C.PP.S. Resources-37

AN ACCEPTABLE TIME



The Method of Popular Missions According to Saint Gaspar del Bufalo

Beniamino Conti, C.PP.S.

Translated by Jerome Stack, C.PP.S.

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MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD
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We urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,
"At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you."
See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!
2 Corinthians 6:1–2

The mission is an extraordinary means of God's providence. Through the mission, our most compassionate father seeks to call people to penance and to a sincere change of their life. Thus, it is called an acceptable time (2 Cor 6:2), in which the Divine Lord abundantly sows his heavenly gifts on souls.

St. Gaspar del Bufalo
Method of the Missions

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Foreword

The mission of St. Gaspar and the first C.PP.S. Missionaries was sharply focused on preaching. From the founding of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1815 until his death in 1837, Gaspar and his confreres devoted themselves almost exclusively to conducting popular missions and retreats. Gaspar, along with Pope Pius VII, was convinced of the need for spiritual renewal in the Papal States after the convulsions of the Napoleonic era and saw the popular mission as an effective means for a spiritual awakening.

Upon returning from four years of exile imposed by Napoleon's regime in Italy, Gaspar intended to join the newly re-established Society of Jesus. Instead, he was commissioned by Pius VII to engage in the work of preaching missions to bring about the needed renewal among the faithful. A year later, Gaspar and three companions founded the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in Giano, Umbria.

In the 22 ensuing years, Gaspar alone conducted some three hundred "extraordinary ministries", missions, retreats, Lenten preaching, etc., about half of which were popular missions. Venerable Giovanni Merlini, Gaspar's close friend and later moderator general of the Congregation, testified that during that same period Gaspar and his Missionaries conducted more than a thousand missions and retreats, mainly in the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples.

Given Gaspar's laser focus on this ministry and its importance in the Congregation for well over a century, it is surprising that the English-speaking world has never had access to our Founder's manual for conducting these missions, published in an 1819 volume entitled simply *Metodo delle Missioni* or *Method of the Missions.* Included in this publication was another treatise on the "works of perseverance," the associations of the faithful that the Missionaries would establish

during the missions so that the spiritual fruits obtained would endure beyond those two weeks of intense spiritual activity.

The present volume presents these two important manuals in English translation along with a translation of Don Beniamino Conti's *The Method of Popular Missions According to St. Gaspar del Bufalo*. A lifelong scholar of Gaspar scholar of Gaspar, Conti presents a very comprehensive thematic overview of Gaspar's missions, based not only on The *Method of the Missions* but also on many other sources, including the correspondence of the Founder.

Also included in this volume is the 1883 revision of Gaspar's 1819 work by Don Enrico Rizzoli, C.PP.S. then moderator general of the Congregation. This work is presented in a revised English translation. Rizzoli based his work in part on revisions to the text of *Method of the Missions* that were made by Gaspar in 1835 and on other revisions made by Ven. John Merlini but never published. Rizzoli also relied on advice from his general council.

What emerges from reading the original documents and Don Beniamino's study is a better understanding of how these missions were planned and structured. Gaspar left nothing to chance. He once remarked that the mission was "a machine that runs like a clock." Indeed, while allowing for the discretion of the Missionaries in the face of diverse circumstances, nearly every hour of the day was scheduled for prayer, preaching, education, the sacraments (especially reconciliation), and other functions. Attention was paid to the needs of all segments of society. He even gave instructions for how the Missionaries were to travel, and how they were to enter and leave the town where a mission was being held.

He and the early Missionaries provided for the ongoing spiritual growth of the people after the mission had ended through the "works of perseverance." These were associations of the faithful that were established for the clergy, and for men, women, boys, and girls. Again, detailed instructions for their structure and functioning were

given to ensure that these associations would effectively sustain and promote spiritual growth.

While circumstances today are different, the goal of parish missions and retreats remains the same: calling people to recognize God's mercy and to live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Gaspar's love for the mystery of the blood of Christ, the great sign of God's mercy, remains strong in the hearts of his Missionaries and C.PP.S. lay associates today.

Notes on the translation

Every translator faces the challenge of rendering the text of another language and culture into a readable text that is faithful to the original. A literal translation has the advantage of fidelity to the original but can be less easily readable. Too free a translation risks introducing the translator's bias into the text.

In translating the historical documents, I have attempted to be as literal as possible without making the text sound too archaic and stilted. I wanted to convey a sense of how Gaspar thought and wrote, even if his vocabulary and style might be a bit more difficult for the modern reader.

The text contains many footnotes, most of which are those of the author, a careful researcher. A number of these references are to material that is not available in English or which is found only in the general archives of the Congregation. In several chapters in which there are many citations of a single source, I have simply noted that any quotation without a footnote is from that source. I have added my own footnotes to explain or clarify items in the text that might be unfamiliar to most readers.

I have left two regularly occurring terms in the original Italian because they are not easily translatable into a satisfactory word or phrase. One is *fervorino*, a generally short and "fervent" talk that appeals to the heart rather than the head. The other is *svegliarino*,

which derives from the Italian *svegliare* which means "to awaken." The *svegliarino* was likewise a short exhortation designed to awaken or rouse the listener, and this often included some sort of activity or function as well. When citing the works of St. Gaspar and others, I have followed the capitalization of words found in the original even when this is not always uniform and would not conform to contemporary English usage.

