks to the Lord, that He chose Her and made Her his Mother and our Intercessor.

(Inspectio Cordis)

11

“Blest is the womb that bore you” (Luke 11:27). It is not only the opinion of this woman enlightened by God, but also all of Christian theology confirms, that the Most Holy Virgin was adorned with greater holiness, and even more graces, after the incarnation of the Son of God than before. Be careful therefore, not to

make any obstacles to the Lord, who is about to come to you. Do not make obstacles which would prevent Him from enlightening, sanctifying and purifying you more than before, and making you more obedient, disciplined, humble, poor, gentle and devoted to mortifications.

(Inspectio Cordis)

12

How truly sweet you are, O Mary! Whoever filled with bitterness ran to you and left without the sweetest consolation? Who in affliction came to you and was not immediately strengthened? Who, tormented with severe temptations, did not experience sweetness in your arms? Oppressed, groaning, tempted, dispirited you console, strengthen, support, raise. You are generous to all, to all very sweet. If only I could express this sweetness the way I comprehend it! The entire Christian world experiences, tastes and draws from this sweetness, although it cannot express it. So the generous, the devout, the sweet Virgin! Show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb, gracious to us today and merciful in the hour of our death.

(Inspectio Cordis)

13

Give the greatest and highest thanks to the Most Holy Lady, and ask her to obtain for you, a permanent state of grace, so that you would not fear the world, Hell or death.

(Inspectio Cordis)

CHURCH

1

“I am the gate. Whoever enters through Me will be safe. He will go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9). Contemplate what one religious man correctly notices,

that Christ, His life and teaching are the gate; while the sheepfold is the Church, the Order or any Religious Society. Those who enter through this gate, that is Christ, into Christ's sheepfold, the Church, Order or Society, will certainly be saved.

To enter through the gate, is also to contemplate the teaching, in particular to ponder on the most holy passion of the Savior, and to follow the example of His life. Truly, there are many of those who, professing Christ, develop a liking for His teaching and carefully ponder it all the time, yet they walk away from the gate of salvation, because their contemplation is not united with their life practices. And only "blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11: 28).

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

"The reign of God is like [...] the owner" (Matthew 20:1). Consider that the owner is Christ; the Church, the vineyard; and the souls of the faithful are the vine bushes in the vineyard; while the workers, are both religious and lay priests, many of whom have preceded us: originally, the apostles, who set up and cultivated the vineyard with Christ, the owner; later, the martyrs, whose blood watered it; and the virgins, whose virginal lilies and other flowers of scented, shining virtues, adorned it.

You should also consider yourself called to this vineyard, and rejoicing, devote yourself with all your strength, with all your spirit and body, to fulfilling the works of love in it. The great Owner of the vineyard has already prepared for you and His other workers, the most wonderful meal, filling food, the food of salvation that is His Most Holy Body.

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

"He sent them out to his vineyard" (...). Imagine that you were also sent to some vineyard, where many people have been working: one is digging the soil, another is trimming the branches clean, yet another is cultivating the vineyard and one more is watering it.

Realize that such a vineyard of the heavenly Lord is the faithful Church in which numerous workers toil and sweat. One teaches, another acts, yet another fertilizes the field of the faithful souls with the word of God and another, through the sacrament

of penance, cleans them of the dirt of sins. Nobody indulges in rest, all work in shifts and through various deeds of love, approach perfection and desire only for it to bear plentiful fruit for the Lord, the fruit which would rejoice and please Him.

And you, would you not be ashamed, if among such a multitude of workers, you would lay idle? Would you eat the heavenly bread which belongs to the heavenly Lord in vain?

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

“The fruitful one He trims clean to increase their yield” (John 15:2). Consider, how desirable are the grape-vines which bring fruit! How worthy of love are those servants, who work in the Lord’s vineyard! How precious in God’s eyes are those who cooperate in the work of saving souls. Despite the fact that they themselves fall and defile themselves, out of their frailty, their imperfections, and due to their frequent contacts with imperfect people in working for their salvation, He purifies them “to increase their yield.” May you be one of these, who, as far as you can, toil for the Lord, so that the grape-vines in His vineyard could bear fruit.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

“I am with you always, until the end of the world!” (Mt 28:20) Contemplate that the Savior, when he was leaving for Heaven, could not give us any other, more graceful, excellent and gratifying token of remembrance, than his truest Body which for our salvation was tormented and hurt.

As in Heaven, there is nothing more precious and greater than God, just so, here on earth, there is nothing more worthy and excellent than this most valuable treasure, which contains the veiled God-Man.

The Church triumphant takes pride in the delightful vision of the Holy Trinity. The Church militant boasts of participation in the gifts of God which it receives from the treasury of the Most Holy Body. From this, comes perfect love, from this, derives patience, from this, one receives the strengthening of hope, from this, shines faith, from this, we draw mildness, humility, obedience and other virtues typical of Christians. From this treasury, we receive the forgiveness of sins, the remission of punishment, the correction of our lives, the enlightenment of the mind

and the salvation of the soul. And, since it never exhausts itself, we will have it till the end of the world. Just for this reason, you are the happiest, the Church of God! So go now and whatever your soul desires, draw from that treasury.

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

“No one has hired us” (Mt 20:7). Consider that many among the pagans, on the day of the judgment, may use this as an excuse for their infidelity, that they have not heard about Christ, the Light of the world and the Savior of the people. It is also certain, that pagans will receive a lighter punishment than Christians, as can be inferred from the story of the soul of the pagan priest which appeared to Saint Macarius. Conversely, who among the Christians, could be able to explain his bad deeds, when his not keeping the commandments of God and of the Church, the evangelical counsel and Christ’s teaching, will bring upon him a very harsh sentence of condemnation?

It is understandable that you should most fear, not falling into the hands of the Judge, to whom you will not be able to provide any excuse for your transgressions, your negligence, the bad actions that you did and the good actions which you neglected to do. Lay people will probably only have to account to the Divine Judge for God’s and Church commandments. You would be required to report on your vocation, received inspirations, neglected opportunities for pursuing virtues, not keeping the Constitution, discarding the unusual means given to you by God so that you could proceed toward ever higher perfection. Finally, don’t you think that your receiving of the Holy Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist will be carefully examined? Your soul will be required to account for their fruit, just as for the fruit of today’s Holy Communion just received.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

“You who have followed me [...] will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life” (cf. Mt 19:28-29). Shake yourself free from any numbness and negligence and get to work! Why do you give yourself 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, toil days and nights, take up many tasks and suffer many hardships just to keep 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 all necessary efforts? 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!

(Inspectio Cordis)

HOLINESS

1

"If one of you decides to build a tower, will he not first sit down and calculate the outlay to see if he has enough money" (comp. Luke 14:28). Contemplate that to achieve perfection in the Religious Life, you should first look for the appropriate means, before you start climbing the hill of perfection. Just as no house would be erected without the incurring some costs, so without the appropriate means, there would be no virtue. Do you want to know what means you should use on the road to perfection? None but the rules given you by God to be obeyed.

There is no greater perfection than diligent obedience to the rules. Thus, if someone shapes his life far from the rule, he finds himself off the road to perfection and is closer to Hell than to Heaven.

May you have an unshaken rule, that there is nothing more sacred in your life, than keeping God's commandments and religious rules, because you will go forward in God's love, to the degree that you will keep the rules.

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

Have you progressed so far in religious perfection, not as far as honors, knowledge, offices, superior occupations are concerned, but in poverty, humility, obedience, God's love, self-contempt and the other virtues which constitute religious perfection?

Think whether, within the scope of the graces received from God, you have progressed in the spiritual exercises, for example in prayer, contemplation or, quite opposite, have you moved backwards?

According to an often repeated opinion of the spiritual masters: "Not to progress is to stop, and not to move forward is to move back." Who does not know that from one's everyday experience!

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

"Unless your holiness surpasses that of the scribes..." (Mt 5:20). Contemplate how the truthful and holy Teacher, encourages His disciples to make progress and to advance in perfection; He wants them to place so much effort into moving forward, that nobody would be able to exceed them in holiness of life, but rather, they would surpass everyone in perfecting the virtues and in this way, reach the Kingdom of Heaven.

You do not take up an insignificant challenge to prove that you are the most perfect of all. Aroused by this holy jealousy, strive so as to surpass everyone in the virtues. Do not follow the opinion of those, who believe that it would be enough if you just catch up with others. Do not delude yourself that you reach the peak with others, because then it will turn out that you are at the lowest level of perfection. It is not inappropriate that Christ admonishes: "You must be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). Here is the Most High Teacher of perfection who wants you to possess the perfection of God alone.

May your holiness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (cf. Mt 5:20). Yet, since so quickly and so often you go astray, beg God, who is to come to you, to perform in you, what He commands.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

The aim of our life is certainly to serve God, to live to please Him and to achieve heavenly happiness. We should have this aim in view, in any act of virtue and any task.

In choosing the tools to achieve this aim, we should be guided by the laws of God. We should ask God for light to discern His will in any action, say special prayers toward this end, and to precede any important task with a thorough consideration, counsel and listening to the opinions of others, not simply relying on oneself.

As to the objects of consultation, you should be able to discern them and properly distinguish: what is useful from what is useless, the good from the bad, the more important from the less crucial; simultaneously, considering one's position, one's own vocation, and the scope of possessed virtues and talents. The best and most appropriate measures should be taken to reach the goal we are pursuing.

We should efficiently employ our will and other powers of the soul, to perform the tasks which have already been chosen and accepted. As the Sage testifies, "a wise man is more powerful than a strong man, and a man of knowledge, than a man of might" (Proverbs 24:5). Thus, he will not only discern and choose rightly, but also the good that he has discerned and chosen, will perseveringly lead him to fruition. Probably, the last act of discernment is to consider the judiciousness of the world as injudiciousness, and its wisdom as stupidity. As they say—with might and main, proceed to God's love. As the above mentioned Sage says, "Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!" (Eccl. 1:2; 12:8) And stupidity, except for the love of God and service to Him alone (cf. Dt. 6:13; 11:1).

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

5 Believe, that this is the voice of the Lord when you are called to improve your life, when you are turned from the path of mistakes, when you are urged to do penance for your trespasses, when you are prompted to despise the world, to renounce your own self, to love your brother and to be obedient. When, finally, you are called to acquire all different virtues, the voice which is prompting, urging and exhorting you is the voice of the Lord. Thus, you must admit that happy are those who can hear this voice, recognize and understand it, and thanks to that, they will never be misled, they will never err or get lost. You, keeping your heart constantly open to this voice, say like the just man, David: "My heart is steadfast, O God; my heart is steadfast" (Ps 56:8): "Let it be done to me as you say" (Luke 1:38).

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

Those, to whom the Heavenly Luminary grants the grace of self-knowledge, will proceed well. Then, when they see their offenses, they regret them and feel aversion toward them, when they realize how ugly they are. They care most for their salvation, as soon as they realize that they are the greatest sinners.

Poor you, if you do not see your sins, when during the examination of conscience, your sight is dimmed, and despite your hidden shortcomings, you joyfully accept the title, "saint" and believe yourself to be one. But what this nice-looking holiness of yours truly is, will be revealed, only when God, your Judge appears, coming on blue clouds to "explore Jerusalem with lamps" (cf. Zephaniah 1:12). Now, rather, consider yourself a sinner, when He comes to your heart as the most Merciful Father.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

If you want to discern if someone, or yourself, possesses the Spirit of the Lord, think whether he is a lover of truth and whether you are guided by truth, since hiding the truth is a characteristic of the evil spirit; preventing it from speaking up is an act of the evil spirit. The one who neither speaks the truth to others, nor allows it being told to them, who neither listens to the words of God which are the truth, nor proclaims them to others, is not of God.

Thus, if you accept reproofs as valuable, you possess the Spirit of God. If you accept the sins of your past life and the shortcomings of the present, repent for them and correct them, you have the Spirit of God. If you lead others to recognize their sins, to grieve for them, to render them repugnant and to embrace correction and redress, you have the Spirit of God. Any desire for virtues and disgust for vices is from the Spirit of God, as these are the best things and "every worthwhile gift, every genuine benefit comes from above, descending from the Father of the Heavenly luminaries" (cf. James 1:17).

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

A Religious without humility is like a house without foundations. But when he possesses it, he is like a perfectly fortified edifice, rested on a strong rock.

If this is so, you should regret that that you have not done everything you could to acquire this most precious virtue, that you have never practiced it, or have done it very rarely, with an insolent and a reluctant disposition. And now, having contemplated its great power, efficiency, dignity and usefulness, will you remain idle? Won't you rather reach for it quickly and practice it diligently?

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

Here are the signs of the humble spirit: greater dedication to everyday tasks, turning to what is held in contempt, fleeing honors, avoiding self-praise or referring it to God alone; a desire to be held in contempt. Never wish that people would realize that your deeds come from humility, and never wish to be considered humble. Yet, when people believe that what you speak or do comes from humility, ascribe it rather to God's help, than to your humility.

In a nutshell: humility consists in an open, clear, genuine and sincere spirit and similar deeds. Since humility (as we are taught by a particular Doctor, drawing from the thoughts and apparitions of St. Theresa), is nothing else but the truth. And when, on account of our shameful deeds, we consider ourselves to be worms, it is most true. When we believe we deserve all the punishment, suffering, crosses and oppression, it is also not far from the truth. Certainly, we who offend God, the Father of all, individually or as a community and hurt Him with gross trespasses, are worthy of all the anguish, pain and suffering.

(Inspectio Cordis)

10

Contemplate how many opportunities you have wasted in practicing humility. How many times, with great energy and without any urgent need, you have fought the opinions of others, and promoted your own, to stress your importance, although you could have remained silent with honor and humility.

It will not be useless, if you recall already contemplated humiliations suffered by your Lord, when He was in this world. Think how much of it you have used for your humiliation and how much you still miss it.

Moreover, how many times, because of your spiritual pride, have you refused humiliating services, works and functions which, if taken up, would be the source of merit? What was happening to you when there was an opportunity to humiliate yourself! Out of vain conceit and the proud desire of your mind, you neglected it or declined to take it up and did not want to give up your comfortable position. Now you regret the wasted merit and the thought of your pride, bothers your conscience.

Go forward! If you have carelessly navigated into those high reefs and very dangerous rocks, from now on, try to be more careful and discern the road with greater humility, so that you could, with the Teacher of humility, Jesus, rise to the

top, and become more prudent, following the example of David who sang: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray" (cf. Psalm 119:67).

(Inspectio Cordis)

11

The daughters of pride are: vain glory, hideous and dishonest ambition, love for self-adoration, vain, useless and disordered longing for knowledge; the desire to surpass others with erudition; striving for more honors, respect, glory and importance from others; the rejection of unfailing and most beneficial advice; resisting more probable opinions while with unconquerable obstinacy, rejecting, objecting to and fighting only probable ones: all this is a certain sign of considerable pride.

You should add to this bragging about your erudition, showing off your cleverness through jokes, mockery, brazen jests, poking fun at others and speaking highly of oneself.

(Inspectio Cordis)

12

You must not think that I am taking no account of that which is best, and which alone forms a wise and holy man, 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 sometimes you have 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 evils you have committed, or good deeds 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.

(Templum Dei Mysticum)

13

"Blest are you who are weeping" (Luke 6:21). You also try to cry if you want to be happy. Cry because you are in exile from the Heavenly homeland; cry because you remain in the valley of tears. Cry that you fall every minute; cry that you are so burdened with your deficiencies, that you are unable to follow Jesus to the peak

of perfection. Cry that as long as you remain in the body, you will be deprived of the highest good. Cry that too often, you offend God who loves you so much; cry that you do more evil than good. Cry that, by nature, you turn yourself to ruin. Cry that you have more predilections for bodily pleasures, than for mortifications. Finally, cry that you are so ill prepared to receive the sweetest Divine nourishment. Cry, at last, that although you have a thousand reasons to cry, you cannot cry, and in fact you laugh and rejoice more.

(Inspectio Cordis)

BEAUTY OF THE HEART

1

And who would not admit that the Heart of man, especially of a devout one, is the Altar of God the Most High? For, just as God, veiled in the most Holy Eucharist, is never absent on the altar of a material temple, so He is never absent in a heart that is devoted to Him. [...]

Once the God of infinite goodness desired that a temple be set up for Him by the King of the Israelites. And so He intimated His desire to His Prophet, and dispatched him to David with these instructions: “Go, tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Should you build me a house to dwell in?’” (2 Sam 7:5). How much more ardently does He desire to have an altar—I say, the whole heart—dedicated to Him in His mystical temple? From this arises this entreaty, so to speak, addressed to each one of us, as it is found in the writings of the Sage: “My son, give me your heart” (Prov 23:26). For what purpose? That He may inhabit it, reside therein, and stay, reign and rest therein forever. For the Roman Philosopher himself believes: “God dwells in each good man” (Seneca).

(Templum Dei Mysticum)

2

Yet what is more excellent or more sublime than God? Since then there is nothing in man either more deserving, or more noble, than his heart, God is to be placed here as on His altar, so that He may rejoice most fully in His whole possession.

Saint Bernard, a man most beloved of God, holds the same opinion saying: "In every creature under the sun, controlled by the vanities of the world, nothing is found more sublime than the human heart, nothing more noble, nothing more like God. Therefore, He seeks from you, nothing other than your heart." Additionally, if our heart is a little more noble, it can be filled with no other thing except God alone! And so it should seek nothing except God, nor to rest anywhere but in Him, to whom it is morally bound. Augustine acknowledged that by speaking to God in this way: "You made us, Lord, for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." The most learned and devout Father Nieremberg illustrated this in a very elegant and appropriate metaphor saying: "The compass needle does not come to rest until it turns toward the North, and looks straight at the Arctic Pole; and in whatever other direction it finally turns, it never stops there: in the same way, our Hearts, which God has made for Himself alone and not for anything else, tend and incline toward their own center or natural perfection: and they cannot rest until they look to their Creator."

(Templum Dei Mysticum)

3

Let [God] remain alone on His altar. Nothing earthly, let alone impure, should come to rest on it. Let us keep this altar, with utmost zeal, very pure for God alone. [...]

Nor should we permit anything except God on the altar of our heart. His command is, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart" (Mt 22:37). [...] The slightest disordered feeling toward a small trifle, toward ourselves, impedes, in the highest degree, this perfect love. "For those who love God," as Theodoretus says, "with all their heart, do not divide their feeling by placing it both among earthly matters and among heavenly things, but bear it entirely upwards".

(Templum Dei Mysticum)

4

"The weeds made their appearance as well" (Mt 13:26). With the greatest diligence, you should avoid little imperfections and even the smallest sins. Undoubtedly, they are invisible when the devilish scoundrel sows them in. However, after more serious falls, and a large number of mortal sins, you finally realize them and think-

ing about yourself, you understand that these very small imperfections, which you neglectfully allowed, gave way to the serious ones, this is when the weeds appeared. You should imitate farmers who take the weeds out of a field sown with wheat or any other grain, protecting it from attacks of other, even more destructive weeds.

You should do the same: beware of little imperfections to prevent the access of greater sins, or if they have already run rampant, get rid of them, to keep your heart pure and your soul very clean, and to secure your own salvation, by not allowing any greater trespasses in future. This is how the evil spirit deals with spiritual people, not by trapping them in a net of mortal sins, because they abhor them. But rather through little deficiencies, which he knows they would ignore, and which will lead them to the heaviest falls. Ask Divine Wisdom, when you receive It, to give you wisdom which will let you avoid the traps of the evil spirit.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

How careful have you been in avoiding talkativeness, which destroys the virtues and distracts your spirit? How concerned have you been for keeping silence, the guardian of the same virtues and a concentration of your spirit? How have you practiced them in your life?

How have you cultivated the virtues of kindness, benevolence and gentleness, the greatest adornments of a religious? How much effort have you put into obtaining patience, this hereditary virtue of Christians, and of religious in particular; and gaining courage and magnanimity which stands out with it, that it opposes all that resists perfection? How zealous have you been in fighting such vices as cowardliness, vain fear, uncontrollable sadness, impatience and anger? How many times have you neglected and how many times have you practiced giving yourself over to the will of God, the main source of internal peace and perseverance?

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

It is not enough to pull oneself together once we recognize the sickness caused by the vices which have burdened us and made us groan. It is not enough to rinse committed sins with sincere penance and the proper elimination of bad habits. We should add avoidance of the new ones. We should add a persevering watchfulness

to avoid a relapse into sickness, as doctors say; so that we would not return to vomit, following the nasty habit of dogs, and would not get entangled in the devilish trap, out of which we were freed, thanks to God's grace. But who—I am asking—can do it by himself? Who can [do it] with even his own greatest resourcefulness, not supported by Christ, not strengthened by the One without whom, we can do nothing, nothing? We have to sigh often to Jesus, our Helper, with great zeal, and as the Church commands, always repeat: "Into your hands," my Lord, "I commend my spirit: you will redeem me, O Lord, O faithful God" (Ps 30:6); so I commend my spirit into Your hands, at any time, at any place, at any moment, particularly when the spirit leaves the body. "Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings" (Ps 16:8).

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

If people put so much effort and inventiveness to avoiding the places where they suffered the loss of their worldly possessions, with even greater zeal, you should avoid even the smallest opportunities to commit any, even the least imperfections which may lead you to suffer the loss of the treasure of the heavenly glory and may deprive you of it. May the sons of darkness not turn out to be wiser than you, a son of the light. (cf. Luke 16:8)

Avoid pride, not to lose humility; avoid the air of vain glory, not to crash into very dangerous rocks of numerous foul deeds; avoid gluttony, not to fall in debauchery; avoid quarrels, not to injure love; avoid idleness, not to become a pillow of the devil; avoid any looseness, not to go to condemnation.

If you had sinned with disobedience, now with obedience regain the lost laurel wreaths; if you had been lenient with your soul and let it be distracted with talkativeness, focus again on silence; if you had lost God's grace through pride, take care to regain it through humility; if you had lost heaven through laziness, get it back with work, devotion and the practicing of the virtues. Clothe yourself in the new man and, thus transformed, experience the Savior of all people. The more angry our Lord was with you because of your sins, the more gracious, more devoted and more friendly He will become, thanks to your penance.

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

For spiritual sluggishness, that is laziness or discouragement which are the source of numerous imperfections and trespasses. Just as at a busy farm, the fields are always green, the crops grow, and there is a harvest; at a neglectful one, they lie fallow and bring a vast amount of useless weeds. It is same is with a spiritual man, who loves progressing in all the virtues; his soul is full of life, his spirit blossoms and great and rich fruit appear; conversely with a sluggish and frigid one, nothing good appears in his mind or heart, they rather get infested with the weeds of imperfections, if not with the dirt of nasty sins. [...] Idleness and nothing else is the source of all sins. According to the opinion of many saints, the enemy from hell fears to approach people who are diligent and tend to their development. But as soon as we turn our attention away from honest and holy works, the enemy plants in us the seeds of evil thoughts and sows for himself the field of the Heavenly Lord. Beware of idleness.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

Contemplate what happens frequently to people who lead a spiritual life, who try with their hearts to serve God: they experience moments of the deepest abandonment. It appears to them, that they were deserted by God, like a ship during the strongest storm was deserted by its captain. Complaining about it, the greatest friend of God, the king of Israel, sings: “Why do you keep me so far away? Why must I go about in mourning, with the enemy oppressing me?” (Ps 42:2).