Quotations from the Bible are generally taken from the Douay-Rheims translation, since this is a translation of the Latin Vulgate that St. Gaspar used.

Acknowledgments

During the preparation of the translation of this volume, the author, Fr. Beniamino Conti, C.PP.S., was called to the fullness of eternal life. Don Beniamino devoted his life to the study of St. Gaspar and the history of the Congregation. His contributions to the knowledge of our Founder are truly immense and have enriched our understanding of St. Gaspar's life and times, his spirituality and his charism.

The publication of this volume would not have been possible without the assistance of several able collaborators. Fr. Jeffrey Kirch, C.PP.S., provincial director of the Cincinnati Province, read an early draft of the text and also offered corrections and helpful suggestions. Fr. Lee Flaherty, C.PP.S. provided careful proofreading of the text, and C.PP.S. Companion Jean Giesige also offered comments and was the able liaison with the Messenger Press. Sherri Thobe of the Messenger Press in Carthagena, Ohio, prepared the final format of the book in preparation for printing and designed the cover.

I want to acknowledge the great contribution of the late Fr. Raymond Cera, C.PP.S., who translated the letters of St. Gaspar and the testimony about Gaspar by Venerable John Merlini. He

made those important resources available to the English-speaking world, giving us the opportunity to encounter our Founder in his own words and in the deposition of his close friend and co-worker.

Finally, I am grateful to the members of our Congregation for their encouragement and support in the ongoing work of the C.PP.S. Resources series. I hope that returning to the sources of our Congregation may move us to a renewed commitment to the charism of St. Gaspar and to our ongoing mission to be ambassadors of God's mercy in our Church and world.

Jerome Stack, C.PP.S.
October 21, 2020
Feast of St. Gaspar del Bufalo

ABBREVIATIONS

AS	*A Saint Scrutinizes a Saint*
Method	*Method of the Missions* (1819 with editing of 1835)
Works	*Method for the Works of Perseverance*
PAA	*Processo Apostolico Albanese per la beatificazione e canonizzazione del Servo di Dio Gaspare Del Bufalo*
POA	*Processo Ordinario Albanese per la beatificazione e canonizzazione del Servo di Dio Gaspare Del Bufalo*
SF	*Scritti del Fondatore* (volume and file number in the C.PP.S.Archives, Rome)

Introduction

St. Gaspar del Bufalo was born in Rome on January 6, 1786. Ordained a priest on July 31, 1808, he was deported to Piacenza, Bologna, Imola, and Lugo during the years 1810–14. He endured this exile because he wanted to remain faithful to Pope Pius VII when Napoleon Bonaparte imposed an oath of fidelity on the clergy holding benefices in the two regions of the Papal States that were the last to be annexed to the Empire: Lazio, and Umbria. He returned to Rome in February 1814, and from that year until his death on December 28, 1837, he dedicated himself to the ministry of the missions and retreats (*esercizi spirituali*), aided by some other diocesan priests, but primarily by members of his Congregation, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, which he founded on August 15, 1815.

In the arc of nearly 52 years of life, St. Gaspar found himself involved in great political upheavals, such as the French Revolution, the hegemony of Napoleon, and the Restoration. These caused profound changes and disturbances in society.

This critical situation of his day is frequently recorded with concern in the writings of St. Gaspar: "I am always aware of the confusion in which we find ourselves in these miserable times."[1] "I weep in the presence of God when I see the sad situation of our times."[2] The Saint denounces the political upheavals provoked here and there by the liberal movement as the causes and excesses of brigandage.[3]

What was most pressing on him, however, were the moral consequences of such upheavals. Because of the influence of the Enlightenment, "piety, education, and dependence on the Church" were in decline.[4] In fact, "the self-styled philosophizing,"[5] as he called the Enlightenment, spread "among the people…a

1 Letter 1770
2 Letter 1165
3 Letters 876, 1168
4 Letter 1167
5 *Method,*

fatal indifferentism in sacred and religious matters."[6] In other periods of the Church "one or the other dogma was attacked, or sacred things were subjected to scorn in one or the other part of the Catholic world. In our miserable times, however, the crisis in the people is a general one, with indescribable perversion of basic principles and of proper living..."[7] In a sermon, he makes a comparison between the faith of the first Christians and the Christians of his age:

> When I think of that epoch in which the first Christians gave witness to our most holy faith in Jesus Christ, Oh, how my heart is filled with the joy and consolation of God! By faith the just conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises (cf. Heb 11:33). Oh, the times, I repeat, of grateful remembrance for the true children of God! But when I think of our miserable days, Oh, how we must now weep at the foot of the Cross...You already understand that I deplore the licentiousness of today. I deplore so many who, closing their eyes to the more resplendent light of Catholic doctrine, find themselves surrounded by the thick darkness of sins, of vices, of lack of respect for religion. The modern method of thinking tells us to think and act against God and the Church. Oh, how human pride attacks the sanctuary, the temple, the tenderest objects of the human heart![8]

This profound religious and moral crisis also concerns the clergy. "The Lord is not happy with his sacred ministers. Ordinations are too greatly accelerated, in short, and in general the clergy are not formed for the life of the spirit."[9]

Gaspar does not stop with just a denunciation. He dedicates himself with all his strength to meet the spiritual needs of the people of his day, calling "souls to penitence and to a sincere change

6 Letter 1270
7 Letter 1215
8 From sermon "At the foot of the Cross" in *Standing at the Cross*, p. 107
9 Letter 1171

of heart…to the holy divine love"[10] with the proclamation of the word of God by means of missions and spiritual exercises. St. Gaspar is convinced that in a time of "fatal [religious] indifferentism" and of a "general crisis" of faith, what is needed is "giving the nourishment of the divine word to all souls."[11] As "the faith was spread already through the ages," by means of the word, so "through [the word] one awaits the renewal [of faith]: So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ (Rom 10:17).[12] The word that St. Gaspar poses again to the people of his day is none other than the word of the Cross: Christ crucified…the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:18, 23-24), which finds its most eloquent expression in the sign of the redeeming Blood.[13] In those times, writes St. Gaspar, in which "people forget the mysteries of redemption and the love of Jesus, who has redeemed us by the price of his Blood, see that [the Church] seeks to inspire in all affection for the Crucified Lord."[14] "In the present times [this is] the devotion and cult of the Divine Blood.[15]" "There is no doubt that devotion to the Divine Blood is the mystical armament of the times."[16]

In the Memorial[17] to Leo XII, St. Gaspar expresses his profound convictions that clearly delineate his pastoral plan:

> There are two things that must necessarily be done nowadays. The first is to find a way of placating the Divine Eternal Father, and we have that in the merits of the Divine Blood…The other is to try to find a way of effectively applying those merits to souls, and this can be done particularly through holy Missions and Spiritual Retreats, as well as other pious programs that are proportionately beneficial for the urgent situation our times.[18]

10 *Method*.
11 Letter 1214
12 Ibid.
13 Cf. Heb 12:24
14 *Method.*
15 Letter 2285
16 Letter 2196
17 Letter 1215
18 Ibid.

To accomplish this he founded the Congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1815, composed of secular priests living in community without the bond of vows, to revive the faith of the people of God and reawakening apostolic zeal in the clergy by means of the preaching of missions and spiritual exercises. He also founded houses, called "Houses of Mission and Spiritual Exercises." These were to be "urban missions," active all year long in those places where there was the greatest spiritual need of the faithful.

1. The choice of the ministry of the popular missions

Why did St. Gaspar choose the specific ministry of popular missions for himself and for his Congregation?

In addition to what has already been said about his conviction of the efficacy of the word of God to bring about personal conversion, an adequate response to this question is to be found in the special charism of the Saint, in the needs of the Church at that moment in history, and in the effectiveness of the ministry of the missions in themselves.

Above all, the choice of the ministry of the missions is to be found in Gaspar's charism. This appears clearly from his letter of January 14, 1814, written from Florence just prior to his return from his years of exile during the Napoleonic regime, to the secretary of the Holy League,[19] who had made an official invitation to the Saint to join the League. Gaspar wrote:

> The undertaking of the Holy Missions has always been the object of my yearnings: I am lacking, it is true, those

19 The secretary of the *Holy League* was Don Antonio Santelli. This association of priests was founded on the feast of Corpus Christi in 1813 under the direction of Don Gaetano Bonanni (1766–1848), later bishop of Norcia. He had begun preaching missions in the Papal States, which were in complete decline following the French occupation. Bonanni founded the Holy League to revitalize the Papal States. The League was also known as the *Work of the Gospel Workers* (*Opera degli Operai Evangelici*), which numbered many Roman priests among its members, including St. Gaspar.

> qualities that are required for such a great ministry; but divine Goodness comforts me, and his ineffable Mercy encourages my spirit. Hence, quite willingly I accept all that you seek to propose to me in your greatly esteemed letter. I thank you for the charity shown toward me by giving me a share in those merits that you acquire by working zealously for the greater divine glory, along with the other most worthy members and Brethren, to whom you will extend these sentiments of mine.[20]

This personal vocation of the Saint was in tune with the pastoral possibilities of the Church in his day. As Meiberg[21] writes, popular missions ceased at the end of the eighteenth century due to political and civil upheavals or government prohibition. Once the political order had been restored at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were taken up again and began to increase through the efforts of secular priests and later by religious congregations both established and newly founded. Following his return to Rome after his imprisonment under Napoleon, Pius VII saw the importance and the value of the missions for the spiritual and moral reform of the people. He promoted and expanded the missionary ministry. It was precisely because of the will of Pius VII that missions were held in the hot spots of the Papal States: Benevento, Frosinone, Civitavecchia, the Marches, and, as we will see, particularly in that part of southern Lazio then called the Province of Marittima and Campagna. It was Pius VII himself who, in September 1814, wanted St. Gaspar to dedicate himself to the popular missions.