Yet, in this internal desolation, as we understand it, the Most Merciful Lord does not abandon us entirely, but remains apparently asleep, to give us the opportunity to gather greater merits, and to learn to fight unaided. When his great servant, St. Catherine of Siena was amicably complaining and asking where He went when she experienced the greatest temptations, and why He did this to her, He answered that He was in her heart. He allowed the evil spirits to attack her, so that she had the merit of perseverance, and the virtue of courage was tested, yet He never allowed her to fall, protecting her from disgrace and condemnation.

(Inspectio Cordis)

10

From this, you should learn that there are many people in the world, who do not experience temptations because the evil spirit considers them his own and does

not reveal his power against them, does not aim bullets, does not chop with an ax so as to cause the tree to fall, and does not set snares. Those who live in an Order, a holy and fortified city of God, he attacks fiercely. Thus, the religious, despite their numerous mortifications, fastings and abstinence, are troubled and exposed to unusual temptations. It is so, because their common adversary from hell considers them his most implacable enemies and resorts to all the possible tricks, makes the strongest efforts so as to force them out of there, as from a camp fortified with God's might and protection, or tries to dig his way in, defeat and annihilate them.

Thus, do not think this is any new kind of trouble, cross or religious fight when you hear that even the God-Man was tempted. Nor do not despair of obtaining help from the One who led you out of the walled city of Babylon, into the holy desert. Remain hopeful and have trust, that you will manage to defeat the infernal enemy any time he attacks you, armed with so many disgusting thoughts, vices and wrong stimuli, as his power is much weaker than one might imagine. This dog may bark but he will not bite. While you, whenever you nourish yourself with the Holy Eucharist, acquire new strength and a new weapon. Certainly, the Eucharist is the mightiest weapon against any temptation.

(Inspectio Cordis)

11

Undoubtedly, the evil spirit does not need a big hole to sap and to destroy the structure of the fortification of the soul; he can do it with the tiniest transgression of the religious rule. If small impurities of sins will not be removed, they would suffice to poison the air of the soul; it has been proven repeatedly, that small imperfections, ignored because of their insignificance, extinguish great virtues.

(Inspectio Cordis)

12

You have to think about the integrity 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 devotion, 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.

(Inspectio Cordis)

13

Since it is from the mouth of man that life and death comes, you will have to give an account to the Highest Judge, regarding who you have animated, instructed, strengthened, or called to a better life with your speech, or conversely, you will be held accountable if you have destroyed, or deprived someone or if you have become the source of condemnation for someone.

Therefore, you should rather be a severe censor of your mouth, be a judge of yourself, and keep in mind committed lies, talkativeness, defamations and murmuring, cleanse them with adequate penance and perform an act of expiation. From now on, harness your tongue with a strict curb and ask the Lord to set a watch over your mouth and a guard over your lips (cf. Ps 140:3), so that you would not say anything unbecoming of a religious.

(Inspectio Cordis)

14

You should use your tongue with great care, speak gently and use only well-balanced words, because your listener judges you according to what he hears from your mouth. It is commonly accepted, that on the basis of words, one's internal worth is judged. A tongue is the expression of the heart. It makes many people good, but it can also deprive many, even the best ones, just as the Apostle says: "Bad company corrupts good morals" (1 Cor 15:33).

So now, reflect seriously on the words which come out of your mouth. Ponder whether you have not torn down more than you have built up with your speech. Whether you have led others to idleness or even to immorality through the telling of useless or ridiculous things?

(Inspectio Cordis)

15

If you are overconfident and certain that in the spiritual matters you are very experienced, watch that you do not fall! Even Christ did not direct Himself, but had the Spirit, which led Him to fulfill the will of the Everlasting Father to the fullest extent. Pay attention, what advantages you derive from the opening of your conscience, and what losses you incur when you close it. Doesn't it trouble you when you hide something in it? Don't you experience the feeling of highest peace and joy whenever you open it up?

(Inspectio Cordis)

LOVE**1**

The Teacher of the Gentiles has best compared a servant of God who is not glowing with true love to a tinkling bell and a clanging cymbal (1 Cor 13:1). For the attainment of eternal life—and the value of meritorious works—are rooted in love. Therefore, more than any other good, each of you should try to gain for himself [this love], this pearl of great price, this treasure hidden in the field (Mt 13:44-46). Although love is a gift of God, it is obtained and preserved by constancy of prayer and mortification. Therefore, let everything you do, be done in love (1 Cor 16:14).

The commandments of God, and the Evangelical counsels, the laws of the 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 for God. This is what [Jesus Christ] the heavenly Lawgiver said: "Anyone who loves Me, will be true to My word." (John 14:23) 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.

(Norma vitae)

2

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, daily actions and sufferings, and each and every moment, details, circumstances, changes. Each and every action and suffering by due submission, confidence, 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.

“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 [the Old and New] Testaments, (Mk 12:30, Lk 10:27) should be your common rule and the safest way to heaven.

(Norma vitae)

3

On all (Mt 25:31-46) 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). These works alone will triumph at the final Judgement. (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27-35)

(Norma vitae)

4

Now, contemplate the virtue, thanks to which everything was created: Heaven and earth came into being, and man was made, God became a man and, although not prone to suffering, suffered in the body and was savagely killed, and though immortal, He died for you, not as God but as man. Thanks to this love, the Apostles and other disciples received the Light from Heaven, the Teacher of Truth and the Spirit of all knowledge. And thanks to this love, the one Body of God’s Church, was created out of many peoples, as of different limbs; and many holy Communities,

Societies and Orders, brought together by one Spirit, and the love of one God, would live in the most perfect love.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

“God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” (John 3:16). Occupy your thoughts with contemplating the love of God for people, a love which is so great, that neither human nor angelic tongue may express it, nor any mind comprehend it. Even if you had overlooked other acts of love, and if nothing else had been revealed to us except for the truth that, for the salvation of all mankind, God decided and gave His one and only Son as a holocaust, this alone would suffice to prove the infinite, disinterested and incomprehensible love.

Contemplate how much love God gives you every day, how much He gave you at the beginning of the world. Out of love to you, He created an immense universe. He placed bright stars in the sky to give you the light that you need. Out of love for you, He created such a variety of birds and reptiles and numerous shoals of fish in the waters. He painted the earth with beauty and adorned it with a diversity of trees, flowers and herbs, out of love to you. Do your eyes lack anything to admire? Can your heart long for anything else to satisfy it? Does your soul lack anything to refresh it?

Evidently the Most Merciful Father believed that what He did out of love for you would have been insufficient and paltry, had he not sacrificed His One and Only Son to death for your salvation. The Great God so loved the world, so loved mankind and so loved you, the ungrateful one!

Feel ashamed and blush for shame, that you have done nothing out of disinterested love for Him, that you have not performed any act worth remembering, that you have not devoted yourself to practicing any serious virtue. Moreover, if you inspect your heart more carefully, you will see that you returned evil for good, hate for love, offenses for blessings, ingratitude for graces. It is revealed through your serious trespasses, the infinite number of which, you will see during a careful self-examination.

Therefore, for the sake of the Everlasting God, promise now, to mourn, not only for your trespasses, but also for those of others, and through sufficient atonement, to reconcile with the majesty of God!

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

“You shall love the Lord your God” (Mt 22:37). If the most important reason to love our friends is that we are loved by them, could you not love God who loved you so much, that He gave His only Son for you? Besides, think what you were before He created you. You were nothing, just a pile of dust. While He, directed by His love for you, made you in His image. Why should not you love Him?

If only vessels knew their creators and pictures and statues their authors, they could talk to them. They surely would love them, for the beauty which they owe to their hands and they might even be more faithful in love than you are toward your Creator whom you accept, get to know and contemplate.

Contemplate, if someone bought you out of hard slavery, with what service would you return such an act of kindness? What kind of love would you have for your great benefactor!

Jesus Christ is the one who paid the price of His Blood rather than money, to get you out of the slavery of eternal death. With what flames of love for Him do you burn? While leaving the Holy Table unmoved, didn't you give yourself to vain amusements, talkativeness, laughter, jokes, empty cheerfulness and great distraction?

How ungrateful! How inhuman! You deserve the eternal fires of hell!

Think how indebted you would be, to thank someone who had rescued you, if you had fallen into a cave in a secluded place, or in the woods. Yet you have received such benefit from the Holy Spirit numerous times!

Besides having called you to the Catholic faith, which freed you from the abyss of hell prepared for the unfaithful, He calls you with His daily callings from so many dangers! How many times, when prompted by your nature, you fall in the same abyss of hell, He mercifully rescues you by giving you the recognition of your sins, allowing you the gift of contrition and inciting you to receive the holy Sacraments? Thanks to them, you have regained your salvation, as many times as you have forfeited it.

Convinced by these benefits from God, love Him. And cry out with David: “I love you, O Lord, my strength” (Ps 17:2).

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

“The Father loves me for this” (Jn 10:17). Christ says that the reason why His Father loves Him, is that He gave his life for the salvation of the people.

Similarly, you will experience the love of God, only when you care for the salvation of your brother and out of love for him, you will take up and bear all distress, difficulties and demands. The one who does not love his brother is unworthy of God's love. The one who, because of the Highest Good, does not treat with love those who do wrong to him, is undeserving of the love of this Good.

Would you like God to love you? Then love your brother because of God. Since every day, you receive so many goods from the hand of God, why don't you do good to others? God gave His love for your salvation, while for the salvation of your brother, you try to avoid even the slightest hardships. Believe me: in this way, you do not love God and God is not going to love you. “There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's love for one's friends” (J 15:13).

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

Consider all the dangerous accidents, which you managed to escape unhurt or avoided altogether, only thanks to the help of the Highest God, the Best Father and Protector. To immerse you mind in these thoughts, recall the trips, and places, actions and conversations and dangers and focus on them.

The more clearly you see the protection of Providence and the strong hand of the great and Highest God, the more it will make your heart burn with stronger feelings for Him and the more you will thank Him with all your heart and you will give yourself to His love. Why should you not love Him, when He has loved you so much, that He never turns His most merciful and kind eye away.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

Consider that the measure of graces depends on the measure of love. Thus, the one who has a greater love for the Highest Goodness, receives more abundant graces and more numerous rewards of love. My spirit, what can you hear? What can you

grasp? Are you still going to be so silly and reckless as to not devote yourself entirely to God's love, to receive all of God in return? Are you still going to follow your will to destruction, or rather to follow the inspirations of the Beloved for your salvation? Aren't you going to abandon everything in order to receive everything? Aren't you going to renounce yourself to receive yourself and the One who created you?

Oh, beneficial love for God! Through it we reach the One whom we love! Truly, it is good to love the Infinite and to be loved by Him! Oh, insatiable, sweet, constant, kind, calm, laudable and uncontained love! Make us experience you! Allow us to delight in you, to burn always with your flame and never burn down, to long for you and never have enough!

My God! May I, loving you truly and serving you in pure love, be able to sing you the sweetest song of love, when I see you in the happiest kingdom of all: "I found him whom my heart loves. I took hold of him and would not let him go" (Song of Songs 3:4).

(Inspectio Cordis)

10

"Anyone who loves me will be true to my word" (Jn 14:23). Contemplate that keeping God's teaching, is a sign of perfect love. Just as children who love their parents truly desire to fulfill their will scrupulously, those who would like to be counted among the sons of God, loving the best and the highest Father, should desire to strictly keep His commandments. Conversely, the one who is deaf to all the commandments, but rather considers them to be fairy-tales, and considers himself to be unnecessarily burdened with many things by the Father, is unworthy to be called a son.

Thus, the one who does not care about the works of God, cannot be considered even His servant. The Infinite Goodness complains about them in such a way: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not put into practice what I teach you?" (Luke 6:46).

It would be your task to strive for a perfect union through earnestly keeping the laws and teaching of God and those who represent Him.

(Inspectio Cordis)

11

Reflect on the deficiencies, which preclude God's love. You possess them when you are cold on your path to perfection, which you entered out of love for God; when you do not spread God's glory; when you humiliate the Order; when you are content with a lower standard of perfection, and give up in your strivings, out of negligence or maliciousness; when you place obstacles to allowing the great and the Highest God, to enter your heart freely, to stay in it and to rule it; when you long for the world again, praise it or even delight in it in your thoughts; when you do not want to avoid, and remove from yourself, any smaller or bigger sin, or even tiny imperfections and opportunities for them. All of this, to a large extent, opposes the love of God and gravely offends the infinite Goodness.

(Inspectio Cordis)

12

You will not err, thinking that whoever lacks love, does not have any virtues. Futile and fruitless is the teaching, which does not come from love. False and useless is obedience, which is taken up and performed without love. Vain and false is humility, joined to a speck of hatred. Paltry and pompous is chastity, without its companion and caretaker, holy love. Uncaring and dishonorable is poverty, practiced without love. Deficient is gentleness, not born out of love. Frigid is any perfection, virtue or action not warmed by love.

In this case, without love, we are not able to perform any heroic deeds. Thus it happens to many that they take their hands off the plow, stop in the middle of the road, shamefully abandon good works, because they lacked love. It does not impel, animate or support them.

I do not hesitate to claim, that even our wonderful Savior, would not have been able to perform the greatest work of human salvation, if He had not had love. Could He achieve this without the virtue, for which, He took up the work in the first place, moved by the highest love? Whatever He did for our life, whatever He had to bear, whatever He suffered, all this needs to be ascribed to Love, which alone achieved it.

(Inspectio Cordis)

13

“No man can serve two masters” (Mt 6:24). Contemplate that there are two masters: God and the world, spiritual and carnal desires, love for the self and love for God.

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 to 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. Thus, ask your Lord to smother and put out these fires completely with an abundant stream of tears in Holy Communion.

(Inspectio Cordis)

14

Therefore, whether you are praying, or reading, or writing, or saying good things, meditating, working, eating, drinking, worthily refreshing your spirit, or whatever you do that is virtuous, devout, holy, useful or praiseworthy, do it all out of the love of God, to the glory of God in such a way, that a particular intention always precedes what you do, or at least follows close after it. For it is both more fruitful and noble to consecrate oneself and all one has to God (as we have taught), not only in the morning and evening, but also more frequently in the course of the day, especially at the beginning of each action, adding everyday at least some general protestation (as it was shown) with the resolve not to think, speak or act, I do not say evil things, but those that are vain, prompted by mere curiosity, useless and to avoid imperfections. For so it will be that our loving and merciful God, considering our sincere will, will sanctify all our works, thoughts and actions, will preserve us from sins, and if by chance we should fall because of weakness, He will at once lift us up and mercifully pardon the effects of our ignorance, and finally will grant that we love Him most perfectly with all our heart, spirit, mind, will and

strength, everywhere, always, for all eternity, and that we are united with His Divinity in the closest bond of intimate Love.

(Templum Dei Mysticum)

15

Contemplate that love is a guarantee of eternal life. Nobody is closer to the glory of God than the friends of God. Yet, do not think that you should love very ardently only God and that only those enjoy the fruits of love whose hearts are constantly united with Him. The Lord says that the love of brother is very close to the love of God, or even it must be sad that one does not exist without the other.

You who claim that you burn with love for God, could you at the same time feel in your heart a great hatred to your brother? Could you truly serve God while you refuse any service to your brother? Meanwhile, sometimes you neglect what concerns his salvation or attend to it carelessly.

Love for your brother does not only mean that you are going to serve him but it should include glossing over his mistakes, bearing them and considering forgivable. "Help carry one another's burdens; in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Ga 6:2). So says the one whose love for brother has been perfect.

(Inspectio Cordis)

16

Love, the most noble princess of virtues and teacher of perfection! Holy love, eternal fire, redeeming fire, feeder of souls, mother of peace, tie linking nations and souls, spirit uniting us with God!

Never stop or put out in my heart in relation to God, the Highest Goodness and to my brother! Be my companion everywhere, in any thought, any resolution, intention or action! Do not fail me, ever! May knowledge abandon me and prophecies and oracles, but you do not desert me (c.f. 1 Cor 13:8-13). May I enter with you these dwellings of the saints and the kingdom of love from where you, the mightiest of virtues, have brought down God's Child to the earthly kingdom.

(Inspectio Cordis)

CHASTITY**1**

Ponder that chastity is a virtue of angels, even more than angels, due to the fragility of the vessel in which this most expensive and very fragrant liquor is contained. Realize that you are obliged to keep chastity not only because you have loved it, but also because you pledged yourself under oath to keep it: so not only as a virtue, but also through the power of the vow. Remember, that as pure souls more than any other are pleasant to God, the souls given to unchastity are not likeable and fill Him with disgust. Now you have the time to reflect on how you have been keeping this vow.

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

Each person is bound to keep the virtue of chastity not only on account of the positive law of God, but also the natural law. You are bound on the triple account; apart from the two mentioned above, there is also the vow. Thus, the more you were exposing yourself to the danger of breaking this vow, the more seriously you were sinning, because you were committing sacrilege. You should realize that you sinned like Lucifer who wanted to sit on the throne of God, or any other angel who rebelled against God.

If, by God's will, you are free from the temptations against this virtue, know that you are either not worthy or too weak to be tried. If, in turn, you have been put through your paces, it has come from the great grace of the Great and truly foreseeing God and thus give Him the greatest thanks for that.

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

Try to evaluate all your thoughts, whether they have not brought any moral dirt into your heart. In the sphere of chastity, an impure thought is a very serious issue, this which is kept in the heart and somehow allowed to enter your mind. It kills the souls as any unchaste act.

You should examine how you have guarded and in what condition you have kept your senses because they bring into your souls any good and evil. How you have guarded your eyes and your ears, comparable to amber which draws tiny objects to itself; your touch which is like a poisonous snake, taste, not unimportant enemy of chastity, and smell, a dangerous obstacle to keep the aforementioned thought clean.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

Take care, take care today and ever of each of your thoughts and inconsiderately do not open to it not only the door of your heart but also the gate of your mind. Since, so much evil and damage is brought to a poor soul with thoughts! Satan first offers a bad thought which poisons or steals chastity from the heart. Once it is done a great sorrow comes, which weakening the power of the spirit renders it unfit for anything and frequently thrusts some people to such an abyss of despair that, having shun the redeeming yoke of Christ, they take their hands off the plow and abandon the cultivation of the soul.

Oppose that enemy, that evil right at the beginning of your thought and today as well through your entire life keep your heart pure for the purest Lord.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

Many fall due to carnal temptations when they trust themselves too much. They fall because God's grace rightly abandons these who, as a result of disobedience, become arrogant. So we can read about a monk who brought along with him to the cloister, a son of disobedience. Finally, many fall due to frigidity and spiritual laziness according to the words of the Lord: "Because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth!" (Rev. 3:16), meaning I will deprive you of my grace.

Who swaggers above another, although only in his thoughts, prepares a hard fall for himself. Who relies too much on his own discernment, deliberateness and far-sightedness falls easily abandoned by the discernment of God. It was said: "In you I trust; let me not be put to shame!" (c.f. Ps 24,2). so, carnal sin follows the

disobedient, because disobedience renders any remedies futile. A christian poet so says about spiritual laziness and frigidity: “Spiritual laziness is a virulent plague which inflicts wounds with its invisible tooth.”

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

Reflect whether you have used all means to protect this virtue. Have you curbed your eye, have you restrained your hand, have you cared for your thought to be spotless and pure? Have you restrained from soft fabrics, sophisticated meals, idleness which are robbers of purity and have you avoided indecent books?

Although all these should be alien to you, as a religious person, if you have read, listened to or by other means found out that various occasions may lead you to fall into a deep abyss, examine yourself concerning the issues which may threaten the chastity of your soul.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

“Blest are the single-hearted for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). The gradual steps employed by Jesus Christ, the Divine Teacher, are worth the deepest contemplation. Starting from poverty, kindness, sorrow, and mercy, He reaches chastity of heart. He promised the heavenly Kingdom to the poor, inheritance of the land to the lowly, eternal consolation to the grieving, fulfillment to these who hunger and thirst for holiness, mercy to the merciful. And what did He promise to the single-hearted? He secured for them the delightful vision of God.

So when you see that greater awards are set for chastity, all the more carefully guard your heart. If tainting the heart leads to losing the sight of God, then keeping it pure ensures seeing Him.

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

Since obedience guards chastity, and poverty feeds it, therefore a soul fervently pursuing chastity, should practice obedience and poverty to get it. Especially

helpful in keeping this angelic virtue, would be custody of the eyes, and frequently turning one's soul to God; avoiding idleness, chats, useless readings; wisely refraining from dangerous relations, cherishing one's cell and respecting the cloister; zealously invoking the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary, your Guardian Angel, Saint Joseph and the holy virgins.

Superiors should make every effort not to expose anyone to a danger, which would threaten this great virtue or to neglect anyone who found himself in such a position, because they would have to account to God for all the persons entrusted to them.

(Inspectio Cordis)

POVERTY

1

You can see that God feeds the entire world and don't you admire this? He feeds innumerable crowds of the poor, the religious and other mortals, and even the entire world. He leads and supports it, and don't you wonder and praise Him for that? He is the One who ensures food and clothing even to His most careless servants; He cares for the house you live in, protects the good name of His servants and elevates them, endows them with authority, and provides them with love and respect: He bestows upon them limitless supernatural goods, gives them health and helps in every need.

Can you not appreciate this? Won't you admire and praise Him? Will you keep silent and not repay Him with due thankfulness?

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

"Blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs" (Mt 5:3). Contemplate, that the Lord considers blessed, not the poor who live in destitution, but the poor in spirit. One who, having nothing, carries in one's heart, a desire to possess every-

thing, is not blessed but poor. But the one who abounds in riches is blessed, when he does not lose his heart in them.

About them the Apostle says: “We seem to have nothing, yet everything is ours” (2 Cor. 6:10). Do not think that one who left everything for the love of Christ, yet kept a great desire to possess some trifle or honor, or fame for one’s name, is truly poor in spirit! Such poverty is false-hearted! He cheats himself!

You will be blessed and become truly poor, when you are content with Jesus alone, whom you receive in the Blessed Sacrament. Ask Him, together with Saint Bonaventure, to become a part of you, your heritage and your treasure, in which you set and root your mind and heart for ever.

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

Realize that Divine Wisdom placed this blessing, [“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”] (Mt. 5:3) in the first place. She did it for no other reason than to show that among all the others, this one is most pleasing to Her.

St. Basil says: “He wanted to be born of a poor Mother, in a poor stable, and wrapped in paltry swaddling clothes be placed in a manger” (c.f. Luke 2:7).

To explain that poverty does not mean a lack of possessions, Christ said that blessed are the “poor in spirit.” So He taught that, the one who possesses many things, but is not emotionally attached to them, believing them to be transient goods that were given to him to be generously passed to the needier, is also poor and enjoys the blessing of poverty.

You should follow the path of the Apostles, who were told to make do without even a walking staff and a traveling bag, while traveling the world in different directions. In practicing extreme poverty, do not be afraid that you will lack anything.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

Contemplate that, for these who want to follow Christ, the greatest obstacle lies in riches, in friends and in all that they love apart from God. Thus He said to the young man seeking perfection and yearning for eternal life: “Sell your posses-

sions and follow Me” (c.f. Mt 19:21). This way, He showed that nobody who is not completely free, poor and stripped can truly follow Christ.

Just as luggage burdens travellers and slows down the trip, temporal goods, lay jokes and love for the world, burden the followers of Christ and do not allow them to reach Him.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

Christ, the Highest Wisdom, chose poor Apostles to convert the world rather than very greedy rich people. He wanted them and other faithful souls, to devote their time exclusively to the matters of the Spirit, and thus He taught that this virtue should not be neglected. He showed them how it should be taken care of and structured in order to practice it.