In his letters St. Gaspar refers to another motive for choosing the ministry of the missions. Following the suppression of the religious

20 Letter 87.
21 Cf. A. Meiberg, *Historiae missionis paroecialis lineamenta,* s.l. 1953 (mimeographed), 272 pp; B. Peyrous, "Missions paroissiales, "in *Catholicisme,* IX, 419, 427-428.

orders, there were few institutes that dedicated themselves to the ministry of the missions, at least in the Papal States. He writes to Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi[22] in January 1825:

> I give thanks to the almighty that other Institutes render their services and that a holy harmony in doing good work is promoted. But, compelled by the need, I must say that they are able to do very, very little because of a lack of workers, I think. Vocations that involve the taking of vows I find are exceedingly scarce nowadays.[23]

In addition, according to testimony of the history of the missions and his own experience, St. Gaspar saw that the missions and spiritual exercises were, by reason of their pastoral effectiveness, "two great means of spiritual and social reform of the world,"[24] or at least the "principal bases" of the spiritual and social reform of his times.[25] He writes in the *Rule* of his Congregation that the two means of missions and spiritual exercises or retreats "customarily yield abundant fruit."[26] In *Method of the Missions* he states: "The mission is an extraordinary instrument of God's providence. Through the mission, our most compassionate father seeks to call people to penance and to a sincere change in their lives. Thus, it is called an acceptable time (2 Cor 6:2), in which the Divine Lord abundantly sows his heavenly gifts on souls."[27] Thus, the ministry of the missions was chosen because of its

22 Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi (1764–1831), consistorial lawyer, was Auditor of Pius VII (1818) and later, from 1820 to 1828, became the General Treasurer of the Holy See. On December 15, 1828, he was made Cardinal by Leo XII. He had a great admiration for St. Gaspar and was a generous benefactor of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. The copious correspondence between St. Gaspar and Cristaldi is fundamental to the knowledge of St. Gaspar's life and works. Unfortunately, the letters of 1829–1831 have not been found.
23 Letter 1309.
24 Letter 299
25 Cf. Letters 1240, 52
26 *Rule*, article 2
27 In this and subsequent chapters, quotations that are not footnoted are taken from *The Method of the Missions* unless otherwise noted.

effectiveness in promoting conversion and sanctification and because through it one can reach a much larger population.

Finally, by means of the missions, St. Gaspar intended to reawaken apostolic zeal in the secular clergy. "Missions and Retreats give life to so many of the clergy, and in that way, the bishops are assisted well."[28] "I know very well that the giving of holy Missions will be the means adopted for awakening in other priests a holy desire to join the Work,"[29] that is, his Congregation.

There were thus various motivations that spurred St. Gaspar to embrace the ministry of the missions: his personal vocation in obedience to the pope, the effectiveness of announcing the word of God with the possibility of reaching a greater number of people, the assessment that there were then few forces available at the time for such a ministry to sustain it with the greatest number of missions possible, etc. Together these were intended to meet the most pressing needs of the Church and society of his time as effectively as possible.

2. The missionary activity of St. Gaspar and the fruit of the missions

In twenty-two years of his missionary career, St. Gaspar conducted about three hundred "extraordinary ministries" (missions, retreats, Lenten preaching, etc.), of which about half were missions. If one considers the extraordinary ministries of his companions during the same period, "there were more than a thousand [missions and retreats conducted]," according to Don Giovanni Merlini[30] in his testimony for the canonical processes for the canonization of the Saint.[31]

28 Letter 307
29 Letter 130
30 Venerable Don Giovanni Merlini (1795-1873). A priest of the Diocese of Spoleto, in 1820 he joined St. Gaspar and entered his Congregation, in which he held important positions. He assisted St. Maria De Mattias (1805-1866) in founding the Institute of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ. From 1847 to 1873 he was the third moderator general of the Congregation. He died in Rome on January 12, 1873.
31 This is a reference to the process for the beatification and canonization of St.

The missionary activity of St. Gaspar extended mainly to the central regions of Italy that were part of the Papal States and in the Kingdom of Naples, preferably in those areas that were most in need, as we have mentioned earlier and will see in the narrative that follows.

The missions were very fruitful, as witnessed by the letters and the accounts of the various missions, which were carefully examined by Merlini in his depositions for the process of canonization. Here are a few selections from Merlini's comments:

> I will say that the two results that he sought in all of his preaching were for good and practical effects in the life of his neighbor. I know this because he spoke of it continuously and wanted us to preach in such a way as to win souls to God. Constantly did I notice that he would study every possible way of promoting, in this fashion, the glory of the Lord.

> In general, then, I can say that all the missions given by the Servant of God, some more, some less, were accompanied by special heavenly blessings. In every mission that I took part in, I stood in admiration of the powerful hand of God who worked in the hearts of all.

There were the confessions of penitents, especially those of men, who had not received the sacraments for years. There were general confessions of persons who were living a life of continuous sacrilege, and peace was made between families and persons. Weapons and banned books were collected, and there were amazing conversions.

> Besides the general results that the Servant of God sought to bring about through his Missions, the one that stands out remarkably is that of arousing the clergy to lead an apostolic life.