That is why, coming into the world, He chose for Himself, poor parents, avoiding interacting with the proud and wealthy Pharisees, except to seek their salvation. He treated them like this, because they were the teachers of greed, not of disinterested love; they were mercenaries, not true shepherds.

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

Contemplate that you will have to carefully account to God for all the virtues, poverty in particular. It was loved more than any other by Christ and He encouraged it the most in His Evangelical Counsels and orders, when He told the Apostles to go without a traveling bag and a walking stick (c.f. Mt. 10:10; Luke 9:3). He wanted those who followed Him, to know that they have to renounce the world, friends, riches and everything in general (c.f. Mt. 19:21; Luke 14:26.33). You, following this teaching and counsel of the Redeemer, deprived yourself of everything for Him, renouncing, leaving and running away from the world and its possessions and your parents living in the world.

So it would be ugly and shameful, if you were to strive for something much more worthless than the things you have so nobly and heroically renounced and abandoned out of love for God alone, and not just for a friend. Thus, examine your conscience now, first, your feelings: have you not become attached to the things given for you to use?

Second, your desires: have you not desired to possess things which, by the decision of the Superiors, were given to someone else? Or, have you let go of things you had, that were lost or taken from you, reluctantly or with murmuring or pain?

Third, your will: haven't you wanted to buy and possess things which are mentioned and described in the Constitutions and the canonical law as opposing poverty? Or rather, whenever you could and were in a position to do so, have you instilled in others love for Christ, who became poor for you? Have you freed yourself from any desire to possess?

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

The deeper [in your heart, lie] hidden greed and the desire to possess, the more carefully they should be traced, uncovered and removed. So check whether you are not emotionally attached to any thing, even though you may have permission to possess it. And while large and numerous material possessions, obtained legally, do not do any harm to many, it may be quite the opposite with you. Even the tiniest thing, if you desire it too emotionally, or are attached to it, may harm you. For many people, it is a source of pride to have a lot of possessions but you, bound by the vow of poverty, should restrain and restrict your will from possessing even necessary things, such as clothes.

As for the things you yourself recognize as irreconcilable with the virtue of poverty, consider them poisonous snakes, which will soon bring both you and the Congregation to ruin. Get rid of them immediately, and remove them from your cell, so that the precious pearl of Evangelical poverty would not lose its value or dim its luster.

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

Judge for yourself whether you are not emotionally attached to anything which you could not part with; or, if you were to give it away, you would do it with regret and the shattering of your inner peace. That would be much more serious and negative than possessing the entire world, without any emotional attachment to it.

Examine also whether you have not provided an opportunity for someone else to violate or disregard poverty, either by letting him keep something, or by bring-

ing him a thing to make him ask for permission to keep it; or even by bringing to the convent or the religious house, even small things which are against the spirit of holy poverty. Further, have you not hidden from the Superior anything you could fairly possess? Or maybe you have not given things you received as gifts from others for the common use, or by your insistence, you have compelled the Superior to agree on your exclusive use of them?

Realize that just as naked you have risen from the dust, naked you shall return there. For Christ left Heaven and was born naked in a stable for you, so that you would imitate Him in this austerity.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

Now contemplate the issues concerning neatness in poverty. Therefore, do you keep your room, your cassock and other things tidy, keeping in mind the saying of a saint: "Poverty always pleased me, but orderly."

Further, haven't you demanded fancy meals, other than the norm, without any necessity, only to feed your greediness; or have you eaten the ordinary food reluctantly or with complaining?

Finally, haven't you tried to accumulate books, even devotional ones, out of pure curiosity, and haven't you filled your cell with them? Perhaps you have not always tried to reach a more perfect, higher level of noble poverty?

(Inspectio Cordis)

10

The essence of your poverty rests in not possessing anything in private, without the approval of the Superior, and not daring to call anything one's own. Things given for him to use, should be kept clean and intact for as long as possible.

All revenues should be for the common use, no matter whether they came from alms or anywhere else; and the way to collect, keep and distribute them, described in the papal decrees, should be kept in its entirety, under the threat of the penalties included there.

May no one retain money, at the risk of losing the active and passive voice regarding elections; or any food or drinks without the permission of the Superior,

given reasonably for a period of time. All should live from the common property and the common table. Exceptions should be given only to the aged and sick, bearing in mind the potential harm. Therefore, without such permission, none of you may accept anything from anybody, either in the House or outside, and you may not give anything to anybody. [. . .]

Besides this however, in order to allow the members to not be sluggish in the service of God on account of severe privation, the Superiors should provide them with everything sufficiently, according to the decrees, but not in excess, as far as they can in the Lord. Everyone should remember and even imitate, the privation of the Heavenly King, who, as we read, did not have even His own dwelling (c.f. Mt. 8:20; Luke 9:58) and once, when He was thirsty, He was not ashamed to ask for water (c.f. J. 4:7). In the same way, when you experience extreme poverty, rejoice that you can be true disciples of Christ and His followers.

(Inspectio Cordis)

OBEDIENCE

1

Focus your attention and carefully contemplate the words of the Lord: “If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and begin to follow in my footsteps” (Mt 16:24). From these words, you will easily grasp that you follow Christ if you have sometimes carried His cross and out of love for Him, you have renounced yourself. Your striving for perfection by abandoning your possessions, riches, honors, relatives and friends in the world, will mean little if you do not abandon yourself and your own will. Christ did not redeem the world by leaving heaven, descending to earth and becoming man, but by being put to death while fulfilling the will of the Father.

Contemplate with what motivation, effort and zeal, you will imitate this virtue of Christ, which He has shown to you and illustrated by word and example.

May your conversation with God involve your grief for your lack of obedience and determination, that from now on, you are going to keep more faithfully.

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

Again, bring to mind why you have entered the Congregation and recall and renew earlier resolutions as to the improvement of your life and morals. Be certain that fulfilling the will of God and submitting to it, is the most noble and highest perfection.

This is the most frequently chosen path to Heaven, taken by all the saints, patriarchs and religious. Abraham wanted to offer to God's will, his son as a holocaust. You also, following his example, should offer something to the same Lord. Abraham, at the voice of God, left his homeland and all his relatives. (cf. Gn 12:1-5. 22:1-12).

You have also left the land of your family, for the haven of the religious vocation shown to you by the finger of the Holy Spirit. Just as you have abandoned your relatives and comrades, you should also abandon your bad habits and unbridled passions. You should also offer to the great and Almighty God, as a holocaust at the Mount of Moria, that is, in the Order, your one and only son Isaac, that is, your own will. In all your actions and resolutions say: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." As for me, my Lord, may Your will be done in every minute, every hour, every day and in eternity.

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

"And was obedient to them" (Lk 2:51). Christ teaches you the noble virtue of obedience, not with many words but by the importance of example, when you see how obedient He was to the will of his parents.

Jesus, I am more surprised to see the deference You show in listening to Joseph, than the way in which You convince the Jewish scholars through the authority of unexpected words and knowledge. What is so strange in your wise discussions with them, when you are the eternal Wisdom? Yet, who would not be astonished that you, the Lord of heaven, willfully submits to your parents, that as God, you are obedient to man?

My Jesus, watching your example, I accept the value and necessity of the virtue of obedience. It was necessary for the One who later was to be obedient to His tormentors, and to whom the entire world was to be submitted, to be obedient to his parents. If his neighbors or relatives had seen that he rebelled against the

Virgin Mother and his foster father Joseph, they could have suspected that He was under the influence of the evil spirit, and that He was hypocritical and proud. Obedience is a true sign and proof of any holiness.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

“Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). To perform the miracle at Cana, the devotion and obedience of the disciples was needed, prompted by the encouragement of the Virgin Mary who understood the will of her Almighty Son. Similarly, for any deed to be performed by the grace of God in and through you, and to receive all the graces which the Highest Lord is to bestow upon you, the consent of your will, and your participation and cooperation are needed. What good could He perform through you, if you resisted His decrees and His will? What sense would there be to command, to entrust, to inspire you, if you were not willing to listen and fulfill this?

So, if you want to rejoice at the heavenly wedding, you have no choice but learn how to adjust your will to His will. If you want to reign with the Great God in eternity, in the Kingdom prepared by the Everlasting Father for His slaves, you need to be submissive and obedient now, and to serve Him as devotedly as you can.

Many have lost graces, because they fulfilled their will and, conversely, many escaped from the precipitous abyss of transgressions and reached a happy port, because they adjusted their will to the will of God and submitted to it. Similarly, a just will be excluded from the dwelling of Eternal Life if he is not obedient, as proved and illustrated by Saul (cf. 1 Sm 15:1-26; 31:1-6), while a sinner will receive life and Heaven, if he starts submitting himself to God, because no one can be saved without one's participation.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

“Blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it” (Lk 11:28). Listen to the voice of Christ the Lord, who instructs you and says to you: “Your happiness depends on keeping My words. They can be found in religious books, they are the Commandments, the Evangelical Counsels, your Rules, finally, the instructions of your Superiors. Just as I spoke to the Jews through Moses and passed on to them

my Commandments, now I speak to my chosen people, my servants, that is to the Religious, through their Superiors and spiritual directors and I reveal my will to them. The one who listens to the Superiors, listens as if to Me and is blessed.”

You are more than blessed, when you base your happiness on this foundation, when you listen to your spiritual directors as to God, and submit to them as to God.

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

Contemplate, that there are two serious infirmities filled with greatest unhappiness, when someone is 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?

Notice whether or not you are deaf and dumb. Run quickly to Christ to open your ears and untie your tongue, that is, to bestow upon you the virtue of obedience and grace of devotion.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

A human will which resists God, is unfit for His service. Just as masters do not like disobedient servants, so God hates disobedient Religious. Jesus needs obedient servants like He himself was; His nourishment was to fulfill the will of the Father, to whom He submitted himself, till His death on the Cross. The Holy Apostles were these types of servants for Him and through them, He converted the entire world.

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

Consider that the name of shepherd belongs to every Superior, along with that of the doorkeeper to the Holy Spirit, who opens the gate for the shepherd, that is shows to the Superior, the paths of the Lord on which he is to lead the sheep entrusted to His care, his subordinates, brothers or disciples, so that they would not leave the redeeming path carried by the winds of carnal passions, or search for praise or any other self-interest.

You have to respect the Superiors as if they were Christ, residing at your dwelling. Be obedient to their instructions, wishes and intentions as to the commands of the Holy Spirit. Rest assured, that if you are obedient to them, you will not be led astray by anyone in the future.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

The instructions, actions and the advice of your Superiors, spiritual directors and elders, are the acts of God who inspires, guides and leads them. When you see that something holy and admirable was performed by them, attribute it to God, and realize that they received this ability from the right hand of the Lord, and you should praise and adore Him. Consider that man, without the grace of God, is like a tree without roots, a grapevine without life, and a tool without a craftsman. Try to make an effort and attribute especially to God, those deeds which you yourself performed, and which are admirable or have received recognition.

(Inspectio Cordis)

10

Obedience does not know any refusal, obstacle or difficulty. Indeed, the obedient one takes difficult matters upon himself, and the more difficult the task he receives, the more easily he performs it. Because in the majority of important cases, the true servant of God does not count on himself, but entrusts the tasks to God and expects that He will perform them.[...] It is better to be ready to die, than to be disobedient.

(Inspectio Cordis)

11

Happy are the souls which 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.

Regret any neglect in obedience with a sincere heart, and try eagerly to possess it. Ask for it through the merits of the Virgin Mary. Resolve to practice imitating the most obedient Son of God, your Lord and Redeemer.

(Inspectio Cordis)

12

If you do not win any victories over yourself, you should know that no laurel wreath is awaiting you, nor any reward is prepared for you. Moreover, if you realize that you have not performed any act of obedience, you should know, that you do not deserve anything, and thus you are not yet destined for Heaven, and your eternal happiness. Obtaining Heaven, for which you have joined the Order, is not yet certain. Only the obedient man, by the law of inheritance, obtains Heaven. Only he may clearly say to Christ: "I have fulfilled what you ordered, therefore give what You have promised." Poor soul, you have exposed yourself to the loss of eternal rewards, to the degree that you have neglected any occasion to be obedient.

(Inspectio Cordis)

13

Contemplate this virtue, meditating upon the six points which refer to true obedience and to keeping it.

Firstly, obedience performed *to the fullest*. Examine in particular, whether you have always performed the duties placed upon you by obedience in a perfect man-

ner; whether it was impossible to do them better, without any harm, with a particular resourcefulness, carefulness and precision.

Secondly, obedience *with love*. Examine yourself, regarding whether or not you have listened to your Superiors out of a pure love for God and your brothers, and due respect for obedience; not awaiting empty glory, or worldly pay, as if they were the motives for the vow of obedience.

Thirdly, obedience performed *eagerly*. Ask your conscience, whether you have responded to the orders promptly, without the necessity to repeat them numerous times, without pressure or additional motivation. Recall what the vow of obedience calls you to: when you hear the agreed signal, leave the letter unfinished in writing. Contemplate whether you acted in this way, because the law binds you to achieve the summit of perfect obedience.

Contemplate the remaining issues concerning obedience.

Firstly, have you been *consistent* in performing acts of obedience, and have you not withdrawn, defeated by discouragement, fatigue or the instigations of the evil spirit, from the tasks in progress? Or, perhaps some other worthless argument diverted you from obedience? Have you suppressed any signs of murmuring and not allowed them to overcome you?

In the second point concerning obedience, check whether you have performed it *courageously*. Have you turned your spirit to hard and difficult tasks, even more willingly toward those which were placed on you by the virtue of obedience? Haven't you ever abhorred them, and without any serious reason, which would explain your objections and resistance to the spirit of obedience, have you not declined to take up difficult matters?

Finally, in the last point, contemplate whether you have been *faithful* in performing it. When you have started exercising this virtue, have you been persevering and constant? It is not for you to discern why you were to be submitted to someone, but you should recognize the shortcomings in your obedience, assess them, remove, regret and mend.

(Inspectio Cordis)

COMMUNITY

1

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, secret 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).

(Norma Vitae)

2

No community may thrive without love. Thus, Jesus wanted to commit His Apostles to mutual love not only with His admonitions, but also with His commandments. Just as the limbs of the human body are so interrelated, that they constantly help and serve one another; so the people in God's Church, in any Order, Congregation or association which make it up, as the limbs do in the body, have to show mutual love and submission.

You should know that the degree of perfection in you, is equivalent to the degree of love in you.

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

Contemplate that the Lord so appreciates unity and accord, that when He realized that the disciples were gathered in unity, He immediately appeared among them. Unity grows with accord. Where there is unity there is love. And when there is true love, there must be Jesus, who is pure Love.

Any time you break the bonds of love or disturb unity, you exclude Christ and remove Him from among His disciples, and your brothers.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

By “brother” you should understand, any man, and particularly, “brothers in the faith” (cf. Gal 6:10). Ponder then, whether you are, “of one heart and one mind” with everyone (cf. Acts 4:32); whether you are not unpleasant to anyone, or whether out of excessive devotion, you do not charge or accuse anyone. Why do you stand in the way of somebody’s promotion? Why don’t you rejoice over the abilities and talents of others? Why don’t you support their progress to perfection? Why do you treat some with hard feelings? Why do you address them with blunt and bitter words?

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

“Whoever would say . . . you, fool” (cf. Mt 5:22). Pay attention, how harmful it is, to contemplate the mistakes of others, and to exaggerate them, while we should not care about them at all.

May you never harshly attack others but rather, realizing their imperfections, attribute them to yourself, saying: “He learned this evil from me, since I was the first to fall through these mistakes; I am a source of deprivation for him; this is my vice not his; I can see it in myself, not in my brother.

How much I should strive to correct in myself, the shortcomings I realize in my brothers! What a deceitful, ungrateful and careless creature I am! My Lord, if you do not help me I will perish.” “Restore me, O God our savior, and abandon your displeasure against us” (cf. Ps 84:5).

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

“Blest are you among women” (Luke 1:42). Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, but she did not try to elevate herself above the Virgin Mary. She considered herself inferior to Her, and praised Mary as blessed and most holy among women. This is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit: not throwing slander on others, but rather praising them, recognizing attributes they are filled with, rather than denying them out of jealousy. It is a sign that a heart is given to God, when it extols other’s traits, while forgetting one’s own.

Learn to praise the virtues of others (yet without adulation), and to hide and explain their vices. Then you could believe you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

Do not do what exasperates others; do what brings them joy, however not sinful joy. Believe that you deserve punishment for other sinners. As far as possible, avoid high ranks, desiring praise and honors, unless they are given or bestowed on you without soliciting them, by the decree of God. Even then, accept them in humility, and although unwillingly, you can tolerate them.

It would be the height of humility, if acting in this way, you will not be conscious you are humble, and would not be convinced of that at all. You are going to behave as if you did not know what humility was, or rather, you would accept and profess it. Even if you fulfilled all that was enumerated above, you would never reach this perfection and the height of humility, which was achieved and gained by its Master, Jesus Christ, or which other saints climbed. But, so as not to drift away from Him as His disciple did, try to at least fulfill these duties and acts which the Savior performed, or at least admire and praise them! Try to understand, that even with the humility of all the saints, you will not be able, in the slightest, to equal the humility of Christ. In the end, ask the One, who alone, can make you humble, the One who “deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places” (Lk 1:52).

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

Jesus said to Peter: “Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in Heaven; whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in Heaven” (Mt 16:19).

Well, you happy sinner, I will go with you to Peter. But can you hear what Peter tells us to do? “Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pt 4:8). Peter advises a very good and not difficult thing. We may love one another, without unpleasant arduousness and much difficulty. Yet, so as not to err in this love, as it may happen easily, Saint Gregory [the Great] gives a proper mode of conduct, saying: “Anyone who bestows love upon someone, may not rush to believe that he has love, before discerning the motives of one’s loving. Since, if someone loves, yet not because of God, he does not have love. [. . .] Love is true, only when a friend is loved in God, and a foe because of God. [. . .] The one who truly possesses love, because of God’s command, loves someone by whom he is not loved.” So, according to Peter, “love covers a multitude of sins,” but along with the explanation of St. Gregory, only this love “with which, because of God, we love our enemy.” Sinners, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Forgive and you will be forgiven.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

Contemplate the words of Saint Paul: “If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love, [. . .] I am nothing” (1 Cor 13:1-2). Just as if you said: “Man without love, a Religious without love is a shadow without the sun, a body without the soul, simply nothing.” What the soul is for the body, love is for the Church, Orders, and Religious Houses. Someone who encouraged this virtue was right saying: “Take the Sun away from the world, and you will take away everything, take love away from man and he will be left with nothing.”

Love is the soul, light, and life of the Orders and any human community. Thus, whoever destroys love, it is as if, he destroyed life, turned off the light and killed the soul. This is so, because a lack of love in one member, reverberates in the entire body. When we take an example of a human body: if one finger is cut with a poisoned blade, venom travels through the arm and infects the entire body. All the parts of the body suffer the wound of one member. Thanks to love, from the particular members—the Superiors, peers and inferiors—the one body of the Order is formed.

(Inspectio Cordis)

PRAYER

1

Your continual interior silence will consist in this: that you will acknowledge, worship and bless God present everywhere, and thus you will walk in his sight modestly, faithfully and piously, as it is proper for servants to behave in the presence of the Master. Make an effort to contemplate God in all creatures, and not only in yourselves, since we “live and move and exist in him” (Acts 17:28). In this way, He will never slip away from your mind.

(Norma vitae)

2

My soul, you know from experience, that the main source of great sorrow, and many sins and imperfections, was my neglecting or forgetting about God's presence. Once you have light from above, you can see clearly what you should do, and what you should avoid: you agreeably put up with any bitterness, enjoy any pleasant things, while being ready to renounce them. You have a clean conscience and see yourself living in an earthly paradise, which you believe you have found for rest and delight. When you pray, you feel as if you were in the presence of angels and thus you pray devotedly, humbly and carefully. I will remain silent, about the thousand other benefits, the presence of God brings to you.

Conversely, when you do not have God's presence in front of your eyes, when Jesus leaves your soul, you are plagued with sorrow, experience frigidity, feel broken, you fall, wane and immerse yourself in all, even the worst offenses, and it seems to you, that you are in hell, or close to it.

The author was correct who said: “To be without Jesus is an awful hell, to be with Jesus is a sweet paradise.” You see how much you should value the presence of God and, having received the Lord in the Holy Banquet, how diligently you should be mindful of His presence.

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

You should devote a great deal of time to give thanks, you who left and parted from the world and came closer to the Lord. You do not have any obstacles, because you do not have to take care of many different things, which would interfere in a very diligent act of devout thanksgiving.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

“Then he went out to the mountain to pray” (Lk 6:12). Contemplate that the words of the King-Prophet may refer to Christ praying on the top of the mountain: “His foundation upon the holy mountains” (cf. Ps 87:1). In different ways, Christ sanctified different mountains: Golgotha with His passion and death; Tabor with the Transfiguration, and the one today, with prayer. He laid the foundations of the Church on this one when, after prayer, He named and chose twelve Apostles to support Him.

It is regrettable that you, overburdened with passions I suppose, cannot follow Jesus to the mountain. You cannot, I assume, devote yourself to sublime contemplation and raise your spirit. So at least with sorrow and longing, wait in the lowlands, when moved with mercy, He will come down to you, and will carry you along to the higher peaks of contemplation.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

Having thought about the place for your prayer, consider also the most suitable time for it, night. Night is most suitable and it is conducive to prayer. At night, nobody can see you and you fulfill the instruction: “When you are praying, do not behave like the hypocrites who love to stand and pray in synagogues or street corners in order to be noticed” (Mt 6:5). Nobody disturbs you and you can achieve this: “If you are ready to believe that you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer, it shall be done for you” (Mk 11:24).

Realize that prayer is the first way to achieve great things. Has there been anything more important than the founding of the Church? Christ set to it, starting with prayer. Thus, Ambrose rightly admonishes: “You, Christian, have been given the idea,

the pattern to follow. What should you do for your salvation, when Christ spends entire nights praying for you? What should you do before any act of mercy, when Christ, before sending His apostles, prayed, prayed alone” and spent nights in prayer?

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

“Whatever you ask” (Jn 16:23). The Heavenly Master, after His Resurrection, gave many instructions to His Apostles before they lost sight of Him, and He triumphantly ascended into Heaven. Among other things, He first recommended to them, the practice of prayer and perseverance at it. He did it sensibly and not without consideration of future events. He foresaw their future crosses and persecutions, and many other types of evils, and taught them that to avoid or to bear them, there is nothing more suitable than prayer, especially one addressed in His name. He left it as an almost exclusive measure to overcome all misfortunes and needs, and as a way to reach perfection and to come to comprehend it.

Having established your friendship with God today, be assured, that you need prayer very much. Equipped with this anchor, you will sail safely through all storms; armed with this shield, you will cross fire and water untouched, and countless mortal dangers. With such a friend, you will proceed to perfection and eternity unharmed, despite numerous attackers waiting on the road. Who should be more zealous in prayer, if not a Religious, if not you?

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

“Ask and you shall receive” (J 16:24). Contemplate, that although the Savior said that one who asks shall receive everything, there are things, it is believed, a Christian and a Religious never should ask for, because they either opposed to justice or harmful to love. Asking that someone’s life or possessions be damaged, asking or desiring the death of anyone to take over his inheritance or position, goes counter to justice. Demanding that God punish your enemies is contrary to love, which tells you to love your foes.

Therefore, ask the Heavenly Father, in the name of the Son, who will be your guest, for three virtuous things: the forgiveness of your sins, the grace to persevere in goodness and eternal glory.

Surely, if you listen to the Truth, seek first the Kingdom of God and the rest will follow (cf. Lk 12:31).