Gaspar in Albano Laziale. The reference can be found in *A Saint Scrutinizes a Saint,* an important resource available in English translation only in the form of a digital manuscript. The quotations in this section are all from that resource, chapter 3.

> I know further that wherever he found priests whom he could take along with himself on Missions, he would do so. I got to know several of them, and, in fact, he managed to invite one or the other bishop to accompany him. Other priests, encouraged likewise by the Servant of God, saw to the continuation of the work that had been initiated during the Mission by means of the various pious groups established, set up according to the needs of the different places.
>
> Animating the clergy was not the only fruit of the Missions. There was also the encouragement of the men to continue to support the oratory. Even where he encountered a shortage of priests, he would try to get one or the other layperson to take care of this pious work.

In the missions many vocations to the priesthood and religious life matured. Merlini emphasizes this often in his deposition.

Finally, the fruit of the missions was also the conversion of so many who belonged to sects such as the Freemasons, the Carbonari, or more generally, to revolutionary movements. The missions preached at Forlimpopoli and Meldola in Romagna in June and July are among the more famous of these.

For the rest, as we have noted before, St. Gaspar went about preaching missions in those areas of the Papal States that were most in need of them. In 1818, Pius VII sent St. Gaspar and his companions to preach missions in the Marches, dens of the Carbonari[32] and Freemasons. Here again is the testimony of Merlini:

> Canon Muccioli told me that Pius VII felt that he had to send either Missionaries or troops there to restore public tranquility and that he had spoken to Monsignor Cristaldi

32 The Carbonari (literally, "charcoal makers") were members of a secret society which advocated constitutional and representative government and the overthrow of absolutist regimes. Although they virtually ceased to exist after about 1830, the ideals of the movement helped to lay the groundwork for the independence movement (the Risorgimento) in Italy later in the century.

about this. The latter, knowing the mind of His Holiness, called to his nephew [Don Antonio Muccioli], urged him to speak immediately to the Servant of God and to arrange for Missions. That was done that very night.

For about two years the field of activity of St. Gaspar and his companions was the Marches and Romagna. He earned the titles of "Apostle of the Marches" and "Hammer of the Carbonari."

Another troubled area in the Papal States was southern Lazio, specifically the part that was then called Marittima and Campagna. The scourge of this zone was brigandage,[33] which no remedy, lenient or severe, was able to overcome. In 1821, Monsignor Cristaldi contrived an unusual plan to stamp out brigandage. In the plan he did not propose special commissions or battalions of police trained to hunt down the criminals who hid in the mountains. Rather, "among the many remedies that have been suggested," he pointed out that "the most opportune and at the same time simplest and of quickest effectiveness" were popular missions, "not infrequent and partial" but "general and with lasting consequences" like the apostolic project of St. Gaspar.

Here we produce much of the text of a valuable document, entitled *Progetto di cultura religiosa e morale per la Delegazione di Frosinone 'The religious and moral project for the Delegation of Frosinone,'*[34] because this gives eloquent testimony to the esteem for the missions held by Pius VII and his closest collaborators in the government of the Papal States.

The roughness, the barbarity, the immorality, the lack of principles, and all the reports of the painful condition of the Province of Marittima and Campagna, which the excellent Monsignor Barberi was accustomed to call brutalized, is

33 Cf. Michele Colagiovanni, *Il brigantaggio nel Lazio meridionale e l'opera di Gaspare del Bufalo,* Rome, 1986.

34 Cf. B. Conti, "Le missioni popolari di S. Gaspare e la Beata Maria De Mattias," in (various authors), *Per il Centocinquantesimo delle Adoratrici del Preziosissimo Sangue*, Rome, 1983, pp. 39-70

noted by everyone. The cause is equally noted, specifically the lack of a religious culture, which is tightly bound to the civil culture.

Among the many remedies that have been suggested, the most opportune and at the same time easiest and quickest is considered to be that of the 'Holy Missions.' Not just any missions, however, not Missions that are infrequent, partial, and ineffective. Rather it is those Missions that are general, energetic, and Missions with permanent results.

To accomplish this, it would be necessary to choose a man who is recognized in this field, who is considered to be the most able, zealous, and effective. I want to speak of the famous Canon Del Bufalo, who, although small in stature is large in spirit and in virtue. He is untiring in his activity, and the results are exceptional. He is renowned, and is called the Apostle of the Marches, the Hammer of the Carbonari, and the Founder of many worthwhile works that are aimed at the religious and moral culture.

He has already founded more houses in the Marches, in Umbria and in Comarca by the sole impetus of his zeal. He could establish *six* houses in the Delegation of Frosinone by command of the Government, making use of some vacant places in Pontecorvo, Terracina, Sonnino, Ceccano, and elsewhere. Each of these houses is staffed by five priests. According to their system, they are assisted by other priests from outside (who, once employed in these Missions and Spiritual Exercises, return to their own houses, but who remain ready to respond when called), one could have twelve missions annually, and thus seventy-two [missions] in two years would cover the entire Province. Later they could spread themselves by cultivating the first seeds in establishing, multiplying and perfection the Works of public instruction, that is Catechism classes, Associations of Youth, Oratories, and the like.