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

“Lord, save us! We are lost!” (Mt. 8:25). The disciples of Jesus, while themselves in danger on the sea, give to you the example, that timely prayer is the most effective means to overcome dangers, temptations, sorrows and obstacles. God wants us to turn to Him with our needs, and that is why He allows our temptations, persecutions and attacks. A soldier either resists a charging enemy armed with a sword or any other weapon, or he runs away. A servant of God could resist the enemy from hell with the power of prayer. In the same manner, the man attuned to the heart of God says: “In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me” (Ps 120:1).

Therefore, do not give up, after the first or the thousandth attack of the enemy of your soul, but for as long as he assails you, resist, even at the cost of your entire life. The more often you achieve victory, the more often you will receive a laurel wreath. The harder the fight is, the greater the reward will be. If you ask for God’s assistance, it will be given to you. Jesus pretended to be asleep, when He allowed you to be tormented with temptations. He is asleep, any time you are harassed, so you should wake Him up with efficient, humble and persevering prayer, asking for help. When you sink, miserably, and are drawn into an abyss by your sins, why don’t you cry out: “Lord, save me! I am lost!” (cf. Mt 8:25).

Do not have any doubts, that when He gets into the boat of your heart today, He does so to lead you, to give you help and to save you.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

“Lord, I want to see” (Luke 18:41). If the blind man asked only to have his sight restored to see the world and created things, with what desire you should ask for the light of your soul, with what persistence in prayer and—let me say—with what holy obtrusiveness, you should demand to gaze on 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 a knowledge of oneself and of 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 gazing upon 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, and 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 a multitude of things to accomplish. Remember to guard it as carefully as ordinary people tend to guard their physical eyes.

(Inspectio Cordis)

10

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 numerous times that he neglected prayer. On the contrary, the more zealous and frequent your prayer, the more often, you 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. And, on the contrary, what can more effectively, quickly and beautifully cultivate, weed and set new plants of graces in the garden of your soul, than the undertaking and repeated exercise of prayer.

(Inspectio Cordis)

PENANCE

1

Contemplate God's mercy! Today's tax collector so deeply participates in this mercy that, as the Son of God alone testifies: "He went home from the temple justified" (Lk 18:14).

Learn to immerse your imperfections trustfully in the vast abyss of God's mercy. Never dare to hold in contempt any man, even more sinister than Judas, or even worse, never condemn anyone.

Profess that God's heart is open to everyone, and be assured, that the road to salvation is closed to no sinner, as long as he is willing to do penance. Be much less disposed to judge and treat sinners harshly, having in mind your infirmity and God's kindness for you.

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

Beg God's kindness to never shield your own trespasses and mistakes from you, but rather, to make them well known to you, even the tiniest imperfections. Just as we wash our clothes as soon as the smallest stains appear on them, similarly, seeing our conscience stained with sin, we cannot and should not stand it, but rather we should immediately try to atone for it. It is a great grace when God places our misdeeds in front of our eyes. It was redeeming for David, who acknowledged his crime when he was scolded by the Prophet (cf. 2 Sm 12:1-13). Solomon suffered, since no one admonished him for his excessive splendor and dissipation, and no one reprimanded him for his worship of idols (cf. 1 Kgs 11).

Consider it a grace, and not an offense, when someone opens your eyes, points to your sins and criticizes them. If this happens to you, my soul, you may consider yourself to be saved.

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

“‘Are you the Prophet?’ ‘No,’ he replied” (Jn 1:21). Contemplate that the reason why Christ places His Predecessor higher than the prophets, is his particular humility and penance. So you should also be assured, that you need to make an effort to practice penance and humility, rather than to demand the gifts of prophecy and extraordinary supernatural graces. Certainty of possessing grace, does not rest on prophecies, neither have all who have prophesied entered the Kingdom of the saved. A great hope for salvation lies in penance and humility. In any case, practicing them is, in the first case, the key, and, in the second, the stairs to heaven.

Ecstasy, spiritual elation, sweetness and delight in devotion, do not greatly facilitate the achievement of happiness. At times, they are bestowed upon the greatest sinners. However, anguish for our sins and exercising penance, strengthens souls with hope, obtains forgiveness and wins for us the Divine Majesty. Saul was among the prophets, but the penance of David turned out to be more valuable than the prophecy of Saul. We may find people who led very devout lives and were famous for the miracles they performed, but who were rejected by God. Yet, you will find no penitent who was not saved. Miracles, devotion, knowledge of the future breeds pride, while penance cleanse our sins, opens Heaven, wins God, strengthens humility, which undoubtedly belongs in Heaven.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

“I have come to call, not the self-righteous, but sinners” (Mt 9:13). Contemplate that, God is most saddened to see souls, for whose salvation He gave his life, perish by their own will. The Redeemer of the world openly assured that He did not come to call to grace the self-righteous but sinners, so as not to bring to despair for his salvation, one who is awash in a sea of vices and is fearful of God’s judgment, And while the self-righteous are certain of their salvation and sinners of their punishment, He openly acknowledges that He is busy saving sinners and desires that anyone who wants to, (that is all), would be saved. So the road to Heaven has not been closed to anyone, provided, one wants to enter it, and to discard once and for all, the path of evil greediness. Sinners may rejoice that the Son of God left the throne of glory, and choosing a humiliating prison, came to the world to call and to save them.

You would await an unhappy future if you perished as a sheep, through your own fault, although the Heavenly Shepherd wanted to save you.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

In this meditation on the necessity of penance, linger for a moment, ponder and place in front of your eyes, Saint Mary Magdalene, a sinner. Although the Savior Himself forgave her sins, after His ascension, she went to the desert to lead a harsh life of penance. Despite the fact that she knew that her former sins were forgiven, and

that she had received a full absolution, to protect herself from a fall in future, she put on the armor of harsh penance against the heavy advances of the former foe.

And what are you supposed to do, regarding how to do penance and how to exercise it daily, you, who deserve ever more punishment for your daily transgressions! Do you not sin frequently, because you do not close the door to future offenses with a perfect penance for past sins? By neglecting atonement for past falls, you inevitably prepare the way for new, even bigger ones. Just as a past sin is an occasion for a new one, so penance after the fall, protects against future falls and distances them. No one in the world would be able to prevent another fall, if he did not atone for past sins and would not devote his entire soul, to harsh, true and solid penance. The Apostle rightly testifies by saying: "I [. . .] discipline my own body and master it" (1 Cor 9:27). Why?—so as not to return to old sinful habits and acquired ancient vices.

You should do the same. Focus on penance, because you will never be protected from evil, if you do not stop it with penance. If you neglect penance, temptation, sin and evil spirits will come back to you, accompanied by even stronger comrades to fight your will, and you should fear that the last state will be worse than the first (cf. Mt 12:43-45).

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

Starting some works and not bringing them to a happy conclusion, never brings honor; it is always laughed at. Often it results in harm rather than benefit. What glory is there in starting many things, to finish them badly or to abandon them unfinished? The end, not the beginning, brings glory. Thus God, the Creator of the Universe, when He praised the works of the five days of creation, did not express the solemn approval: "God saw how good it was," for the works of the second day. Everything else He considered good, only the firmament, as if unfinished, was not praised by Him. For what reason? Rupert answers this question: "Although the firmament is one of its kind and a beautiful object, it is not, according to the plan of the One who performs the work, something exclusive and complete." Thus, it does not receive praise like the other works of the right hand of God, because in God's thought, it must have been a work only begun, not yet completed.

Those who begin their internal transformation, have a lesson here: while taking up penance, they should persevere in it until death. Only that penance is all perfect and certain of eternal glory, which is fulfilled till the end of life.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

We should persist in penance as long as we live, so that devil could not say to anyone with a sneer: “he started building,” he started to rebuild his ruined house but “did not manage to complete it.” He rose from the decaying madness of his vices, and drowned in them again. He began to root out bad habits, and yet, he indulges in them again. He put the hand to the plow, but looked back.

(Inspectio Cordis)

APOSTOLATE

1

“Have faith in me” (cf. Jn 14:1). Notice that God demands great faith from you, greater than from others, whom He did not call to the Religious Life. However, along with good and great faith, He also requires good and great deeds. He tells you to believe in Him, but He also commends you to act the way He did. Someone expressed it succinctly: “faith that does nothing in practice is lifeless” (cf. Jas 2:17). The Apostles believed, but they were saved not only by their belief, but also because they fulfilled the law and the will of God. Christ wanted them to do a great deal, to suffer intensely, and in the end, to endure death for His Name.

Contemplate where your bad actions are leading you? You will not be saved by your faith alone, if you do not do good things in your life. Is it at all possible to have good faith without good deeds? How could one expect to be saved, whose soul is condemned like the worm of the reproaches [Mk 9:48]?

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

“Proclaim the good news to all creation” (Mk 16:15). How great is the kindness of the Son of God toward all mankind! He does not want anyone to be excluded from the heavenly land, even the shameful and most dishonorable. He com-

mends those whom He raised to become His Apostles, to proclaim the Gospel to all creatures: kings and citizens, rulers and subjects; masters and servants, the rich and the poor, to both the wise and to children; quite simply, to all the people, absolutely everyone!

Draw your own conclusions, on how despicably you behaved, when on any given occasion, while preaching salvation, you valued the powerful more highly than the common people, the rich more than the poor. How far you have wandered from the teachings of the Heavenly Master, if you have visited the drawing rooms of the noble, because of their splendor, while you contemptuously avoided poorer dwellings; or, when you have not served both the least and the greatest, with the same readiness.

Undoubtedly, due to our religious vocation, thanks to which, we are equal to the Apostles, we should at least express our gratitude to God, that we do not hold any of His creatures in contempt; and as much as it is our duty, we should not neglect anyone, while teaching the Commandments, and the rules that would assist in keeping them.

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

Be certain, that all who care for their brothers receive great and numerous graces, to obtain salvation, not only for themselves, but also for others, to win the souls of many. Why are you so lazy in spiritual service, that no care or love for your brother matters to you, moves or propels you? You say you care for your own salvation. Yet, oh best defender of your salvation, you should know, that when you care for your brother, you care for yourself. However, when you think only about yourself, you should fear not bringing yourself to a loss. The more work you perform in the Lord's vineyard, the more certain you are of eternal salvation and an everlasting reward.

Gather all the leftovers: in the time that is left, turn to the salvation of your brother. Direct and devote the supernatural powers of grace that you have in abundance, to care for that same brother. In this way, one day in the future, you will not have to provide a very scrupulous account of all the spare gifts and talents, especially if you wasted them. Certainly, this will take place during a very exacting judgment, before a righteous judge, Christ, the author of our salvation. If it was necessary, He is ready to spill His blood again, even for one soul.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

Goodness can be performed sensibly, when it is preceded by a good intention; when there is no boastfulness and benefit; when it is performed using just and right means; and when it is accompanied, from start to finish, by constant perseverance and courage; when out of two possible choices, the better is chosen; when any action is performed as well as possible; and when no harm or distress follows, as a result of our lack of anticipation.

Thanks to discernment, if this is accompanied by a long-term prediction for the future, we avoid damages. Thanks to discernment, finally, we do not give temptations access to us. If they unexpectedly reach our soul and conquer it, then we promptly, magnanimously and by applying reasonable means, exclude, reject and destroy them, so that they do not have influence over us; unless God allows and permits us to suffer, for our greater benefit or humiliation.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

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.

(Norma vitae)

6

Profess that God's heart is open to everyone, and assure that for no sinner, as long as he wants to do penance, the road to salvation is closed. Be much less disposed to judge and treat harshly sinners, having in mind your infirmity and God's kindness to you.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

Realize how preposterous and unenlightened are those, who believe that love and zeal for converting sinners who have left the path of perfection, is not important, practically nothing. Rather, this labor is among the most important matters. It contains both the love of God and of one's brother, and perfection depends on this. Those truly cooperate with Christ in saving souls, who call the lost to return to the path of eternal life.

Christ took a human body, for no other reason, than to save what was lost. Thus, [the Psalmist]—the Penitent-King, who wants to re-conquer the exasperated [heart of] God, refers to no other means, but to the conversion of sinners: "I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall return to you" (Ps 51:15).

Awaken in yourself the desire to convert the fallen, and day after day, try to develop this most beautiful desire. And while you are moving in that direction, first convert your whole heart to the Lord.

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

If a tragedy befalling our neighbor, sometimes brings tears to our eyes, all the more should they be caused by the fall of a soul. What can be a greater tragedy for man, than when he becomes, through sin, the enemy of God? They should by all means, be raised and supported.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

"Men will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with great power and glory" (Lk 21:27). Contemplate how great will be the shame of these who disdained Christ, did not want to follow Him, and put Him to death, (on the Cross as the greatest criminal and scoundrel), when they see His power and glory. And conversely, how great will be the joy, of those who not only followed the scorned Jesus, not only professed faith in Him, but also proclaimed Him; and, out of love for Him, not only were held in contempt, but also suffered death. Christ, our life, will descend in His glorified Body, clothed in the Sun, surrounded by the choirs of angels and multitudes of the saints, carrying the victorious cross in the front.

For you, to participate in this glory, you have to strive and reach the fullest contempt for the world and—I say—contempt for yourself. “The sufferings of the present—says the Apostle—are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us” (cf. Rom 8:18).

(Inspectio Cordis)

FIDELITY AND DEVOTION

1

Faith is the greatest gift and light of God. When we lack it, everything in our soul is shrouded in darkness and fog. Contemplate that faith brings us salvation but only when it shines in us through good deeds. Then, make a resolution that, with a strong will, with the help of God's grace, you will devote yourself to performing good deeds. To make it easier for you, often recall this sentence: “Their good works accompany them” (Rv 14:13).

Though by nature you are rather prone to evil, become aware that you are obliged to perform good deeds and that you have been called to acquire solid virtues, to take up heroic works, similar to these done by the Apostles and the great servants of God. To bring this to pass, you should fulfill your everyday duties with a much greater care and devotion.

(Inspectio Cordis)

2

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 all necessary efforts? 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!

(Inspectio Cordis)

3

“If you say so, I will lower the nets” (Lk 5:5). Contemplate that distrust is the greatest obstacle in taking up heroic works, removing vices, which we try to uproot, and acquiring virtues, which we want to exercise. Conversely, trust is the most important help in doing noble things, as David boasts: “In God I trust; I will not be put to shame” (cf. Ps 25:2).

Contemplate, how futile are the efforts of numerous people, in many undertakings, when they lower the nets, not [according] to the word of the Lord. There is no catch for those who catch men, if in their teaching, they look for own glory, and not for the glory of God, or the salvation of souls. Apply yourself zealously to doing everything [according] to the word of the Lord, with the best intentions.

(Inspectio Cordis)

4

“We have been hard at it all night long and have caught nothing” (Lk 5:5). The same with us, sometimes all night long, for many years, with numerous sacrifices, and the highest efforts, we devote ourselves to catching fish, yet without effect; and giving up hope, we abandon the care for our neighbor, believing that everything is lost; when all of a sudden, the assistance of God’s grace arrives, and throws a great catch into our nets.

So teach yourself, and make the resolution, that no disgust, no loss, no inconvenience will take you away, from working on self-improvement, or the improvement of others; but as far as possible, perform it, and God will look toward your good will and honest efforts: He will come to help you, even if He delays.

(Inspectio Cordis)

5

Putting off and delaying the fulfillment of good resolutions, is detrimental. It resembles the situation of those who, having a favorable wind, do not leave the port but, rather, losing this perfect opportunity to sail, never get a similar one again.

Try to avoid such behavior. Once you receive God’s inspiration, leave the port as quickly as possible and set to completing the good deed that you were prompted to do. The grace of the Holy Spirit does not accept being put off for later. It

leaves the lazy ravens which put off everything till tomorrow (cf. Lk 12:24), and the lukewarm it spits out of its mouth (cf. Rv 3:16). If, in the world, masters like eager servants and hate lazy ones, how much more eager you should be, when you boast of being a servant of the Everlasting King who draws away from the sluggish. If He does not put off His graces till tomorrow, why do you put off your deeds?

(Inspectio Cordis)

6

“Where I am you also may be” (J 14:3). Contemplate that you should try to tread the paths of the Lord, to reach the gate of life. It will happen in the future, if you zealously pursue the virtues; if you are possessed with a great desire to carry the cross, and if you will carry the one placed on your shoulder with incessant zeal; if you steadfastly work in the vineyard of the Lord, and are not satisfied with ordinary perfection, you will strive for more.

If the Lord said, that some day His disciples would do greater works than He did, (cf. Jn 14:12), He also wants you to aspire to the higher virtues, and to break from an everyday way of life. The Lord wants you, as far as it is possible for a man, to reach for His own virtues and holy works, to get where He is, through your virtues and holy works.

(Inspectio Cordis)

7

Contemplate that a servant who is faithful and persistent in fulfilling the duties placed on him, even though he does not receive any signs of kindness, cannot be unpleasant to his master. In this way, the Heavenly Lord, does not in the least, bestow the lowest level of love on his servant, the Religious who, without receiving any particular grace or signs of love, and not expecting any miracles of God's omnipotence, is persistent in his zeal, has a firm heart and with a joyful spirit serves His Majesty.

It is easy to keep serving God when you are sustained with constant bonds of love and graces. However, whoever is burdened with permanent crosses, is endlessly exposed to a thousand adversities and failures, and is persecuted as a useless slave, yet still serves the Almighty King as much as he can, deserves a place among the highest heroes and he will receive the reward. These steadfast and loving ser-

vants, are not are not among those who follow the Crucified One, because they see signs, but the passionate love of God reigns in their hearts—without any signs. They do not need any extraordinary signs of favor and graces, while they carry the yoke of God’s service with a very holy stubbornness. They do not count how much the Lord owes to them, but how much they owe to Him. Nor do they ever cease to pursue the path of perfection, in exercising love and in daily hardships. Such servants will finally receive their praise, such soldiers of Christ will be honored, such Religious will receive the eternal reward.

Long to be counted among them, and ask the Lord, present in the Holy Eucharist, to make you fit, to not to seek comforts, but to carry the cross, and to bear numerous hardships.

(Inspectio Cordis)

8

“A violent storm came” (Mt 8:24). Notice, that the danger of shattering the boat, along with the rolling waves of the sea, allowed the Lord to test the faith of the disciples. It is the same way for you or—as you can expect—it will be in future. The storms and turbulence which arise in your soul, caused either by Satan or by you yourself, occur according to the will of God and His Providence, to test you in the virtues, and to put your perseverance to the test in your sacred ministry and in your trust in God. We are still on the sea, that is, we lead this unpleasant life, filled with defeats. In no way can we avoid the storms of torments, the waves of temptations and the tempests of sorrows, nor *should* we be free from them. Since we can discern the courage, the knowledge and the efforts of the seamen, by their ability to pass through and survive storms, in the same way, love for God, courage and the discernment of God’s servant is tested, in opposing the waves of difficulties.

(Inspectio Cordis)

9

“A mercenary is someone who tends the Lord’s sheep, not out of a profound love, but for a temporal reward” (Gregory the Great).

Beware to not serve the Lord with any other intention, than out of a pure love for Him, so that you would not earn the name of a mercenary, and you would not lose your reward. What does it mean to be a mercenary, rather than a servant of God? It is to search for praise, that you did something well; to boast about, rather

than to denounce oneself; to not constantly renounce the world; to expect reward for one's efforts, instead of an honorable disinterestedness; to not get rid of everything, but to look back.

A mercenary is cunning. At first, he puts his hand to the plow, but later, perhaps in hope of greater comfort, or discouraged by hard work, or lured by the pleasures of idleness, or tempted by the sweet taste of old vices, he looks back, abandons the religious cross and loses, not someone else's, but his own soul and he does not save it.

Try to remain persistent in any good work, so that you would earn the name of the shepherd, or worker, and you would receive God alone as pay for your efforts, and everything together with Him.

(Inspectio Cordis)

10

Think about the intention with which you serve God in the Order: as a son with love or as a mercenary for some worldly pay, for honors, for gaining knowledge, benefits or any other transient good.

You would be a mercenary, if you performed your duties carelessly and indifferently, and played the role of a Religious only on the surface. If this does not take place, you are a true servant of God, and not a mercenary; for your efforts, which you should have taken up out of love for the Crucified God, expect only the remuneration about which the Lord says: "I will make your reward very great" (Gn 15:1).

(Inspectio Cordis)

11

Beware that nobody would say to you: You wear a cassock, but do not know what it means to be a Religious, what it means to be obedient, what it means to strive to keep chastity, poverty, humility and mortification of the senses. You wish to uncover heavenly secrets, to discover the deepest mysteries of God, to possess an abundance of heavenly delights and to relish in them! Yet how can you achieve this, if in every way you revolt, you do not believe, and you do not listen, when you should be abandoning and trampling [underfoot], all that is earthly?

(Inspectio Cordis)

12

While you have been in the Religious Order, have you devoted yourself more to mortifications or to comforts? Have you disposed your spirit more to breaking your will or to giving in to it? To fulfilling the wishes of others, especially your Superiors, or to following your own desires?

If you have been busier pursuing your desires, be certain that a false spirit has guided you. If you have done otherwise, do not have any doubts, that you have conducted yourself in the right direction and in accordance with your vocation. To answer this call, cherish and also assist, the smaller new sparks of God's love for practicing the virtues to grow, favoring them with your efforts and your desire for progress and actual development. If you hold yourself in contempt, you will feel how sweet the Lord is! If you detach yourself completely from the world, you will experience how bitter it is!

(Inspectio Cordis)

13

Carefully reflect on whether in your Religious Life, you have reaped any fruits of your mortifications? How has your soul benefited from such frequent participation in the holy sacraments and the constant practicing of the virtues? What profit for your salvation, have the numerous spiritual books, conversations and meditations had for you? How much has your soul progressed in acquiring the virtues, in being encouraged to do good deeds and, spurred by numerous religious speeches, to holy inspirations and admonitions? What benefits have you derived from your presence in the house of God, from your prayers, the mortifications of your body and from regular fasting?

Examine your conscience for the wasted time, which flies away, never to return and brings you every day closer to the verge of eternity with the knowledge, that you will have to enter its port soon. With what kind of holy goods will you harbor in there? If you lack the pearls of virtues, which are of value at the celestial heights, be certain that you will not be allowed to enter the shores of the heavenly land.

If this were to happen (which God forbid!) where would you go? In the ocean of the world, your ship cannot drift without end, but has to ceaselessly look for the shore to reach: whether a happy one of the Promised Land, or a miserable one of eternal damnation.

(Inspectio Cordis)

14

Contemplate that only a pure conscience can be unafraid of anything on the day of the Final Judgement. Since you do not know in which moment you are going to be taken from among the living, to pass to the gate of eternity, shouldn't you rather, in this very joyful period offered to you, simply to put your conscience in order, try constantly and with all your heart, to free it from any fear? Your enemies are going to accuse you before God, the Highest Judge, particularly concerning the issues which you willingly pledged yourself to, so now in a careful examination of conscience, review your vows and pay attention to how you have kept them.

(Inspectio Cordis)

15

Contemplate that the Lord expects from you constant devotion and with the passage of time, greater growth in the virtues. What an indiscriminate ruler He would be, if He constantly and generously rewarded a soldier, who was good, diligent and obedient, only at the beginning of his service and later, turned lazy? God, who is to give you the eternal reward, wants you to keep vigil ceaselessly and to earnestly act, labor and progress.

For God's soldier, it would be not only unbecoming but dishonorable if, only at the beginning of his service, he were zealous and courageous in his fight with temptations, willing to practice numerous mortifications, prayers and all the virtues, but shortly after, slackened off and with lazy and hampered hands, he handed to the enemy, a palm of victory.

Prepare yourself for greater and greater hardships and longer periods of loneliness. If you desire for perfect happiness, you should always keep vigil, at the first watch, that is during the preparation for Religious Life, or at the second, that is the vows, or finally at the third watch, with your death in sight, when your life comes to an end.

(Inspectio Cordis)

16

Apart from contemplating the benefits of creation, salvation, justification and His calling you to faith and the Religious Life, you should consider the other benefits which God gave to you in a particular way: mainly, the everyday graces with

which He has protected you from sin, encouraged you to strive for the virtues and to do good deeds, supported you in your actions and in your execution.

Pay attention also to your lack of gratitude, this insufficiency which you have returned for such a multitude of graces, or even neglected giving any thanksgiving whatsoever; unaware, and not comprehending, that it was God who led you, guarded you, enriched you with so many goods and protected you from numerous disasters.

Arouse remorse in yourself for your negligence, and ask the Lord to compensate for it, by giving you a greater devotion and zeal to serve Him, for the rest of your days.

(Inspectio Cordis)

17

“Who will separate me from the love of Christ?” (cf. Rom 8:35). Who will separate me from loving the true God-Man and the Savior of all people, received under the disguise of bread? Will it be poverty, nakedness, deprivation or sorrow, persecution, hardships, anguish, weakness? Will it be temptation, humiliations, the world, hell, any pleasure or mortification? Will it be the flattering persuasion of the evil spirit, or people’s anger, cruel words or anything else? Or finally, death alone, the cruelest thing? I am certain, that none of these things will ever separate me, draw me away, or tear me away from the love of Jesus Christ, because for this love, I will bear everything and suffer and fulfill [everything].

May I, my Jesus—I am going to repeat it over and over—May I, my Jesus, love you as much as You have loved me! May I die of love for You, who, although immortal, were willing to die out of love for me!

(Inspectio Cordis)

Selected and edited by
Fr. Janusz Kumala, M.I.C.

PART III

**SELECTED ARTICLES ABOUT
FR. STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI**

DEVOTION TO THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE M.B.V.M. ACCORDING TO FR. STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI (1631-1701)*

According to the very first concept and the vision imprinted by God in Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński's soul, the Congregation of Marians was to be dedicated above all to spreading the devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the Most B.V.M.¹ Father Papczyński first made his intentions known in Lubocza, by a public solemn proclamation on December 11, 1670, that is on the same day which he left the Piarists Order by his own request and with papal dispensation. At the same time he also made an act of oblation (*oblatio*) offering himself to the service of God and Mary Immaculate and solemnly promising too persevere in religious vows made in the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, which, with God's grace, he wished to found.² This congregation was to have a special Marian character, which was already underscored in its title. In his *oblatio* Fr. Founder calls himself Mary's servant, and, professing his faith in the privilege of her Immaculate Conception, makes a so-called "blood vow": he pledges to spread and defend the Immaculate Mary's honor even at the cost of his own life. In the very same way he defines the future Order's aim (at the moment, only as an intent), the primary goal of which is to spread devotion to the Most B.V.M. Immaculately Conceived and to imitate her life. It should be mentioned here that his *oblatio* does not yet speak of any other particular goal of the Order, nor other works, which the Congregation can possibly undertake in the future. The same outlook on matters is also present in *Norma vitae*, where the Marian Legislator says: "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." However, *Norma vitae*, which is the Marians' first constitution, already contains a totally new concept that will permanently remain in the Marians' spirituality and goals, for to the above-quoted statement the Founder adds: "... and with utmost zeal, piety, and fervor assist the souls on the faithful departed subjected to expiatory pains—especially the souls of soldiers and those who died of pestilence."³ And further: "... those gifted with such talents will not be prevented from humbly helping pastors in their church work, if they would

* This paper was presented during the 5th International Conference of the Association of Marian Helpers in Fatima, 2003.

** (Note of the Translator: Please note that page reference in footnotes is given according to Polish sources.)

¹ S. Papczyński, *Fundatio Domus Recolletionis* (c. 1675), in *Scripta Historica P. Stanislai a J.M. Papczyński*, Ed. C. Krzyzanowski, M.I.C., Warsaw, 1999, p. 84.

² Same, *Oblatio* (1670), in *Ibid*, 25-30.

³ Same, *Norma vitae religiosae* I, 2 (1694), in *Norma vitae et alia scriptae*, Ed. C. Krzyzanowski, Warsaw, 2001, p. 33.

be called upon by pastors, and have previously obtained faculties from the Ordinaries and the Superiors.”⁴ Consequently, spreading the devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the Most B.V.M. means to assist the souls of the departed and to conduct an active apostolic work. Can it be, since Fr. Papczyński’s first intent was to spread devotion to the Immaculately Conceived Virgin Mary, that those two subsequent goals appearing at a later time—supporting the deceased and pastoral work—result from a special devotion to Mary Immaculate and are a form of spreading of this devotion, thus needing to be subordinate to it?

Foundations of the devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M.

We do not doubt that Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński was a zealous venerator and imitator of our Blessed Mother, Immaculately Conceived. In the most difficult moments of his life he used to entrust himself to her and to fly to her maternal protection. This is a result of his deep belief in the special role that Our Lady plays in Christian life and it has been reflected in his writings. He pointed out that God’s will is for us to give ourselves with trust into Mary’s care in every circumstance of our life.⁵

It is possible to assume that such convictions came from Fr. Stanislaus’s experience of faith and piety learned in his family home. However, they were also a particular reflection of the times, in which Fr. Founder lived, and of the Marian devotion practiced then by the Republic of the Two Nations. Very similar was the piety of the environment in which Fr. Papczyński grew up. For the Commonwealth, the 17th century was marked by a particular Marian devotion with a strongly developed aspect of Marian enslavement and protection of Mary’s privilege of the Immaculate Conception. As a fruit of this devotion came the famous Marian vows made by King John Casimir who gave all lands under his reign into Mary’s enslavement and proclaimed her the Queen of the Republic.⁶ Growing up in this particular epoch, the Marian Founder was its product and expression. He adapted for his newly established Order everything that agreed with his own concept of reading the signs of the times and matters, of which the Holy Spirit made him specifically aware. We should note that, given the circumstances, theological arguments regarding devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. were particularly important for him: that for centuries Mary was destined by God to become the mother of His Son and for this reason He granted her the privilege of the Immaculate Conception.

⁴ *Ibid*, I, 3.

⁵ Cf. Same author, *Orator crucifixus*, III, 11 (1670), Ed. C. Krzyzanowski, Warsaw, 1998, 35 (here and after: OC); same author, *Templum Dei Mysticum* XX, 159 (1675), Ed. C. Krzyzanowski, MIC, Warsaw, 1998 (here and after: TDM).

⁶ J. Misiurek, *Historia i teologia posłkiej duchowości katolickiej* (History and theology of Polish Catholic spirituality).

Thus, this gift shows in a special way the Divine Mercy and the primacy of grace. For Mary received this gift not because of her own merits, but because of the future merits of her Son, Jesus Christ. Father Stanislaus explained this in *Prodromus Reginae artium*: “Such a woman was destined to become the mother of God whom the Lord Himself adorned with so many virtues that only a few can enumerate and no mortal can ever possess in their entirety.”⁷ For this reason the Immaculately Conceived is the first in the economy of grace: we can call the Most Blessed Virgin Mary the only daughter of God, because she is not one not by body, nor by blood or birth, but by adoption.”⁸ And just as “those who are led by the Holy Spirit are children of God” (Rm 8:14), Mary is also led by the Spirit in a particular way. By her acting in the Holy Spirit she overgrew everyone in holiness, being obedient to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit since her youngest years: “In the House of God she was inspired and nourished by the Spirit, becoming like the choicest olive, the receptacle of all virtues.”⁹ For this very reason, the first expression of devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. is imitation of her life: to honor the Virgin Mother of God more with love than with speeches.”¹⁰ Deeper layers of the gift of the Immaculate Conception conceal the particular and unique relationship between Mary and God: a Virgin becomes a mother and being a mother she remains a virgin; from the daughter of the Father she becomes the mother of the Son, the bride of the Holy Spirit, the tabernacle of the entire Blessed Trinity.”¹¹ She is both the paragon of Christian life and this life’s light. Being free from any stain of sin, she demonstrates the victorious power of grace and God’s plan towards man, in other words: the mystery of salvation. In this regard, the Immaculately Conceived is for the faithful the “total hope of eternal life”¹², as Fr. Papczyński states in his *Orator crucifixus*, because the fruitfulness and effectiveness of the work of salvation performed by Christ found in her its expression. The same work of salvation is to be fulfilled in us, both fruitful and equally efficacious.

Forms of devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the Most B.V.M.

“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”—this is the task assigned to us as our primary aim by Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński. How are we to spread this devotion? What is particularly

⁷ S. Papczyński, *Prodromus reginae artium*, 34-35 (1663), Ed. C. Krzyzanowski, Warsaw, 2001, 69 (here and after: PRA).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, 34.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, 35.

¹² OC III, 38.

important in spreading the devotion to Mary Immaculate? In reading the writings left us by Fr. Founder, as also by reflecting on his intentions and aspirations, it seems possible to establish two basic areas for spreading devotion to the Immaculate Conception: 1) by our way of life, in other words—by witness, 2) by works that we take upon us.

Spreading devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the Most B.V.M. by witness of life

This is the fundamental means of devotion to the Immaculate Conception. Papczyński often encourages us to offer ourselves entirely to Mary so that a Marian attitude be formed in a man. He writes in his *Templum Dei Mysticum*: “Most Blessed Virgin, I give myself completely, with all the thoughts, words and works of my whole life, particularly those of today, and I desire to please you with the greatest diligence through all of them.”¹³ Encouraging us to imitate Mary, Fr. Stanislaus recalls certain events from her life so that this imitation also leads to concrete actions. For example, in *Inspectio cordis*: “It is rightly said [concerning Mary] that she conceived of the Holy Spirit, she—full of grace, full of the Holy Spirit. If only the same could be said of your actions, that they come from the Holy Spirit in are accomplished in the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is a great blessing to possess the Holy Spirit, but greater still to act according to the Holy Spirit; but the greatest of all is to live out one’s life in the Holy Spirit. Grant [O Mary] that we may live and die in accord with Holy Spirit.”¹⁴ To form ourselves, our thoughts, words, and acts in imitation of Mary is the foremost task, which defines the fruitfulness of our other actions. Without a doubt that was the reason why Fr. Papczyński, upon learning that the Holy See gave his Order the Rule of the Ten Evangelical Virtues of the B.V.M., declared: “I pledge to observe the Rule of the Imitation of the B.V.M. in so far as it is not contrary to our Institute.” He discerned in it a similar spirituality aspects to strongly imitate the virtues of the B.V.M. Immaculately Conceived in all of human life. This is confirmed, in a way, by the command repeated in the Rule, almost like a refrain at every virtue, which the author reflects in detail, that Mary’s venerators should possess this virtue and imitate the Blessed Virgin in this virtue in a three-fold manner: *in thought, word, and action*. Papczyński makes a similar statement in *Inspectio cordis*: “My soul, you’ve been clinging so far to books containing various kinds of knowledge, but today look into a new book, a fresh book, unknown to you so far—the Most Blessed Mother of God; I’ll tell you that this book is written, illustrated, and published by God Himself. Could you find elsewhere what you

¹³ TDM IV, 36.

¹⁴ *Inspectio cordis*, k. 107 r., (c. 1677-1682), Ed. C. Krzyzanowski, Warsaw, 2001 (here and after: IC).

may not have in Mary? Would anyone else give with you of what Mary possesses? This is a book of virtues and every perfection. It has as many chapters as the number of virtues it discusses. Thus, immerse yourself completely in the reading of this book and gather the flowers necessary for you in your walk of life.”¹⁵

2.2. Spreading of the devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the M.B.V.M. through actions

Without a doubt, the first task in service of spreading devotion to Mary Immaculately Conceived had to be the Congregation of Marian Fathers and its charism. The very fact of the Congregation’s existence is already a form of promoting the Immaculate Conception. Father Casimir Wyszyński (1700-1755) thus recalls in his diary the audience granted by Benedict XIV, during which the Pope commended the fact that the Congregation has been founded for the greater glory of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.¹⁶ In this very manner the Congregation’s existence was perceived by its Founder who, for this reason, attributed great importance to the outward signs pointing to this aspect of Mary’s life and the Congregation’s charism. In his *Norma vitae* he says: “... you, as hermits, will wear clothing from the most simple, rougher and thicker material: you will wear a habit stretching to the ankles [...] and a short mantle reaching to the knees, and a shirt from coarse linen or some other stinging material. All of these will be white in color, in honor of the pure Conception of our Lady, and the greatest cleanliness of them should be observed, because dirty poverty can please no one.”¹⁷ In time, and also as a result of accepting the Rule of the Ten Evangelical Virtues, he adds to this clothing a white and blue scapular embroidered or embossed with the image of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, as well as a ten-bead rosary to be worn at the belt.¹⁸ Such attire was supposed to recall the mystery of the Immaculate Conception. However, what really completed Fr. Papczyński’s Congregation was the existence of a man devoted to Mary, was the evangelical life marked by the Marian spirituality, deepened by daily Marian practices, particularly the daily communal recitation of the *Office of the Immaculate Conception*, the Rosary, and other prayer (i.e., litany), as well as hymns dedicated to the Mother of God, communal fasting prior to all major Marian solemnities, the placing of images of the Immaculately Conceived in the Marian monasteries, and the mandatory invocation

¹⁵ Ibid, k. 140v.

¹⁶ Cf. Z. Proczek, *The Devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the M.B.V.M.*, in *The Marians*, Ed. J. Bukowicz, M.I.C., T. Górski, M.I.C., Rome, 1975, 326.

¹⁷ NV, IV, 4.

¹⁸ Cf. C. Wyszyński, *Foreword*, in: F. Arias, *The Morning Star, or about imitation of ten virtues of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary*, Warsaw, 1986.

used by all Marian communities at the conclusion of every communal activity: *Immaculata Virginis Conception sit nobis salus et protectio* (May the Virgin's Immaculate Conception be our salvation and protection).

2.3. The Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M.

The Confraternity had a special place in the spreading of devotion to our Lady Immaculately Conceived. Already in *Norma vitae* Fr. Founder recommends: "The Superior [General] will designate in each house a promoter of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception to pray for the souls of the faithful departed and as permitted by the Holy Father Innocent XI on March 20, 1681, and in accord with the Ordinary's permission has been established or is to be established in your churches. The one to whom this valued duty shall be entrusted, shall by other means endeavor to gain the greatest number of servants and devotees of the Immaculate Virgin, as helpers of the deceased, holy and devout. Let him administer this Confraternity prudently so that he may obtain great profit for souls. He will especially exhort and incite those who become members of this Confraternity by inspiring them to the frequent and salutary use of the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, as well as to works of charity and to the abandonment of vices."¹⁹ The concept of this Confraternity unites devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. with prayers for the deceased. This spiritual trend, well known in medieval times, was also present in Republic of Poland of 17th and 18th centuries. Undoubtedly, this was the result of the medieval concepts of *ars bene moriendi* (the art of a good death) still very much alive in Polish spirituality of that period. These ideas emphasized, apart from the quality of life (so-called *preparatio longa* [prolonged preparation]), specific stages of the process of dying and the presence of the Saints in it. The Mother of God was considered a particular Patroness at the hour of death and an advocate of souls suffering in Purgatory.²⁰ We also know that in 1663-1667, Fr. Papczyński served as the promoter of the confraternity of the Sweetest Blessed Virgin Mary at the church of Piarist Fathers in Warsaw. According to some sources, he himself founded this confraternity; according to others—he made it very popular. In addition, for a year and a half, he ran the arch-confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. at St. James of Kazimierz in Krakow around 1670. When, a few years later, he founded *the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. giving help to the deceased and pastors*, he also established at the Marian churches (and commended to be established) upon the power of rights received from the Holy See in 1681, Confraternities of the Immaculate Conception bringing help to the departed.

¹⁹ NV VII, 8.

²⁰ J. Woynowski, *The Development of the Devotion to Our Lady in Poland*, "Homo Dei" 26(1957) 846-862.

Uniting devotion to the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. with intercession on behalf of souls in Purgatory was undoubtedly related to Fr. Papczyński's personal experience of faith. We know the accounts, which speak of his visions of the Poor Souls in Purgatory and of his consequent insistent requests to pray for the deceased. We shall not forget either the specific elements of spirituality characterizing this period of the Church's life. It becomes even more important because those times were of Marian devotion strongly marked by the piety of "slaves of Mary," at the core of which lay the total enslaved abandonment to God through Mary leading to simultaneous freedom from the bondage of sin and the devil. The Most Blessed Virgin Mary in her mystery of the Immaculate Conception has become the symbol and a paragon of this abandoned servitude to God and freeing oneself from the bondage of evil. "Mary's bond servants" cannot stop at freeing themselves only from sin and the devil, but also undertook apostolic actions such as ransoming Christians from pagan slavery, giving assistance to prisoners, and freeing Poor Souls in Purgatory. This idea of "Marian bondage" strongly manifested in Polish spirituality of the 17th century was undoubtedly well known to Fr. Papczyński as well because of his studying at the time in the Jesuit college. Jesuits were the main promoters of the spirituality of "Marian bondage."²¹ To some extent, Fr. Papczyński's *oblatio* is an expression of this spirituality. By this *oblatio* he surrenders himself to Mary for eternity and becomes her servant. Our Founder's personal contribution to this spirituality is the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. and his complete dedication to the spreading of devotion to this mystery.

In time, as a result of accepting the Rule of the Ten Virtues, the concept of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception described in *Norma vitae* embraced also the Scapular of the Immaculate Conception. The idea has been enriched in this manner is a very important spiritual and external reality, and resulted in the fact that the Confraternities of the Immaculate Conception, will involve investiture and the wearing of the Scapular, and will enter permanently into the life of the Congregation of Marian Fathers as well as people not only associated with it, but most importantly—those who find for themselves a vital meaning in Marian spirituality, especially in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception.

Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, M.I.C.

²¹ Cf. W. Makoś, M.I.C., *A Form of the Marian Devotion Proposed by Družbicki, Fenicki, and Chomętowski*. "Theological and Canonical Annuals" 29(1982), notebook 2, 127-154.

CHRIST IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, FR. STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI*

Before his death, the Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński bequeathed his portrait to posterity. He said that he leaves it for the curious to examine, but rather he gives his confreres an example of the life of Jesus Christ to imitate.¹

Father Stanislaus's spiritual sons had to follow Christ, but what was Christ like in Fr. Stanislaus's perception? What is the image of Christ that the Founder of the Marians traced? In Fr. Papczyński's teachings, Christ appears above all as the merciful and suffering.

Merciful Christ

One of the most frequently used Bible verses in St. Paul is the word "God rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4). John Paul II placed those words at the beginning of his encyclical *Dives in misericordia*. It is like a song of the merciful God. When writing this second encyclical, almost at the beginning of his pontificate, the Pope wished to place its fate in the hands of God Himself, rich in mercy. He knew that mankind was tormented by various evils and that God's mercy was the only refuge for weak, sin-stricken man.

As we know, the particular encouragement to trust in Divine Mercy has come in our times' through the revelations granted to Sr. Faustina Kowalska, whom John Paul II raised to the honors of the altar.

The truth about God rich in mercy has always been present in Catholic theology. Nonetheless, there were times when a special emphasis was put on it. This essentially happened when hard times came down on people. Such was the 17th century in Poland, and the theologians of that time began to bring this truth closer to people. The teachings of the Marian Founder reflected this in describing the role of the Divine Mercy in the life of a Christian. He was the one to call Divine Mercy "a clear guiding star" that shines for the human soul.²

* This paper was presented at the 8th International Conference of the AMH in Lichen, Poland, in 2006.

¹ "Imaginem personae meae spectandam curiosis, vitam vero Domini mei Jesu Christi Religiosis imitandam relinquo". *Testamentum Alterum* § 9, *Scripta Historica*, Varsaviae 1999, p. 137.

² "Tu iactaris adhuc, anima mea, in periculosissimo pelago mundi, totque scyllis, scopulis, syrtribus allideris. O quoties iam ad Aetnaeum montem, ad Siculum scopulum fueras, ad ianuam inferni fueras appulsa tempestatibus excitatis ab Orco, periissesque oborta gravi nocte peccatorum, in fluctibus tentationum, nisi tibi *clarissima cynosura, divina misericordia*, affulsisset, teque errantem

Born in 1631, in Podegrodzie near Nowy Sącz, Fr. Papczyński was one of the most prominent figures of Polish Catholicism of the 17th century. He was a great humanist, teacher of rhetoric, public speaker, writer, poet, pastor, spiritual director, ascetic, mystic, and founder of the order. In the Jesuit, Piarist, and Reformed Franciscan schools he obtained a sound general, theological and philosophical education, which encompassed the wisdom of antiquity, the Middle ages, and modern times. He left behind many writings that included also theological treatises. He died in 1701, in the odor of sanctity.

In Fr. Papczyński's teaching on the Divine Mercy a reflection on the unfathomable depth of mercy takes a dominant place. The author emphatically states that this truth is the very hope of repenting sinners. He also points out numerous graces, with which God showers the people, especially the sinners who run to His mercy. The Blessed Mother—the Mediatrix of Mercy also participates in the distribution of these graces.

Father Stanislaus bases his observations on Holy Scripture, especially on the gospel parables; however, he also draws generously from the Church's entire treasury, in whose tradition this truth has been frequently pondered in a very profound way.

Unfathomable Divine Mercy

When one considers the moral condition of the modern world, one cannot flee from the impression that all mankind is standing on the edge of a precipice that can consume it. However, God Himself comes to our rescue and points out to us another precipice that can save us. This precipice is the unfathomable Divine Mercy. In his teachings the Marian Founder moves us closer to it, drawing mainly on the gospel parables.

First, he makes a connection between his reflection about the Divine Mercy with the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector who come to the temple to pray. The Tax Collector “beat his breast” (Lk 18:13), repented for his sins, and “went home justified” (Lk 18:14). This is an example of how we ought to trustfully immerse all our imperfections in the unfathomable Divine Mercy. The Pharisee's behavior, on the other hand, which Jesus censured, is a warning for those who hold people in contempt and condemnation. No one has a right to do so, because God's Heart is open for everyone. God does not close a road of salvation before any sinner who wants to repent and make amends. Remembering God's goodness, which we have experienced ourselves, and being aware of our own frailty keeps us from judging others and treating them harshly.³

in viam veritatis, ad perfectionis nempe regulas, convertisset, et sauciam, fractamque restaurasset”. S. Papczyński, *Inspectio cordis*, ca 1680-1685, rps, f. 84r.

³ Ibid., f. 74v.