This entire operation is ready now, and is effective and of permanent value, and would not incur significant expense to

> inaugurate, because it would make use of vacant Convents or Monasteries in the Province. Later, an annual budget of 1000 scudi for each of the house would be sufficient, for the maintenance of the five [Missionaries], for their expenses, alms, and prizes awarded (*premiazioni*). In total, then, the sum of 6000 scudi would be needed, which is scarcely one-twentieth of what is now being spent to combat and punish Brigandage, in order to prevent and eliminate [it] at its roots, by civilizing, instructing and nurturing those brutalized populations. If the Government is not happy with spending this, the expense could be offset by wealthier Monasteries, like Trisulti and some others.

The project carries the autograph approval of Pius VII with these words: "Approved, and to Monsignor Treasurer (Cristaldi) for execution. October 8, 1821. Pio PP. VII."

From October 1821 until the fall of 1825, the year when brigandage came to an end in southern Lazio, St. Gaspar centered his missionary activity and that of his Congregation in the Province of Marittima and Campagna, where he undertook various ministries with his Missionaries, and where he founded the planned six mission houses, some of which, however, were short lived. In this way he contributed effectively to wiping out brigandage, and, therefore to the pacification of those populations.

3. The Method of the Missions of St. Gaspar

The basic purpose of this study is not to present the apostolic plan of St. Gaspar for his Congregation, which we have treated elsewhere,[35] nor to reconstruct the history of the missionary activity of St. Gaspar, but to present his method of preaching popular missions.

35 Cf. B. Conti, "The Apostolate of Our Society According to the Charism of Our Founder," in *C.PP.S. Heritage II: Community, Mission, Spirituality*, edited by Jerome Stack, C.PP.S. Carthagena, Ohio: The Messenger Press, 2006, pp. 99-136. This is a translation of the original Italian article that appeared in 1975.

St. Gaspar's *Method of the Missions*, printed in Rome in 1819, is a small work of 104 pages in a format of 12 x 18 cm. This volume deals both with the mission proper and the works that ordinarily would be established for the perseverance of the fruit of the mission.

The *Method*, certainly composed with the help of Canon Don Francesco Albertini,[36] bears the *imprimatur* of the vice-regent of Rome, Monsignor Candido Maria Frattini, and of the Master of the Apostolic Palace, the Dominican Fr. Tommaso Domenico Piazza, who examined the work in the name of the Sacred Congregation of Rites for those parts that pertained to prayer and worship.

St. Gaspar published the *Method of the Missions* after about five years of experience in the ministry of missions. From the end of 1814, when he preached the first mission in Rome in San Nicola in Carcere, his principal activity was giving missions and retreats for the people. He modeled his missionary practice, and thus his *Method*, on the methods and practice of outstanding missionaries who had preceded him in this ministry. In fact, as he addresses his Missionaries in the preface of the *Method*, he writes:

> In the present Little Work, the system of the Holy Missions is to be found. We must adopt it... In following such a system, we are nothing but disciples of the famous Father Segneri the elder and of [Father] Segneri the younger,[37] of Father Pinamonti,[38] of Father Baldinucci,[39] and to say nothing of so

36 Letter 3719 to Albertini. Monsignor Francesco Albertini was born in Rome on June 8, 1770. He was Canon of the Basilica of San Nicola in Carcere, and on December 8, 1808, with the assistance of St. Gaspar, founded the Confraternity of the Most Precious Blood, which was elevated to the status of Archconfraternity in 1815. From 1810 to 1814 he was deported during the Napoleonic occupation of the Papal States. He was the spiritual director of St. Gaspar from 1810-19. He was named bishop of the Diocese of Sezze, Priverno, and Terracina in 1819 and died the same year on November 24.

37 Paolo Segneri the elder (1624- 1694) was a noted Jesuit preacher and moral theologian. His nephew Paolo Segneri the younger (1673-1713) was also a Jesuit, and like his uncle, dedicated himself to the ministry of missions and retreats.

38 Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti, SJ (1632-1703), was involved in the ministry of missions along with the elder Segneri. The latter wrote about Pinamonti's missionary activity in a volume published in 1687.

39 Bl. Antonio Baldinucci, SJ, was roughly a contemporary of the aforementioned

> many others, of Blessed Leonardo of Porto Maurizio,[40] and of Blessed Alphonsus Maria Liguori.[41]

Before beginning a description of the various parts of the mission (entrance, functions, etc.), he qualifies the *Method* in this way:

> Method to be observed in conducting the Missions, extracted from the book *Practice of the Holy Missions* of Father Paolo Segneri, from the work of Father Fulvio Fontana of the Society of Jesus, and from the Lives of St. Vincent Ferrer, of the younger Segneri, of Father Pinamonti, of Father Baldinucci, of Blessed Leonardo, of Blessed di Girolamo,[42] and of Blessed Liguori.

In the *Method*, when he speaks of a particular function or gives some suggestion, St. Gaspar always refers to the source from which he has derived his recommendations to his Missionaries.