With another example our author shows the truth of Divine Mercy in Christ's meeting with the sinful woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee. She had already been converted and for this reason our Redeemer defended her against the Pharisees' verbal attacks, and then sent her away with the words "go in peace" (Lk 7:50). He treats similarly each repentant person. A person burdened with sins would come to Christ, but he or she would leave freed of them all, as if shaking off binding chains. Bitterness filled the heart of such a person, but now it is infused with sweetness. It was immersed in the darkness of errors, and now it is enveloped in the brightness of sun. It was perturbed by an internal struggle, but now it is at peace.⁴

Father Papczyński sees an even greater example of Divine Mercy in the conversion of a "repentant thief." He hung on his gibbet at the right hand of the Crucified Redeemer and he might have heard Him praying to the Father for His enemies. Then he understood that Jesus was innocent although He was submitted to such a terrible torture. Influenced by the light of the Sun, in whose presence he found himself, he fully understood the evil of his actions, for which he was condemned to death. He then likewise defended Christ against the words of his fellow criminal. He admonished him for bad-mouthing the Redeemer who was guilty of no crime. The thief understood that this falsely accused, innocent man, was the Redeemer and that He suffered for him. Thus, he asked Him the favor of remembering him in His Kingdom. By this appeal he won over Christ's heart and gained His pardon with the promise of being taken by Him to heaven (cf. Lk 23:41-43). The thief earned paradise through a critical, though delayed, repentance. He acknowledged his offenses, repented of them, and made his confession before the very High Priest, crucified next to him.⁵

Discussing the example of the conversion of the thief on the cross, who was grasped by the Divine Mercy at the time of execution, the author reaches out to St. Augustine who thus commented this conversion: "this [alleged] Thief [Christ] through the wood {of the cross} performed an act of redemption, while this [true] thief stole the Kingdom of Heaven thus violating Majesty (...). You have seen how a robber and thief of paradise who hasn't forgotten his trade even on the cross stole the Kingdom of Heaven by means of his very confession." This comparison helps Fr. Papczyński to illustrate the idea of obtaining the Kingdom of Heaven through repentance, thus opening the road to paradise. Father Papczyński entertains yet another thought of St. Augustine who sees the conversion of the thief as great hope

⁴ „Tecum non aliter hodie processum est. Quid enim aliud ad divinam mensam propter innumera peccata attulisti? Et ecce his, quasi vinculis dirissimis, exsolutus inde redis. Quid, praeter amarorem cor tuum gestavit? et en iam dulcedine repletum est. Tenebris involutus multorum defectuum eo procedebas: inde sole amictus quas vestimento regrederis. Bello interno agitatus sacram petiisti synaxim; hac sumpta pace dulcissima potitus es. O quas Deo persolves tanto pro munere grates? Dilige multum, dilige perfecte, dilige constantissime". Ibid., f. 126r.

⁵ S. Papczyński, *Orator Crucifixus*, Cracoviae 1670, 27 n.

for all people: “Let us notice that Christ the Lord kindly forgiving the offender guaranteed safety to all mankind; so that the absolution granted to one despondent person may become the consolation and hope for all people and, finally, so that a gift given to one person may benefit the common good.”⁶

Summing up, the Servant of God affirms that Divine Mercy is indeed unfathomable and embraces all of humanity. The Redeemer of the world is concerned with the salvation of all people and cares not only about the happiness of the righteous, but also about sinners. He brings them closer to Himself through various inspirations and innumerable graces that He showers on them. He calls to Himself people who were wounded by serious sins; He seeks them out like a shepherd searches for a lost sheep; and He nourishes and protects those whom He recovers.⁷ This is the future of sinful humanity: to stop at the edge of the precipice of evil and to jump into the unfathomable Divine Mercy.

Hope for sinners

People who have committed a grave evil often fall into despondency because they don't believe in the possibility of forgiveness. They think that their sins are too great to be forgiven. These are precisely the people whom Fr. Papczyński desires to convince that the unfathomable Divine Mercy is rightly available to all, especially to sinners. According to him, sinners are most privileged in this regard. The Lord Jesus said: “I did not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Mt 9:13). He is most sad, when He sees those, for whose salvation He gave His life, perish by their own volition. Many among them may lose hope of redemption, but Christ Himself assures them that He did not come to call the righteous but sinners. While the righteous are sure of future happiness, the sinners know that they deserve punishment. Because of this Christ tells them about the chance of obtaining redemption. The road to heaven is closed to no one. It is enough that a person wishes to enter this road and to abandon evil. Sinners can rejoice because the Son of God left the throne of glory and came to earth for their sake.⁸

Not only does Christ declare His will to save the sinners, but He also seeks them out and calls them to Himself. He was even criticized for it once: “This man welcomes sinners” (Lk 15:2). But it is impossible to put limits on God's goodness and mercy. He invites and embraces everyone: “Come to me, all you...” (Mt 11:28).⁹ Thus, many have come. Father Papczyński exemplifies this idea by one of

⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁷ *Inspectio cordis*, f. 111.

⁸ Ibid., f. 136r.

⁹ Ibid., f. 65r.

the comparisons that were fashionable in his time. “Just like the sun that draws up from the earth harmful humidity, and at times it even awakens poisonous snakes, so too Jesus—the Son of Justice—drew to Himself and still to this day draws tax collectors, sinners, and many big transgressors. He used to do it to such an extent that one, when pondering His life, notices that it was spent on showing mercy and pity. Being in His cradle He attracted to Himself pagan kings; during the time of His teaching—Zechariah, Matthew, Magdalene, and numerous others; and when He was dying—the thief, the centurion, and Longinus, who opened His side. What is more: He placed at the head of His Church no one other than a sinner”.¹⁰

Today many sinners also come to Jesus, especially those seeking the sacrament of reconciliation. Then they sit with Him at table and partake of the Heavenly Banquet. Then they are no longer sinners, but they become righteous. Father Stanislaus does not conceal his joy when speaking of their conversion, which justifies as one might perceive, his excessive enthusiasm. Those who are sinners today may become saints tomorrow. A short time ago they were worse than the evil spirits, but right after they became more righteous than the angels. And all this happens in a very simple way: it suffices that they go to Jesus and sit at His table, thus becoming purified of all sins and adorned with virtues. By going to Jesus one obtains the power to turn away from sin. “Oh, how holy is this sacrament that turns a sinner into a loving person; a servant of this world into God’s servant; a son of darkness into a son of light; Satan’s slave into a freeman of Christ.”¹¹

Father Papczyński conducts himself with great compassion toward repenting sinners because he sees them as examples of “the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame” in Christ’s parable of those invited to table by the master of the house (Lk 14:21). These are sinners stripped of virtues, indecisive people as to good dispositions, not seeing a path of justice, and not acting according to the law of the Lord. God’s Goodness orders all of them to be brought to His table. Because, if they are already repenting it clothes them in the garment of innocence, gives them strength to do good, enlightens them with its light, and returns their power to walk so that they may persevere on the road to perfection. All of this is achieved by grace, which is given through Holy Communion. This feast enriches the poor, strengthens the weak, enlightens the blind, and makes the lame walk again.¹²

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 64r-64v.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, f. 136r.

¹² „Quod facit per gratiam excitantem, adiuvantem, concomitantem, efficacem, quas in sacrae synaxeos acceptione donat. Ne igitur contempnas peccatores, quos Deus in momento iustificare potest; ne etiam Domini vere magnam caenam vilipendas, aut aliquando negligas! quae tam fructuosa est, ut pauperes ditet, confirmet debiles, caecos illustret, claudos recte faciat ambulare”. *Ibid.*, f. 64r.

Speaking on behalf of repentant sinners, Fr. Stanislaus justifies with the words of Christ Himself who said: “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do” (Mt 9:12). He told the Pharisees that He is the healer of souls and that He was sent not to the healthy ones—that is the saints, but to the sick—that is the sinners. Those are the ones whom He heals with the most effective medicine of all—His Body and Blood.¹³ Jesus rejects the Pharisees’ accusation that He does wrong when He eats with tax collectors and sinners (cf. Mt 9:11). They were driven by pride and as servants of the devil they imitated their master. Sensing that they themselves cannot attain salvation, because they do not want to humbly ask for it, they envied it in others. This is why they persecuted not only the Son of God, but also those who came to Him, so as to receive mercy.¹⁴

In order to encourage trust in Divine Mercy, which opens itself before sinful people, the Servant of God illustrates its blessed results.

Blessings of mercy

Our world is so full of sin that God could rightly annihilate it. However, God’s goodness continues to keep it in existence. This is precisely for Fr. Papczyński the first proof for this, that God is indeed a Merciful God. Preserving the world from annihilation regardless of its sinfulness is an exceptional blessing, which the Merciful God grants to people. Because God’s mercy tempers justice. In this His mercy people also participate who show mercy to others. Father Papczyński is convinced that when God sees people showing compassion one to another, He changes His severe judgment and does not look on the sins of those who show mercy to their neighbors. He is merciful to those who are merciful and because of them He is also merciful toward others. In this manner human mercy unites with God’s mercy and the punishment is changed into grace.¹⁵

Our apostle of mercy offers this advice to those who judge that there is no one to whom they can show mercy. Let them in the meantime have compassion on their own soul redeemed through God’s Love. One must deny one’s own soul, if one does not wish to lose it (cf. Mt 10:39).¹⁶

Another blessing of mercy is the joy that derives from the conversion of a sinner. Fr. Stanislaus called the day when a sinner experiences the grace of conversion

¹³ Ibid., f. 136r.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., f. 139r.

¹⁶ „Tu, si non habes, cuius miserearis, animae tuae miserere; ne perditum illam eas, quam redemit Charitas: perdes autem nisi perdidideris”. Ibid., f. 139r.

“the day of all days most favored and bountiful in greatest joy.” This joy is also shared in heaven: “...there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance” (Lk 15:7). Thus, it is difficult to comprehend the joy known by the heavenly inhabitants on account of the conversion of the sinner Magdalene. The earth also trembles with great joy, because the Messiah has come to her in order to redeem sinners. Not one of them should despair, if only they can comprehend that Jesus easily pardons offenses to those who repent, and that He even takes them into His care. The example of His unprecedented goodness is His pardon of the adulteress and His defending her before the Pharisees. Uplifted in spirit by such an act of mercy, the Servant of God cries out with the Psalmist: “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love is ever lasting” (Ps 106:1).¹⁷

Joy from the occasion of a conversion, the joy of converts is not everything. They also achieve a special excellence. For Fr. Papczyński the argument that underpins this conviction is Jesus’ written genealogy, where sinful David is placed prior to the righteous Abraham (cf. Mt 1:1). This is proof that when a sinner truly repents, he will not only return to grace, but also will be honored and raised to a higher throne in heaven. It goes without saying that such an elevation was earned by the meek and repentant sinners.¹⁸

To encourage the effort necessary to gain the “throne of heavenly glory”, Fr. Papczyński depicts an apocalyptic vision of the heavenly city—namely the New Jerusalem—that needs to be won. Saint John the Baptist incites the fight for this city by his words and actions. His example alone can rouse to battle. “He has a face gaunt with fasting, deeply set eyes; wearing a coarse camel skin; barefoot, pale, exhausted, filled only with the Spirit of God coming down upon him. He proclaims a baptism of repentance—he prepares a battering ram to conquer heaven. He shows that heaven must be won by the use of great force: knocking with deep sighs, breaking in with fasting, bribing the guards with generous and pious alms. And if this holy attack does not bring success, one needs to break into the city by ravaging one’s body and mortifying those parts that fight against the spirit.”¹⁹

When the soldier in Fr. Papczyński—a chaplain of the Polish knighthood—wakes up, his thoughts take on a battle-like approach. To give grounds to his thesis, he quotes Christ’s words: “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force” (Mt 11:12). Heaven can be violated through virtue; and for those who have it “the sky is the limit.” The gates of the heavenly city are wide open for such people, and the

¹⁷ Ibid., f. 125v.

¹⁸ Ibid., f. 140v.

¹⁹ *Orator Crucifixus*, 26.

place itself that remained vacant from the fall of the angels, begs to be taken over. “To take over this city the most efficient weapon is faith, the assault ladder—hope; the arrow—love, by which, as soon as you pierce God, He will order His Capitol (Kingdom) to be opened for the conqueror and will crown the worthy one with immortal laurels.”²⁰

If one conquers the Kingdom of Heaven by the worthy fruits of repentance, God Himself cannot resist this person, because He once bound Himself by saying: “As I live, ...I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but rather in the wicked man’s conversion, that he may live” (Ez 33:11).²¹

Father Papczyński draws our attention to another important element of conquering the Kingdom of Heaven: namely on humble and confident prayer. The one who thinks that he still does not have a right to participate in the joy of the future life can cry out in the manner of the evangelical leper: “Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean” (Mt 8:2). Father Stanislaus changes little of this prayer and implores God with tears: “Lord, even if You don’t want, You ought to clean me. Because if You did not come to redeem the righteous but the sinners, why do You permit me to remain for so long in my offenses? (...) If You were stirred by the leper’s cry when he begged You for a healthy body, then even more so and reasonably should You bow to my pleading, because I beg You for the healing of soul (...). My cause and my request is so much more justified and so much more needed, that You may want to heal me, clean and enlighten me. Otherwise, what good would Your blood be, if I had to be lost? What fruit would I have from Your sacrifice and my redemption, if, redeemed by You, because of my sins, I would remain tempted and thus would lose forever my freedom?”²² This is an example of sincere prayer of a converted sinner, which deeply moves the Heart of the Merciful Jesus.

In this humble prayer to the Merciful Jesus, Fr. Stanislaus also seeks the help of our Blessed Mother as the merciful advocate, because she truly gave the world its Redeemer.

A person often becomes despondent because of committed sins. It is possible that pride does not permit a total submission to the mercy of God. Or the obstacle in achieving a radical change is laziness and a lack of desire for honest work on oneself. Also, it may happen that the obstacle is despondency induced by the enemy of our salvation. To these very people Fr. Stanislaus directs a truly dramatic appeal, so as to awaken in them trust in the intercession of our Blessed Mother: “Come here, oh most desperate sinner! You, who under the weight of your transgressions

²⁰ S. Papczyński, *Prodromus reginae artium*, Varsaviae 1663, 43.

²¹ *Orator Crucifixus*, 27.

²² *Inspectio cordis*, 17v-18r.

fall into the deepest hell and by now believe your salvation to be a lost cause. Come here, run to the feet of Mary: «This is your Mother.»²³

Suffering Christ

In Kalahari, one of the south-african languages, the phrase “to show mercy” is translated as «butelo butloko» meaning “to accept somebody else’s suffering?”. This is what Christ has done: He took upon Himself our suffering. And this is how Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński portrays Him.

The Servant of God was himself closely united to the suffering Christ, this manifested itself both in his life and in his writings. He showed the depth of the suffering Christ’s agony with a realism proper to his contemporary writers, but with a great sensitivity and love for the agonizing Redeemer. By describing in intense and graphic ways everything that happened to Christ from the Last Supper to Calvary, Fr. Stanislaus wished to not only move his Christian reader, but also to teach him, by showing him the important truths that have such a great meaning for the Christian life.

The deepening experiences of the suffering Christ in the teachings of Fr. Papczyński

As a 17th century preacher and writer, Fr. Papczyński portrays everything that Christ undergoes during His passion with the characteristic realism of that epoch. This is easily seen in the writings of each individual scene of the Passion. The author narrates them in a very vivid and concrete way. It is also confirmed by the titles of those passion reflections, such as “Bath of the Olive Garden,” “Flogging of a sinner,” or “Crowning with thorns.”

Father Stanislaus depicts Christ’s prayer in the Garden as a struggle with a multitude of human sins. This was a true battle, an armed confrontation, in which blood has been spilled. The blood flown down Christ’s forehead and His entire body as great drops of sweat, it was dripping down on earth preparing for human kind a salvific bath to wash off the filth of evil.²⁴

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ „Cum igitur audimus cum delictorum nostrorum infinitis prope legionibus pugnam inire Iesum, quid expectamus aliud, quam sanguinem? Ah! manat equidem, manat, non solum rosea frons sed paene totum corpus incurvati sub oneribus culparum totius orbis Atlantis nostri sanquineo sudore!” Ibid., I, 3, s. 5.

Christ, tied at the pillar of scourging as the Divine Monarch—the Only Begotten Son of God, the Lord of men and angels. Understanding this attribute of Christ makes us grasp the extent of this crime of scourging. This was an outrage far greater than the scourging of a Roman citizen, Paul (Acts 12:25).²⁵

But Christ conducted Himself during this torture as a true monarch. He was not afraid of the whips, as the Israelites were fearful at their very mention, who came to King Rehoboam asking to remove the yokes placed on them by Solomon (cf. 1 Kng 12:14). The superhuman perseverance of the Scourged One witnesses this, that He endured at the pillar unperturbed and unconquered, while the executioners probably took turns, exhausted by their effort.²⁶

Christ's royal dignity shows itself ever more clearly at the crowning with thorns. Jesus at that moment reminds us of King Solomon, who had also been crowned in Jerusalem. But Solomon's crown was gold adorned with precious stones, while Christ received a crown made of sharp thorns. Solomon was crowned for glory, while Christ—for infamy. Solomon's head was crowned by his dearest mother, Christ's—by the worst possible stepmother, the Synagogue. The elevation of Solomon took place on the day of his betrothal and with joyful heart; the humiliation of Jesus—in sorrow, on the day of His death.²⁷

It also comes to the mind of the Servant of God, to equate Christ and the bridegroom in the *Song of Songs*, but here also appear contrasts (cf. Songs 5:10-16).²⁸ Scourged and crowned with thorns the suffering King, is immeasurably greater than both Solomon and the bridegroom in the enormity of His sacrifice, in patience, and perseverance.

Realism is again seen in Fr. Papczyński's writing on the Passion, when he meditates on Christ crucified. When the Savior spoke His last words, the blood streamed down from His pierced arms and feet. This blood soaked the wood of suffering, just as it previously soaked the scourging pillar. Truly at this moment was

²⁵ „Aeterni rerum omnium Conditoris ac Domini Filius unigenitus, regnorum omnium atque caelorum, hominum et Angelorum omnipotens Monarcha, ab improbissimis daemonum satellitibus alligatus columnae marmoreae caeditur crudelissime”. Ibid., III, 1, s. 21.

²⁶ „Stabat immotior sua columna; laetus insuper hilarisque profecto illa Prophetæ versabat animo: ‘Ecce ego in flagella paratus sum’ [Ps 37,18]. O invictam animi fortitudinem! O inexplicabile pro nobis patiendi ardorem et alacritatem!”. Ibid., III, 2, s. 25.

²⁷ Ibid., IV, 3, s. 36 n.

²⁸ „Olim ‘caput eius’ visum fuit sponsae ‘aurum optimum’, nunc spinae omnia, spinae. Olim ‘coma eius sicut elatae palmarum, nigrae quasi corvus’, nunc depressae, evulsae, conspurcatae. Olim ‘oculi eius sicut columbae super rivulos aquarum, quae lacte sunt lotae’, nunc tabe natantes. Olim ‘genae illius sicut areolae aromatum’, nunc pallidae, sputis faedatae, tumentes... Olim ‘species eius ut Libani electus ut Cedri’, nunc ceu vermis, opprobrium, abiectio. Olim ‘totus desiderabilis’, nunc totus miserabilis”. Ibid., V, 3, s. 45.

fulfilled the consecration of the Cross—that wood, of which the Eastern Church sings: “Quam sacer cruor perunxit fusus Agni corpore”.²⁹

The depth of torments of the suffering Christ manifests itself not only through the realism, with which Fr. Papczyński speaks about it, but also in the description of Christ’s spiritual experiences. They accompanied Him throughout all stages of His passion, but at certain moments they became evident in a particular way.

One of the most dominant experiences of our Savior was His internal joy, with which He entered the road of suffering. It showed itself right at the beginning, when Jesus, during the Last Supper, expressed His great desire to suffer and to die, so that the work of salvation could be more quickly accomplished. He even encouraged the traitor to hurry up (cf. Jn 13:27). Astonishing is the haste, with which Christ went to His painful destination. He desired to die as soon as possible so as to give life to mankind, and this very prospect filled His soul with joy, which revealed itself in exclamation uttered after the traitor had gone out: “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him” (Jn 13:31).³⁰

The internal feeling of joy accompanied Jesus during the way of the cross, on which He “like an athlete joyfully runs its course” (Ps 19:6). How is it possible that after so much pain, such great weakening caused by the loss of blood, weighed down with an enormous cross could Christ still rejoice? He did rejoice because He took upon Himself this great burden freely, out of love for all people. He also knew that the Cross would be for Him the title to rule over the world, which He was about to redeem.³¹

The profound internal joy of Christ during His passion united itself with another sensation expressed in the cry: “I thirst” (Jn 19:28), which came down from the height of the Cross. This was not a desire for a drink, which, incidentally, Jesus refused; it was a thirst for redeeming men, his faith and conversion.³² This call for conversion has a special significance for Fr. Papczyński. It had come in such circumstances that it was absolutely necessary to answer it. And the answer should be not tears alone, but true contrition and earnest atonement. Father Stanislaus emphasizes the importance of Christ’s appeal for conversion in such dramatic circumstances by recalling the scene of the Last Judgment when Christ will remind people that He was thirsty, and they gave Him no drink.³³

²⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, 3, s. 53.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 1, s. 10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, V, 1, s. 41 n.

³² „Ah! quid sitis, Domine mi, quid siti? ‘Sitis mea’ (respondet per D. Augustinum) ‘salus vestra est: sitis mea redemptio vestra; sitio fidem vestram’, o mortales! sitio conversionem vestram, o peccatores!” S. Papczyński, *Orator Crucifixus*, V, Varsaviae 1998, 56.

³³ „Venturum enim tempus est, quo sitiens hic Cervus in severissimum Iudicem conversus, ita suae sitis ardentissimae et propriae salutis contemptores nefarios alloquetur ultimo damnandos: ‘Sitivi,

The Venerable Servant of God also sees another reason for Christ's thirst on the Cross, namely: His desire to experience even greater suffering. It appears that His suffering had reached its limits, but the Savior's love for people was limitless and actually this very love intensified the desire for suffering. The only solace for Christ at that time were the tears of His mother and pious women, who empathized with Him in His suffering. Those were tears of love in response to His love.³⁴

Yet another spiritual experience of Christ captures Fr. Stanislaus's attention: the feeling of desertion expressed in the words: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). He was not voicing desperation, as Calvin thought, and it is not a complaint, but it is a teaching. He could not abandon the Incarnate Son of God, equal with the Father. Jesus by His cry taught people that they must call out to God, when they feel abandoned by Him.³⁵

In Christ's suffering, both spiritual and physical, in His experiences during Passion, Fr. Stanislaus always tries to discover a deeper meaning, as well as to draw an instruction given to us by the "Crucified Preacher." Thus, for the Servant of God all these events are the school of faith and life.

Christ's victory over death is also our victory, however, it is not without our participation. Christ's Passion puts concrete examples before men. They are clearly shown in Fr. Papczyński's teaching, from this is seen the great living value of his Passion meditations.

Practical value of Passion meditations

As to practical hints for Christian life derived from the Passion meditations, an appeal to break away from sin recurs most often in Fr. Papczyński's teaching. Because the Son of God has been "pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins" (Is 53:5), each Christian must realize that these were his/her sins, which wounded Christ. Our Savior gave Himself to suffering because it was necessary to make atonement to the Father for human transgressions. The great burden that fell on Christ's shoulders has become salvific for men, because "by his stripes we were healed" (Is 53:5). However, people must accept in full conscience Christ's gift of

et non dedistis mihi potum; [...] discedite a me maledicti in ignem aeternum' [Mt 25,42,41]. O peccator! Ut non ardeas aeternum, ardentem siti conversionis tuae Christum iam refocilla". Ibid.

³⁴ „Solutus Iesus in cruentatibus inexplicandis persistens immotus lenta voce exclamat: 'Sitis'. Hic Magdalene Liberatori suo vehementissime compatiens tacita lamentabatur: Ah! 'Sitis', clamas: desunt his rupibus undae. Sola fluunt oculis flumina, sola bibe. Non aliud sanctissima Genitrix, non reliquae Matronae huic tristissimae Tragediae praesentes, facere: lachrymas, nimirum suas dilecto Servatori sitis extinguendae causa offerebant". Ibid., 54.

³⁵ Ibid., IV, s. 37.

salvation, thus breaking completely away from sin. Their conversion has to be a radical one, and their internal change—total and profound. It ought to be outwardly expressed by remorseful tears because of sins and sorrow over the spilled blood of the Lord.³⁶

Repentance for committed sins leads to establishing a heartfelt union with Christ. The Savior then becomes so close to a Christian that there is no more room for sins which until now excluded one from God. Father Papczyński draws our attention to the possibility of freeing ourselves from venial sins through meditating the Lord's Passion and to a chance of cleansing ourselves from our spiritual filth, which he calls "lesser offenses."³⁷

In order to help Christians draw even closer to Christ, Fr. Stanislaus asks us to share pains with the suffering Savior. Our deep feelings must awaken at the sight of the scourged and derided Lord. It is impossible for a Christian heart to remain unmoved by this shocking picture. Father Papczyński calls "barbarian and inhuman" a soul that does not mellow at the sight of the Son of God being so terribly humiliated.³⁸

For Fr. Papczyński the suffering Christ becomes in meditation so close to the Christian that he desires to suffer with the Savior and to experience all His pains, which have become His lot.³⁹ Sharing in suffering brings about a wish to follow Christ in every salvific deed according to His appeal: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt 16:24). By the cross, which a Christian ought to take upon himself, Fr. Stanislaus means voluntary mortification, long-lasting penances, slander, contempt, injustice, and every other anguish. Our cross may also be illness, poverty, misfortune, lack of basic necessities, and any other set-back. Christ admonishes us that we ought to accept the cross with a joyful heart, doing so out of love for Him and according to His example.⁴⁰

One particular moment of Christ's Passion is emphasized by Fr. Papczyński as an example to follow. It is His prayer to the Father for His executioners: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Lk 24:34). The Servant of God has no doubts that everyone has enemies and thus has something to forgive them.⁴¹ He

³⁶ Ibid., III, 1, s. 22.

³⁷ Ibid., I, 1, s. 4.

³⁸ Ibid., IV, 1, s. 34.

³⁹ „Cum te videam sanguine perfusum, vellem oceanum transmeare lachrymarum: cum te videam susque deque concisum, omnes tibi plagas meas afflictionum, calamitatum, dolorum, aerumnarum, maerorum, tentationum, infamationum, iniuriarum, et quorumvis adversitatum, molestiarum, acerbitationum, mortificationum, etiam curarum sollicitudinum anxietatum omnium punctures, omnia vulnera animi cordisque mei humillime consecro”. *Christus Patiens*, III, 1, s. 22 n.

⁴⁰ Ibid., V, 4, s. 47.

⁴¹ *Orator Crucifixus*, I, s. 4.

only wonders why there are so many misunderstandings between Christians who are supposed to be united by mutual love, that it is really difficult to single out one person who would not have an adversary or a persecutor. It seems to him that it happens with God's dispensation so that people have a chance to forgive their neighbor thus meriting for themselves God's forgiveness. No less the forgiveness of a fault, but more so the love of an enemy, this is a difficult matter. This is why it is so important to penetrate ever deeper the prayer that Christ offered on the Cross for sinners and to ponder it's every word, which is full of mystery. Jesus urges them and pleads with the Father, and nobody deserves more heed than He does. He asks for a true absolution, begs for forgiveness of an unusual offense, of which no one ever heard before. For whose intentions is He interceding? He pleads for those who nailed Him to the Cross and scorned Him. Jesus forgave those people and obtained for them His Father's favor. And He did it with great goodness, so that the forgiveness can be obtained more easily. Because He could not justify the deeds of his persecutors, He justified their intentions. He referred to their incompetence and misunderstanding of what they were doing. For a Christian, this breadth of nobility is a magnificent example of love for their enemies.⁴²

Father Stanislaus's practical approach is noticeable throughout his entire meditations. Having perceived a call to following Christ in His prayer for His enemies, Fr. Papczyński tries also to find it in Christ's words, with which He put His spirit into the Father's hands. By giving His soul to the Father, Christ teaches us that we also ought to entrust our spirit to our Savior, namely: "our thoughts, our souls and our conscience."⁴³ Thus, the following of Christ is to guide us to a complete union with Him and to entrusting everything to Him—the depth of our conscience, our whole soul, and every thought. This is the consequence of our personally embracing the Crucified Savior and accepting the teaching that He imparts to us through the stages of His passion.

While striving to bring men to the suffering Christ, Fr. Stanislaus also wants to establish a heartfelt union with the Sorrowful Mother. The Founder of the Marians tells us to direct our special attention to her and to ponder her behavior during Christ's suffering. A Christian ought to deeply comprehend the magnitude of pain, which Mary felt upon seeing Christ burdened with the Cross, for she could not utter a single word. Her silence at her meeting with Jesus is particularly meaningful. Greatly unusual had to be the pain of this Mother, if it prevented her from expressing her feelings that she felt at meeting with her Son on the way of the cross.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid., I, s. 11 n.

⁴³ „Et en Servator noster animam sacratissimam in durissimo crucis lecto exhalans exemplo nos incitat suo, ut, qualiter ipse tum aeterno Patri suum commendabat, ita nos assiduo nostrum ipsi spiritum commendemus. Cogitationes, inquam nostras, Animas nostras, Conscientias nostras”. Ibid., VII, s. 78.

⁴⁴ *Christus Patiens*, V, 4, s. 45.

Mary shared suffering with Christ, her very presence at the agony and death of her Son, is the last act in the work of salvation, which started at the moment of the Incarnation. Mary's participation in this work was a significant one, because along with Christ she offered God an expiation for salvation of the people.⁴⁵

Father Stanislaus Papczyński, who profoundly experienced the truth of Divine Mercy revealed in Christ, as well as the mystery of His passion, can also be today our teacher of faith and Christian life. Showing the depth of these mysteries and drawing from them practical conclusions, just like the Servant of God has done, can be highly beneficial for the modern man, who is mostly consumption-oriented. If Fr. Papczyński had to speak to him today, he would point out the nothingness (emptiness) of such a life and would take him before the Cross of the Merciful Lord, so that his life would take on a new form and a deeper sense.

Fr. Tadeusz Rogalewski, M.I.C.

⁴⁵ S. Papczyński, *Prodromus Reginae Artium*, P. I, N. III, c. I, Cracoviae 1669.

FATHER STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI **AS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE MARIAN HELPERS***

Efforts for the beatification of Fr. Stanislaus Papczyński always have been and still are the sign of the belief in his holiness as well as our gratitude to God for all the good that the Church received during the life of the Venerable Servant of God and continues to receive now, especially the Congregation of Marians and its friends. Every Blessed or Saint is a milestone on the road to holiness, a live example of God's mercy greater than any evil and sin. It gives the man spiritual beauty, the radiance of which amazes others and draws them near the Author of this beauty—God Himself.

Let us bend over the book of Fr. Stanislaus's live and read out a message capable of enlivening our desire for beauty and faithfulness to the chosen way of life.

1. Beautiful by his faithfulness to the grace

Father Stanislaus was born in the beautiful land of Podegrodzie and since early childhood he admired the beauty of mountains, woods, and meadows, afforded to him by circumstances of the rural life. As a little boy he helped his parents, just like every other boy in the neighborhood, and guarded their sheep in the fields. Close contact with nature in the early life always produces in a person this openness and sensitivity to beauty, which sustain later life choices.

Father Stanislaus had good parents, faithful to fulfilling the demands of Christian, married, and family life. The beauty of the family life that finds its expression in daily mutual love and care is the best foundation on which one can build one's future.

Father Papczyński, just like every one of us, received the gift of Holy Baptism that he further developed while following the roads of his religious life. However, his concern for his heart's spirituality must have been something exceptional. For when the Lord chooses a man to fill a special mission, He prepares him for it beforehand by granting him everything needed for a faithful and full accomplishment of the task. In Fr. Stanislaus's heart God planted the sensitivity to beauty,

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which finds its most full expression in the grace that is in God's love. This *inner road* of Fr. Stanislaus, that stayed hidden during his childhood and yearly youth, begins to surface in times when the Lord started to reveal to him his road in life—his vocation. Different options were available to him. He could have opted for the beauty of the married and family life; the beauty of serving people in his home town inheriting after his father his blacksmith trade. Or, he could have chosen to serve his Fatherland by enlisting in the army. He was free to choose his way of life. However, in the depth of his heart he knew that he would be free to the fullest, if he chose to respond to God's proposal. Thus, he listened attentively to God's voice, discerning it among the rustle of tree leaves or birds' singing; while gazing at the starry sky or maybe admiring sunrise and sunset. There was surely such a moment in his spiritual journey when he stood still and tried to decide which way to pursue so that to prove his faithfulness to the obtained grace of beauty, faithfulness to God's love. What did he choose? He chose the road that was sure to lead him to the perfect beauty living a pure, poor, and obedient religious life through following faithfully Jesus Christ. He understood this vocation in life as the call to show the others the beauty of Jesus Christ's person, as the religious life can be properly described in the shortest manner. Years later, Fr. Stanislaus wrote in his testament: "The curious may look at my portrait, but for the religious to follow, I leave the example of the life of my Lord, Jesus Christ." Father Stanislaus knew that the radiance of his beauty is nothing as compared to Christ's beauty, thus throughout his whole life he tried to persuade himself to be fascinated by Christ's beauty alone.

The faithfulness to the grace of beauty does not end with one single choice but continues until the end of one's life. Our sensitivity to the beauty of spiritual life makes it possible to the Lord to give us further tasks, which are more demanding but which also show more fully God's beauty in human hearts. What was it that the Lord again revealed to Fr. Stanislaus? The Lord called him to make efforts in order for the Piarists community, to which Fr. Stanislaus belonged at the time, to regain its brilliance—the brilliance of its original fervor in the religious charism. In Fr. Stanislaus's times the Piarists Order was living through a deep spiritual crisis: the spirit of piety and penance was on the decline, the vow of strict poverty was taken lightly, and religious devoid of all moral principles were made superiors. The ruin of the order was imminent. In those very circumstances Fr. Stanislaus had to fulfill his religious ideals, planted by his Novice Master—revered and greatly appreciated for his love for the Piarist Order's charism.

Guided by his inner longing for the beauty of the religious life, Fr. Stanislaus made attempts to oppose the laxity of the religious observance, by demanding above all the observance of strict poverty and fidelity to the charism of religious and Piarist life. However, his efforts didn't produce any positive results. Instead, he met with unjust accusations and persecutions. But is it possible to extinguish a

desire for the beauty of spiritual life? Is it possible to uproot from the heart beautiful life's ideals? Obstacles met by Fr. Stanislaus in life weren't able to achieve this. Where now will the road of faithfulness to God's grace lead him?

Father Stanislaus receives a new light and calling to seek on a different path the chance of fulfilling his longing for the holiness of life. Here the Lord opens before him a road of life lit by the rays of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Membership in the Association of Marians Helpers puts upon people the obligation to thank the Lord for the grace of Christian life inspired by the Marian charism and accomplished within a large group of people who first mutually help themselves in their striving for a greater fidelity to God and then support the others in their experiencing of faith.

To be a Marian Helper means to continuously nurture in one's heart the spiritual beauty planted by God through the holy baptism. This concern for the beauty of heart demonstrates itself through an attentive listening to God's word and faithful realization of His will, which translates itself into generous undertaking of tasks within the frame of the apostolic mission of the Church.

2. With a seal on his soul

Loneliness more easily opens us up to the Lord and makes us more sensitive to His inspirations. Father Stanislaus suffered painful loneliness during his imprisonment in Podoliniec and Prievizda, when he stood accused of demands for radical faithfulness to the grace of religious life in the Piarist Order. He experienced the pain of being cast out for wanting to serve God more faithfully within his beloved religious community.

Father Stanislaus's physical and spiritual sufferings, awareness of being cast out and his ideals of beautiful religious life taken lightly have become the soil, in which germinated the seed of a new life mission. Left in painful silence, Fr. Stanislaus gave heed to the delicate breaths of the Holy Spirit who chiseled in his soul the image of a new religious congregation. Day after day the Holy Spirit laid out the mosaic of this new community, with which He wanted to adorn the Church. His actions were filled with imagination, for out of colorful pieces, of which none was accidental or needless, He created a stain glass window displaying a commu-

nity whose task was to let the light through so that people, looking upon it, can admire the beauty of its spiritual reality.

The Holy Spirit found in Fr. Stanislaus a man who gave Him his heart so that the Holy Spirit may imprint on it the seal of a new congregation. Father Stanislaus's spiritual experience reflects the dramatic events in creation of this new community within the Church: at its conception (in Fr. Stanislaus's heart), at its birth (troubles with starting the work), and at its growth (obstacles on its road).

Let's recall Fr. Stanislaus's own words who thus describes the beginnings of the Marian religious community: "Several were the Orders of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary that invited me into their midst, me—a person longing for perfection. However, **the vision that has been impressed upon my soul** as to founding the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary caused that, after rejecting all proposals, along with those of returning to the Piarists, led me to its goal." "I was living at the house of this nobleman, P. Karski, for almost two years and I was seeking ways to establish the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception **that has been already formed in my soul by the Holy Spirit**. However, I did not have companions needed to start out such a great work. Although there were candidates from among the laity and religious, I was afraid to let them join for virtue was not clearly visible in them, and besides, there was no room."

Let's note the words: "the vision that has been impressed upon my soul". He speaks about the "vision" which defined the specific features of the new religious community: its identity and place within the Church—all this that we call today "The Founder's charism." This charism is a gift from the Holy Spirit, which Fr. Stanislaus generously discerns with fear and trepidation in his "soul." He sees this gift as being "imprinted" in a manner of a seal being placed on a document in order to make it valid. The one who placed this seal on Fr. Stanislaus's soul was the Holy Spirit, which means that the mission that He assigns comes from God. If God seals a man with the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 1:13), thus He officially takes him into His possession. Father Stanislaus receives a new task of bringing to existence within the Church what was initiated in his soul, in other words: to become the Father Founder of a new religious community. Since the seal is a certain kind of a "signature" that warrants for the document's validity, Fr. Stanislaus can be sure that all his efforts made in conformity with his inner vision are true and expected by God.

Father Stanislaus's example teaches us to be sensitive to the movements of the Holy Spirit. It reminds us first that we all have received an imprint of God already in the sacrament of holy baptism, which the Fathers of the Church call a "holy inde-

structible seal". God recognizes us as His disciples by this baptismal seal that gives back to the soul its original resemblance to the Lord.

A Marian Helper is a person who makes sure that the received seal would not be damaged or marred thus losing its authenticity and credibility. To guard the received seal means to be concerned with the spiritual beauty of the heart and faithfully put into practice all the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. It means to be a person with a seal in the heart, always remembering to whom the seal belongs, who is our Lord, and who always protects us from evil.

3. The Founder

We call Fr. Stanislaus our *Father Founder*. This phase replaces in a way his first and last name, defines his personality and mission, it expresses what is essential in his life—to which everything else has been subordinated. This “new” name was first revealed on December 11, 1670,—on the day when he said the words of so-called *oblation* or the act of offering oneself to God in the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception, the founding of which he planned. He appeared then as a *Founder* but the confirmation of the name came with the official approval of the new community by the Church authorities on October 24, 1673. Father Stanislaus entered a new stage of his life as Father Founder. What did he find? He did not found any new organization, association, or institution, but he gave the *beginning to a new way of living out the mystery of Christ*. By answering “yes” to God, he allowed the new religious community to enrich the Church. He accepted the gift of the Spirit for the Church which means that he not only founded (that is established structures and defined the manner of their functioning, which in fact is related to calling a work into existence), but he did something else: he allowed the Divine Spirit to act within the Church and to reveal the mystery of Christ in the Marian community. Thanks to him the Marian charism or the experience of the Redeemer’s love revealed in the mystery of Mary’s Immaculate Conception came to be known in order to shape with an apostolic zeal and after Mary’s example the beauty of every man and the entire Church.

What are the Founder’s characteristic features? Firstly, his sensitivity and openness to God’s inspiration, which causes that our Founder becomes convinced that God calls him to establish a special religious community.

Father Papczyński experienced the action of the divine inspiration; he prayed, pondered, and questioned spiritual directors, so that, in the end, to acknowledge in full responsibility the authenticity of God’s calling.

Being convinced that the Holy Spirit formed in his mind the shape of the new religious congregation, Fr. Papczyński became assured that God Himself was its creator, and if so, there was no need to worry about its future. God Himself will take care of the new community, will protect it from all dangers and preserve it as long as there would be a need for it in the Church. However, one thing was required from the community: to be faithful to its charism. Surely, this is why Fr. Papczyński warned, before dying, that nothing of essence be changed in the congregation, in other words—its Marian charism.

Another feature of every founder is the desire to serve the Church, concern for it radiating with the brilliance of holiness. Father Stanislaus perceived a great need for proclaiming the Good News to the poor, religiously neglected people, especially those in rural areas. First, Fr. Stanislaus fulfills the calling to care about the Church, as a result of contemplative life, primarily through giving pastoral help to diocesan priests in parishes, and only then to create Marian parishes. His true pastoral zeal found its expression in his humble assistance to pastors, in delivering sermons, hearing confessions. All this contributed to his being called the Apostle of Mazowsze. His pastoral love for people and his concern for their salvation embraced also souls suffering in Purgatory, to whom he brought help through prayer and penance.

Founders inspired by God are not always able to establish permanent community structures, so that they could thrive and assimilate the charism of the founder. Even though the circumstances accompanying the founding of the Marian Congregation were difficult and even very hostile, nevertheless Fr. Papczyński lived to see its approval by the Holy See on November 24, 1699—which laid the foundation for the further creation of necessary structures to the Marian life.

However, the Founder's most important feature was his ability to pass on to his community a spirituality that could enliven people and their works. Father Stanislaus was the first who lived by the Marian charism and shared it with his community through words and example. His main inspiration for following the road of the evangelical counsels was Blessed Virgin Mary in her mystery of the Immaculate Conception. He associated the care for the purity of heart with love for the Church so that it would be filled with grace of faithfulness to God's will. With his merciful love he embraced also souls suffering in Purgatory. He left this manner of life as legacy for his confreres in vocation.

Father Founder is the one who gives life, in other words, who dies for Christ so that only His glory would be revealed to the community and people to whom it's been sent. The more holy the life of the founder the greater is the power of the grace of the charism. We believe in Fr. Stanislaus holiness, if only because his charism is

still alive in the Church while it still leads to holiness those who live by it in a radical manner. Examples of the Servant of God, Fr. Casimir Wyszyński, Bl. George Matulewicz, and Blessed Martyrs Anthony and George testify to it.

Meeting Fr. Stanislaus as the *Founder*, allows us to take a better look at our most important mission in life. Are we founders, too? Every one of us has an inimitable and unique life, which is a gift from God and defines our mission in the Church and the world. Being given life, we ought to strive that it be the way the Divine Spirit planned it. Our openness to divine inspirations ought to manifest itself in our generous cooperation with the grace in order to render more faithfully God's vision as to the shape of our life. It means that we have to be "founders" of our own life, first accepting it with joy and gratitude as God's gift, and then making everything possible to allow the mystery of Christ to reflect His face, so that others can perceive Him in our words and actions. Each one of us "reveals" Christ in a different way, depending on gifts received from the grace, which shape up our particular charism. Our duty is to recognize this charism and resolutely put it into life.

Thus, I ought to be completely convinced that God leads me through life, that He writes the scenario of my life, and that He is the best for me. I can also be sure of the guidance of Divine Providence.

A Marian Helper is a person responsible for the gift of life, which he/she sees as a mission to be accomplished in the world. Listening to the Lord's words and open to inspirations of the Holy Spirit, he/she travels down the road of holiness, drawing others along.

4. Fascinated by God's love

God's only wish is for people to believe in His love, to accept it and to live by it. The One who loved us first expects nothing but love from us. This is how Fr. Stanislaus read the central message of the Gospels; he was fascinated by God's love and made it the foundation of the spiritual and apostolic life for himself and for his religious community, to which he addressed the words of St. Paul: "Your every act should be done with love" (1 Cor 16:14).

Enraptured by Divine love, Fr. Stanislaus wrote: "Indeed, it is good to love the Infinite God and be loved by Him! Oh, insatiable love, so sweet, constant, kind, calm, glorious, boundless! Grant that we can experience you! Let us partake in you

so that we always burn with your fire and never be consumed by it; so that we always long for you but be never sated!”

It is impossible to understand Fr. Stanislaus, his efforts on the road to faithfulness to the religious vocation, his sufferings during the establishing of the new community, his apostolic zeal in proclaiming Good News to the poor and forgotten, his fervent penance and prayer for the souls in Purgatory, if we do not see in his heart the flames of divine love. Thus, this wish of his does not come as a surprise: “Oh love [...] my supreme good my ardent love of neighbor - never fail me and never be extinguished in my heart. Be my constant companion: in my every thought, every decision, every intention and action! Do not ever leave me!”

In this light we can understand Fr. Stanislaus’s words that he often repeated: “O Lord, increase my suffering so that You may diminish the punishment of the souls in Purgatory.” It was not suffering for the sake of suffering, but it was the matter of greater love that finds its manifestation in suffering.

The love consists of gift-giving understood as a *meeting*, for loving someone means not so much to give something, but *to be with this person and to love him/her*. Love lays at the root of Fr. Stanislaus’s apostolic involvement. He loved people. When experiencing God’s love, he *wanted to be there for them, with love*. Each apostolic action has a Christian meaning if it flows from love, if it is a sign from God who loves us; if He reveals to us the Image of a loving and merciful God.

Unfortunately, it is possible to choose a road of a seeming love. It is possible for one to serve the others but only in the manner of showing love to oneself, in other words, to get a satisfaction and a feeling of superiority. If one breaks away from the fount of God’s love, one risks losing the disinterestedness in dealings with people, in serving them. Thus, one must constantly take care of being in close unity with God, of the beauty of one’s heart, of the inner transparency. Love and beauty create a mutual condition: true love can only be beautiful, while beauty that enraptures us can only be a result of love.

In order not to lose our fascination with God’s love we must take constant care of love. It is necessary above all to contemplate God’s love, which manifests itself in the mystery of creation and salvation. Father Stanislaus encourages us to ponder daily this mystery as the fullest sign of God’s love. Our care for love also finds its expression in denying ourselves (making atonement) and in concrete acts of love, not only in talking about it (deeds of mercy, not only talk about deeds of mercy). “Bonum est concretum” said St. Thomas Aquinas. Goodness is concrete. Love is concrete.

A Marian Helper is a person who put his/her trust in the Divine love and strives to live by it in the everyday life, mindful of the words of St. John, the Apostle: “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.” (1 Jn 4:16). Father Stanislaus’s example demonstrates that “persevering in love,” means to serve our neighbor with concern for their salvation. In other words, it means being deeply rooted in love, which can withstand the tragedy of death. Only a person fascinated by Divine love can successfully oppose the evil of this world, perseveringly overcome all life’s difficulties and zealously bring hope to the needy.

Father Stanislaus is for a Marian Helper an inspiration for caring about one’s Christian identity, the essence of which is *love received from God and passed on to people*. It is the matter of being able to say about oneself: *I love therefore I am*. This is well explained by words of St. Gregory of Nissa: “Our Creator gave us love as and expression of our human face.” Thus, it is impossible to accept the gift of life and not to live by love at the same time, for “everyone is the same as his/her love is” (St. Augustine).