Gaspar was inspired by a variety of models of mission without choosing a specific one. This is not simple eclecticism, but a balanced choice of those elements that he considered valid for his times and which, along with his own features, gave specific characteristics to the missions of his Congregation.

During the missionary activity of St. Gaspar, the *Method* of 1819 remained substantially the same.[43] In September 1835 the Saint, while staying in Albano, made some minor changes.

Jesuits (1665-1717). He was also active in the ministry of missions, especially in and around Frascati in Lazio.

40 St. Leonard of Port Maurice, OFM (1676-1751), was a renowned preacher whom St. Alphonsus Liguori called "the great missionary of the 18th century." He was known for spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart and promoting the Stations of the Cross. He died in Rome and is buried in the church of St. Bonaventure on the Palatine Hill He was canonized in 1867.

41 St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787) is probably best known as the founder of the Redemptorists. He was one of the great missionaries of the 18th century and is also famous for his treatises on moral theology. He was canonized in 1839 and later declared a Doctor of the Church.

42 St. Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419) was a famous Dominican missionary. Fulvio Fontana, SJ (1648-1723) was active in the ministry of missions in northern Italy. St. Francis di Girolamo (1642-1716) was a Jesuit whose ministry embraced giving missions in southern Italy. He was canonized in 1839.

43 Testimony of Merlini in AS, Ch. 3.

The aim of this work is to acquaint the reader with the mission of St. Gaspar according to the instructions contained in his *Method*, integrating them, where necessary, with the testimonies derived from his other writing and from other sources. We will begin by giving a brief overview on how St. Gaspar conducted a mission (Chapter I). Next, we will examine the purpose of the mission (Chapter II), and the constitutive elements of the mission in order (Chapters III-VIII). Then we will present the works of perseverance, which he would plant to nurture the maturation of the fruit attained during the mission (Chapter IX). Finally, before the conclusion, we will give a look at the criticisms that were made of some of his missions (Chapter X).

In this volume we are publishing, with absolute fidelity to the original text, the *Method of the Missions* published in 1819, citing in footnotes the corrections made by St. Gaspar to a copy of the *Method* belonging to the Mission House in Albano, in the revision he made in September 1835.[44] Also included are the *Works of Perseverance* and the *Method of the Missions* updated by Moderator General Don Enrico Rizzoli.[45] Rizzoli writes in the presentation of this *Method*, published in Rome in 1883:

> When the first edition of this work had already been out of print for a considerable length of time, our Servant of God, John Merlini of blessed memory, determined to provide a new edition, and he incorporated certain instructions that our Blessed Founder had committed to writing. He added other instructions to these to clarify their meaning and adapt them to the changing circumstances and requirements of the times.[46]

44 There appear to be several printed editions of the 1819 *Method*, all bearing the same date of publication, but with different pagination and some differences in the text.

45 Don Enrico Rizzoli, C.PP.S. (1815-1884), was the fourth moderator general, succeeding Don Giovanni Merlini in 1873. He was a great preacher of popular missions as well as the author of some spiritual works.

46 Cf. the introduction to the 1885 *Method*.

This *Method*, nevertheless, is not the object of our study. After 1883 the *Method of the Missions* was not modified again, even if in practice the Missionaries of the Precious Blood made a variety of changes to the method of preaching their missions.

Chapter 1

The Structure of the Mission According to St. Gaspar

In this chapter we offer a summary description of the mission in its three principal phases: opening, implementation, and closing.

1. The Opening of the Mission

St. Gaspar wanted the opening of the mission to be carried out with the greatest solemnity to dispel any prejudices in the minds of the people and to present it as a time in which the mercies of God were being manifested in a special way.

Prior to the arrival of the Missionaries, the appropriate agreements with the ecclesiastical authorities were made, and the day and hour for the start of the mission were set. The meeting with the missionaries would take place at the entrance to the city, where the bishop or his representative would arrive in procession along with the clergy, the confraternities, and the people. Songs and the solemn ringing of the bells contributed to the festive atmosphere.

The bishop would entrust the crucifix to the director of the mission as a sign of the "entrusting of souls" (*consegna delle anime*). The procession would then go to the principal church while singing the litany of the Blessed Virgin. After the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the singing of the *Veni Creator* and *Ave Maris Stella*, all the missionaries mounted the platform and humbly kissed it. After the hymn *Dio ti salvi Maria,* the missionaries kissed the platform again and then came down from the platform, leaving the director of the mission or another Missionary who would give

the introductory sermon. In the sermon he explained to the people what a mission was, the dispositions needed to receive it, and the fruit that the Lord expected from them. He would also inform them of the schedule for the functions of the mission. After giving the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament, the people returned to their houses reciting the rosary.

After the introduction, some missionaries would visit the bishop, the principal church, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the town, and the communities of religious. About the 24th hour,[47] the *svegliarini* to call the men to the evening oratory would begin. This was conducted according to "the system used in the Oratories of the Oratorian Fathers (*Padri Filippini*), and...of Father Caravita."[48]

This was the ordinary method for the entrance of the mission, but there were possible variations. For example, if the church was not large enough to hold all the faithful, the introduction and Eucharistic benediction could be held outdoors.