Fascination with Divine love allows us to understand ourselves, our place in the world and it also allows us to meet others, which will be the beginning of heaven or *dwelling in love*.

5. Captivated by Mary Immaculate

At the beginning of the Congregation of Marians we see the marvelous actions of the Holy Spirit, who, while calling to life a new religious community, also “points” to the person Immaculately Conceived. Can this analogy tell us something: “conceiving” of the order in Fr. Stanislaus’s mind and the immaculate conception of Mary? It seems that it can. First, it demonstrates that the gift of a new community and the gift of the Immaculate Conception of Mary are the fruits of a gratuitous act of God, who showers them on the Church.

Next, the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit reveals the truth that the Immaculate Conception of Mary is to be the inspiration of the new religious community in terms of the essence of its religious vocation (it is a gratuitous gift, a program to accomplish, directions for the mission in the Church), as well as the form of its fulfillment (in imitation of Mary Immaculate). Pointing to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception as *the inspiration* justifies in some way the lack of necessity for various outward signs, which would express the identity of the new community. The most important of those signs is the white habit—the symbol of unmarred

life, the beauty of which is to be manifested in the faithfulness to God's grace. The "white habit" is a sign for both the Marians and the outsiders. It is a reminiscent sign (vocation received) and a directional sign (road of immaculacy, struggle with sin), as well as an omen foretelling future (fullness of happiness in heaven). It is also a sign indicating the source of strength to follow the Marian way of life, in other words, God's love that embraces us, and the Eucharist that nourishes us.

In *Norma Vitae* (The Rule of Life) Fr. Stanislaus instructs the Marians to wear a habit "of snow-white color in the honor of the purity of Conception of Our Blessed Mother" and also ordered them not to modify it. Father Founder's concern for the outward sign of the Marian community should be perceived today as a challenge to faithfully preserve everything pertaining to the presence of the mystery of Mary's Immaculate Conception in the spiritual and apostolic life of the Marians. Father Stanislaus's directions are quite explicit: "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."

"...lest you remain without work" How are we to understand these words? Do they imply that other forms of apostolic work mean little? Why they speak of being "without work?" A more profound reflection allows us to penetrate the Founder's intuition who in this very way *emphasizes the fundamental meaning of faithfulness to the congregation's charism*. It means that if someone "breaks away" from the charism, won't live by it and put it into life, then regardless of the great good he might be very well doing he would still be seen as "without work." In the religious life the most important is to preserve faithfulness to the charism for this is what the Church expects. And the Church was the one that approved a given religious community thus wanting for its charism to enrich the life of the Church.

Father Papczyński lived in times of painful developing of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. There were two trends in the Church at that time: one rejected the truth about the Immaculate Conception, while the other was defending it. In the 17th century the popes were on the side of the *immaculists* or those who believed in the Immaculate Conception, although its recognition as a dogma did not come about until 1854. In the spirit of the Church teachings, Fr. Stanislaus resolutely took the side of defenders of the truth about the Immaculate Conception and was prepared to defend it at the price of his own life. Defending it and promulgating among the faithful Fr. Stanislaus considered his life's mission.

The very existence of the Congregation of Marians, the title of which displayed the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, was a defense and promulgation of this mystery of faith. In addition, taking inspiration for the Marian way of life in this mystery has become a singular form of its defense and promulgation. It was

supposed to be interpreted as imitation of the Mary's example in accordance to the *Rule of the Ten Evangelical Virtues of the B.V.M.*

“For no one who doesn't imitate Mary's example during his stay here, on earth, who doesn't always serve her with greatest love, will see Mary in her heavenly citadel”, so taught Fr. Stanislaus. Captivated by Mary Immaculate, Fr. Papczyński faithfully trod on the road to holiness, persistently imitating Mary's example and shaping the beauty of his heart after her model.

A Marian Helper perceives in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception an inspiration for growing fidelity to the promises of holy baptism. In this salvific event each one of us was freed from original sin and received sanctifying grace. In this Divine work we see the truth about us, chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4). This is our starting place and our mission: the gift of salvific love by which we must grow every day, thus advancing on the road to heaven.

Whoever breaks away from the baptismal charism, from the holiness of heart, even though he might have done a lot of good, does not have merits before God, as if he were without work. Thus, a Marian Helpers ought to take continuously care of the beauty of his/her heart so that the work for the good of others may bring fruits and become accumulated treasure in heaven.

Our concern for the beautiful life, according to Fr. Stanislaus's inspiration, ought to be put into life on the road of imitating the virtues of the Blessed Mother, above all—of her faith, hope, love, and perfect union with Christ.

Our conception in God's heart many centuries ago and our human conception in time are joined together by the same plan of God: so that we be unmarred before His Face, so that we advance in the newness of life giving witness to the gratuitous love of God, by the mercy of Whom we've been called to life, sustained in our existence, and destined for the life in heaven.

6. Longing for heaven

Father Papczyński fervently desired heaven for himself and for others. He strove for holiness throughout his entire life and uncompromisingly put into life the ideals of religious life in imitation of Mary, in order to rejoice along with her in God's presence in the glory of heaven.

Father Stanislaus's pastoral work resulted from his desire for everyone to be redeemed and rejoicing in heaven. Out of his concern for the holiness of human

hearts, he wrote a book entitled “The Mystical Temple of God” in order to assist all faithful who wished to take good care of the beauty of their hearts’ shrine. With particular zeal he advocated sobriety, making sure that the inner freedom wouldn’t be compromised under the perilous affects of alcohol.

Fervent prayers and atonements made for the intentions of the souls in Purgatory were nothing else but the manifestation of the desire for the deceased submitted to the purifying work of love to reach the joy of heaven as soon as possible. In Fr. Stanislaus’s eyes fraternal help given to the deceased was “a work of noble love,” because it was concern with people “from whom no reward can be expected, no gratitude or praise.” Helping the dead in Purgatory is schooling in selfless love. With tears in his eyes he pleaded with his confreres: “I beg you, brethren, to pray for the deceased for they suffer unbearable torments.” Many times he had mystical visions of Purgatory, which increased his longing for heaven, for the fullness of happiness for everyone.

Someone once said that a longing is the beginning of everything. We can add: it’s the beginning of heaven. Longing for heaven, Fr. Stanislaus continuously gazed with his soul’s eyes at God’s beauty, which he discovered in the pages of the Holy Scriptures, in the holy sacraments, in another person, in the beauty of all creation. He knew that the more his heart is beautiful the closer it is to heaven; the wider he would open it to God’s love and fulfill His will, the more he experienced God’s heavenly presence. “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (J 14:23).

“Thus,”—encouraged Fr. Stanislaus—concentrate on the greatest love of the Most High and Good God who cares about us and wants to redeem us. He gives us numerous and easily available means so that in using them we may merit eternal life!”

Marian Helpers live by this longing for heaven. They daily lift their eyes upward and in the love of their hearts they reach heaven and try to bring it closer to earth. This happens when they help the needy by active deeds of love and do not forget those who already completed their earthly journey and must undergo in purgatory the pains of longing for heaven.

Saint Augustine wrote: “God’s longing is a man alive.” Thus, I shall ask myself in the quiet of my heart: “Am I alive?” Here God is longing for me as a man alive, which means a man “living in sanctifying grace,” or else “beautiful.” God has created me in His likeness and image that is in the image of the Most High Beauty, which He is. Every sin distorts the image and destroys the beauty and for this we constantly must restore it, renew it through penance (conversion) and prayer.

Longing for heaven, and also for the beauty of our hearts, let us allow the Lord to chisel our hearts with His love so that sin, evil, and everything that's ugly and mars the beauty intended by God, be cut off.

But what if there is no longing for heaven? What if earthly goods and joys keep us tied up and won't allow flying toward heaven on the wings of love? Well, let's then awaken at least a longing for a longing. Let's desire to have his longing for holiness, for love, for heaven...

The modern world needs the Marian Helpers who would be longing for heaven and through this would display the beauty of faithfulness to every man's calling for the joy of heaven. We need them to draw the others upwards, to heaven! Are we such people?

"You can bring a horse to the water, but you can't make it drink." With all due respect: how can you make a man long for God, if he does not have such a longing, having drowned it a long time ago in beer and vodka, overpowered with television and car rides? It seems that there is only one solution: he must find a horse that would drink with gusto and bliss from the nearby bucket. And that would be done without any theatrical effects, in simplicity, just because of this inexplicably great thirst. This cannot leave anyone unmoved. Others would also bend over the bucket and start drinking the refreshing water at a draught. People who are hungry and thirsty for God are for their companions far better 'sermons' than many elevated speeches" (Jacques Loew).

Father Stanislaus—thirsty for heaven and perfect beauty—is this very sermon.

7. Conclusion

"A tongue expresses what it can. Let the heart comprehend the rest" (St. Augustine).

Fr. Janusz Kumala, M.I.C.

FATHER STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI'S RELIGIOUS VOWS AS SEEN IN "*INSPECTIO CORDIS*"

*All Christians are His foster children
And co-inheritors of the heavenly kingdom;
But more specifically religious brothers,
Who followed the evangelical counsels...*

Father Papczyński, "*Inspectio cordis*"

The decision to seek the voice of the Lord, leads the Christian not only to uncovering the teachings contained within the Gospels, but first and foremost, to their total acceptance. This advice is established as much in the words of Christ, as in the example of His own life.¹ And since, as Papczyński claims, keeping the evangelical counsels is at the same time, fulfilling the same teachings that Jesus Christ left for His chosen disciples, this form of offering is thus, "*very pleasing to God*". Religious brothers, he teaches, through the acceptance of these counsels, aspire to, precisely (*exacte*) imitating the life of Christ, and thanks to this, becoming more like Him.² The consecration of a person, by the acceptance of the three religious vows, is thus a practical sign of an obligation to the evangelical counsels of: chastity, poverty and obedience. Its consequence is first and foremost, a form of imitating Christ, the perfect model of man, who lived solely by the will of God. It was Christ who totally removed Himself from the world, to live, "in the Father" (cf.: John 14:10) and for the Father.³

And therefore the call of Father Papczyński to a truthful imitation of Christ, is in some sense, a call to a more perfect keeping of these vows. They are what show the twin dimensions of the consecration of a human person: the initiative of the person, who offers up (the gift of his own self), accepts and receives the gift, and God's initiative, as the one who calls the person to these gifts. Both aspects are required

¹ Ref: A.Sicari, *The Revelation of Evangelical Teaching*, trans L.Balter, Com 5 (1985) ch.6 p 9-28

² *Inspectio Cordis*, 109-110. Ref; M.Rouche, *Birth and Expansion of the Religious Life*, trans M.Michalik, Com 5(1985) ch 6, p 30-31.

³ Ref: M. Rouche, *Birth and Expansion of the Religious Life*, trans M.Michalik, Com 5(1985) ch 6, p 30-31.

and valid. Bearing in mind, that these two relationships lead directly to the qualification of the essential conditions that must be fulfilled by a person wishing to devote himself to God, the author of “*Inspectio Cordis*” asserts quickly and bluntly, that such an act cannot be born from force or compulsion, but must be from free-will, from within oneself (*sponte*). The obligation of a religious person, through his vows to fulfill the three evangelical counsels: chastity, poverty and obedience, makes up a clear cut sign of a free and total devotion to our beloved God; it is at the same time, a fine tool, which leads one on to fulfilling this devotion. The religious life naturally leads towards pure love, and thus, as our Founder claims, one of the fundamental conditions in its achievement, is the elimination of all types of “obstructions”. They, having their roots in sin, “*make people’s salvation more difficult*”. For this reason, the three religious vows: chastity, poverty, obedience, also fulfill the role of an agent, that helps the person to decide to stand up against the three lusts: of the body, the eyes and the extravagancies of this world. (cf. 1 John 2:16)⁴.

Moving on to the specific discussion of specific religious vows, one needs to recognize, that the author of “*Inspectio Cordis*” in keeping with the aesthetic character of the contemplation, refers more often to the virtues of chastity, poverty and obedience than to the vows. On the other hand, apart from a few sporadic exceptions, he does not utilize the notion of the evangelical counsels.

If we look at the order and the links with the vows contained in “*Inspectio Cordis*”, the author’s method is to begin with obedience, from which as he puts it “*two further vows are dependent*”. Chastity is referred to specifically after obedience due to its character. The third in order—namely poverty, being a specific example of religious spirituality, is referred to as a “precious pearl” (cf. Mt. 13:46) by our author. However, in, *Norma vitae* (III 3) the order is as follows: Obedience, poverty, chastity; here, Father Founder also gave his interpretation of the vows in this way: “*obedience guards chastity, whilst poverty feeds it, thus a soul striving strongly for chastity, needs to practice obedience and poverty, and he will possess it*”.

I. Obedience

In looking at the question of obedience from a subjective sense, we need to recognize, that it touches one of the most fundamental rights of a person, namely freedom, the ability to decide upon one’s own fate. To subordinate your own will, through the vow of obedience, to the will of God, represented by your superior, neu-

⁴ *Inspectio Cordis* 63,162 Ref. for this subject: Apostolic Exhortation on the Religious Life *Redemptoris Donum*, nr 7 9.

tralizes the danger of free will and wrongly utilized freedom.⁵ It is for precisely this reason, that Father Papczyński talks about the necessity of obedience. If God is the giver of all goodness, then only those who are obedient to Him can obtain it. Obedience, according to Papczyński, thus fulfills the role of tying the person to God's working in his life. Disobedience, not only removes this goodness from the religious brother, which God wishes to grant him, but also gives rise to the danger of not fulfilling one's vocation; while at the same time, endangering the person with the loss of salvation. The goal of the vow of obedience, states Papczyński, is from one point of view, the strengthening of the religious person's will, with the will of God, and secondly—the imitation of Christ, obedient even to his death on the Cross (cf. Phil.2:8). Thus, those who are obedient in such a way, that they "*fulfill His will, just like He fulfilled the will of the Father (...) are His brothers*", and thanks to this, they become "*co-inheritors of His kingdom*". Although the taking of a vow of obedience in itself, carries the need to renounce one's free will, obedience is not the goal in itself.⁶ The keeping of the vow of obedience comes from a willingness to imitate Christ, and leads one towards Christ. Christ, in His "*words and actions*" shows us the ideal of obedience fulfilled, for through this, He "*fulfilled the will of the Father*", and saved the world. Similarly, the religious brother, in other words, he who Christ calls to follow Him (ref: Mt 16, 24), through the faithful fulfillment of the vow of obedience, is not only able to obtain the "*peak of perfection and total sanctity*", but also, he contributes to the salvation of others. Finally, obedience serves the function of a criterion for identifying "every holiness".

Underlining such a vision of the vow of obedience, Papczyński puts forward criteria, which need to be fulfilled, so that they can reach the evangelical marks and measures. He states that, it must always be fulfilled "*exceptionally*" (*unice*). This means, that every act of obedience should be completed in such a way, that it is single and unique. A marker of perfect love is the conviction, that its work "*is always so perfect, that it could be no more perfect*". What's more, it should flow from love, meaning that one motive for the execution of a task, can be "*the pure love of God and one's neighbor*". A virtue of perfect obedience is also being "*willing*" (*prompte*) to act. The point here being, that there would be no need for additional "*orders, encouragement and stimuli*". And it is precisely this penchant, which should be a constant virtue in a consecrated person. Other virtues of perfect obedience are: perseverance (*constanter*) in its fulfillment, manifested in not being deterred, even through known hardships and temptations, and beyond that, an active and clear commitment (*hilariter*). Apart from this, obedience requires soulful determination in

⁵ Ref: S. Witek, *Theology in Religious Life*, Lublin 1986, p 196.

⁶ *Inspectio Cordis*, 16-17, 39, 44. It seems that this is the sense of Fr. Papczyński's statement in his first will, where he writes: "...deprived of my will through the vow of obedience".

“*difficult and weighty matters*”, and is only possible when, it is fulfilled sensibly and methodically (*ratione*), with love (*studio*) and with fervor (*fervore*).

This vision of this vow of obedience, causes the function of the superior to take on a specific character, one, which as the author teaches, becomes for his subordinates “*Christ like*” (*instar Christi*), present in reality within the community.⁷

Obedience is furthermore, a yearning for the person to subordinate himself firstly before God; the relationship with one’s superiors becomes secondary, and a practical realization of the religious brother’s initial subordination.

II. Chastity

Complete devotion to God’s plans, leads a person to take up a life of perfect chastity, which manifests itself as a specific sign of complete love for God above all else. Chastity gives the person freedom of heart, so as to love God even more fully, and through Him one’s neighbor, as well as deepening and strengthening one’s initial choice.⁸ In this way, the religious person, through his religious vow of chastity, unites his life with Christ in a special way. Here, we also find the source of the nuptial vision of spirituality which the author often underlined in *Inspectio Cordis*.

In his teachings on chastity, which fulfills such a pivotal role in the religious life, Father Papczyński claims that every religious brother is obliged to keep it for three reasons: because of natural law, because of God’s law and through the power of the vows taken. Understanding these conditions according to the Founder, should help in maintaining “spotlessness”. They also show the fundamental and deciding role of God’s grace rather than of human efforts. Man alone is “*poor and weak*”, especially in “*these gifts*”, and that is why he exists on “*God’s most benevolent graces and his foreseeing powers*”

Papczyński is also convinced that the religious brother will either enter a life of virtue, or will “*sink in uncleanness*”, for “*fragile is the vessel, that carries such fragrant and expensive fluid*”. Faithful adherence to the vow of chastity, leads to a permanent penchant for the realization of the obligations involved in fulfilling the virtue of chastity.⁹

⁷ *Inspectio Cordis*, 60, 160-163.

⁸ Ref: Decree of the Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Up-To-Date Renewal of Religious Life, Perfectae Caritatis*, nr 12.

⁹ In praising virginity and chastity in *Prodromus reaginae atrium* (p 64-65), Papczyński, in some way, identifies with the virtue of chastity and states that, chastity is a condition for looking at “the

In presenting such a conclusive virtue, Papczyński does not lose sight of the reality of human nature, and for this reason, he places a great deal of emphasis on natural resources, which help in the preservation of chastity. He places emphasis on the need to die to the flesh, especially thoughts: sight, touch, taste etc. He advises that in a determined way, one is to oppose futile interests and "various occasions", which should be "distant from the monastic person". And since he teaches "chastity is an angelic virtue, and even more so", the best means for keeping one's chastity, is an unending care over "the purity of one's mind and heart", which should only be involved in the search for God. Our Founder concludes that, only those who have trust in the Lord, and not in themselves, will meet with His help in the perfect fulfillment of the vow of chastity.¹⁰

III. Poverty

The positive aspect within the vow of poverty is provided, not so much by the renouncement of something, but by the choosing of a higher value, a more worthy choice. Through this choice, it becomes easier to imitate Christ and leads to concentration on His person, within the context of human existence.¹¹ It seems that it is in this sense that the author of "Inspectio Cordis" calls attention to two basic notions. The first reflects the first principle on which the religious life is based. Papczyński states that, if the realization of one's vocation is the formation of one's whole life as a religious person in line with Christ's example, then this example should be adopted wholeheartedly. And here Papczyński emphasizes the picture of the poor Jesus, who "left heaven and was born in a stable" and had no place "to lay his head" (Lk 9:58). Religious brothers should therefore, strive to imitate Christ in His "nakedness". The second stance implied by the vow of poverty, is the choice of "God as the Greatest Good". Moreover, according to Founder Father's arguments, the vow of poverty, should assist those who are imitating Christ "to concern themselves with spiritual affairs", for they allow the safe "entry into eternal life".

The conclusions that Papczyński advances, are intended firstly to illuminate the wonder of the spiritual gifts and the dangers found in the pursuit of riches, and

purest essence of God". (cf. Mt 5: 8). Ref: also on the subject, Apostolic Exhortation on religious life, *Redemptoris Donum*, #8, 11; K Holda "The Charismatic Ecclesiastical aspect of religious vows" in *Religious Life Within the Structure of the Church*, Rome 1979, p 88-89.

¹⁰ *Inspectio Cordis*, 163-164. Worth noting, that St Ignatius Loyola uses similar words in his perception of religious chastity, when comparing it with angelic chastity. Ref: St Ignatius Loyola, *Chosen Writings. Commentary*, edit M.Bednarz, Krakow 1969, v1, p 420-421.

¹¹ Ref: R. Forycki, "Religious life as a particular method in the realization of the Christian life", from: *The Monastic Apostolic Mission*", Poznań 1987, and p 179.

secondly, to give practical advice, that could help one to keep this vow in an even more pure way. And here he states with determination, that each person has a natural and at the same time “*a well hidden lust for knowledge and yearning for possessions*”. These aspirations are not the tool of some singular person, but they encompass all spheres. And because of this, there exists a real danger of “*entangling our thoughts*” in worldly affairs, rather than in “*spiritual affairs*”. With free will “*instead of pushing away all yearnings for possessions*” and “*reaching out for*” Christ, one can be drawn into the errors of “*greed for riches*”. Rather than “*clinging*” to feelings and yearnings for the “*One Good*”, one can cling to things already formed. Papczyński states that, only in “*owning nothing, one owns everything*”, for God is everything.¹²

In summarizing the thoughts of Founder Father with respect to the three vows of: chastity, poverty and obedience, one must underline how frequently he referred to and mentioned the taking of the vows and to the vows themselves, which gives an indication of how much importance he placed on them. By simply reminding ourselves, they take on the character of deepening the initial act of our subservience to God,¹³ and also mobilizing us to persevere in the search for perfect love. By reminding us of the evangelical and supernatural roots of our vows, for they have their source in the grace of the Holy Spirit, this ensures us that he places religious vocations in a theological context, allowing them to be viewed in a deeply spiritual way.

Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, M.I.C.

¹² *Inspectio cordis*, k. 71-72, 138, 164-166.

¹³ Although in *Inspectio cordis* there is no direct referral to a tradition existing within the Church for frequent or even daily renewal of religious vows, however, in *Norma vitae* (ch. V, 6) Father Founder obligates the Marianans to this practice, speaking thus : “So that you will be mindful of your vocation, and avid for the rewards prepared for those who loyally struggle until death, each day renew your vows privately before the Blessed Sacrament.”

**PRAYER FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF
THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD,
FATHER STANISLAUS PAPCZYŃSKI**

Let us pray that God will raise the Venerable Servant of God, Father Stanislaus Papczyński to the altars and ask his intercession for us with God.

Lord God, You called Your Servant Stanislaus to found the Order of the Immaculate Virgin. Raise him to the altars and let his work grow in his homeland and in the entire Church.

We ask You, hear us, O Lord.

O Lord Jesus, You gave us in Your Servant Stanislaus an example of devotion to the Immaculate Virgin Mary. Give us by his example the grace to imitate her virtues.

We ask You, hear us, O Lord.

O Holy Spirit, You are the inspiration of the Church's shepherds. Teach us, by the example of Your Servant Stanislaus, to be zealous in supporting them as they announce the Gospel to all the nations.

We ask You, hear us, O Lord.

O Lord, Just Judge, You filled the heart of Your Servant Stanislaus with love for the suffering souls in Purgatory. Give us a zeal to remember the departed by our prayer, penitence, and sacrifice.

We ask You, hear us, O Lord.

Most holy and undivided Trinity, You choose to live in the hearts of Your faithful servants, and after their death to reward their merits with the glory of heaven. Grant, we implore You, that Your Servant Stanislaus, who with apostolic zeal faithfully served the Church under the patronage of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, may be numbered among the Blessed, through Christ our Lord. Amen.