2. Conducting the Mission During the Day

To give an account of the implementation of the mission, we must present the schedule of the day and the duration of the mission.

The day of the mission began early (*di buon ora*), that is, at sunrise, with the celebration of Mass, during which a cleric or priest of the place led the recitation of the Chaplet of the Precious Blood.

47 This method of computing time in St. Gaspar's era was called Italian or astronomic time, because it was based on the setting of the sun. A half hour after sunset (in some areas sunset itself) was the 24th hour, and the *Ave Maria* was rung. From that moment the hours of the day were reckoned. The so-called French method, introduced during the French Revolution, began the day at midnight, which was in effect the 24th hour.

48 Fr. Pietro Gravita, popularly called Caravita, was born in 1588 and died in Rome in 1658. He built a chapel next to the Roman College, which eventually came to be known as the Oratory of Fr. Caravita. This Oratory was at the heart of the Urban Mission and one of the more important centers of the apostolate in Rome. St. Gaspar, who attended the Roman College, would have been familiar with the church and its ministry, and at least once gave a retreat there.

Following this came the catechesis on the Ten Commandments, which was not to exceed a half hour, since it was necessary "to have regard for the poor people, who had to be dismissed promptly in order to take care of their work and so that they could be able to come back in time after lunch." A second Mass was celebrated immediately afterward, during which the Rosary was recited. After the Gospel, the Missionary celebrating the Mass would preach a short discourse on Mary, to encourage the people to trust in the protection of the Madonna. He would conclude with an example, offering them some moral instruction. The blessing with the relic of the Madonna concluded the function of the early morning.

The missionaries made themselves available for confessions, except for those who had some special responsibilities, as we will see later.

At ten-thirty, the missionaries, at the sound of the bell, went around the streets singing litanies to gather the children for Christian doctrine, if special reasons did not require transferring this to early afternoon.

At the eleventh hour, catechism would begin in two or more separate churches, one for the girls and one for the boys. St. Gaspar notes:

> In each one, a Missionary will preside, and, with consultation of the Pastors, he will divide the Classes according to those who have made their first Communion, those who are to receive Communion during the mission, and those boys or girls who are to make their first confession. One must not overlook those preparing for Confirmation.

The cleric and the *maestre pie*,[49] if there were any, helped with the catechism. The adults also usually attended this instruction in doctrine, especially the parents of the children. If

49 The *maestre pie*, literally, "pious teachers," were women who belonged to religious communities devoted to the education of girls.

needed, the catechism of the children could be repeated before the afternoon functions.

The catechetical instruction would end around midday. Before lunch the missionaries would have a half hour of personal meditation.

The functions after the midday meal ordinarily would end about an hour before sunset (literally "the 23rd hour"), so that the country folk can return home at a reasonable time.

The catechism for the adults would begin now. This covered the sacrament of penance and, in the final instruction, the dispositions necessary for making a good Communion. The instruction lasted about three quarters of an hour. The grand or great sermon would follow, which was not to exceed an hour in length. The sermon concluded with an act of contrition and nearly always some special function followed, the aim of which was to highlight the teaching that had been given.

The Blessed Sacrament was then exposed, and the Eucharistic blessing was given. The people were dismissed, returning to their homes reciting the Rosary.

Fifteen minutes before the Ave Maria hour, the *svegliarini* for the evening oratory began. This was like a mini mission reserved for men only.

The brothers [of the confraternities],[50] together with a Missionary, began with a short procession with the Crucifix through the streets of the city, singing the praises of the mission, in such a way that different areas of the city would be covered on each night. In one or two places on the route, the Missionary would give one or two *fervorini*, inviting the men to the oratory. The procession then proceeded to the principal church, where one of the missionaries gave a summary of the preaching of the day, finishing with the act of contrition. After the blessing with the Crucifix, the men would

50 When the terms *brother* or *brothers* are used in the text, they always refer to members of the confraternities. References to C.PP.S. brothers will be referred to as *lay brothers* or *brothers-in-service*.

return home, reciting the holy Rosary. Those who wanted to confess remained in the church. The *svegliarini* and the evening oratory would last about two hours. The evening meal and evening prayers of the missionaries followed.

To get an exact idea of the mission of St. Gaspar, one must not only examine how it was carried out each day, but also its duration.

3. The Duration of the Mission

Although the *Method* does not prescribe the duration of the mission, we know that the missions of St. Gaspar ordinarily lasted fifteen days, although he preached some that were longer or shorter. He writes to Don Pietro Ferrante on January 2, 1834: "It seems to me that when the mission lasts fifteen days, that is enough."[51] A mission of eight days does not guarantee the full success of the mission: "The mission of eight days is not feasible, because it lacks the tools and nothing would be brought to a conclusion; just as the faithful are being moved, the missionaries would be departing."[52] In another letter, he laments to Giovanni Palmucci of Offida: "The mission in Offida was too short. One is not able to instruct the people sufficiently."[53]

The mission had two basic divisions: in the first, the faithful were moved to conversion, and in the second, the requirements of a new life in Christ were presented.

Don Giovanni Merlini identifies the sermon on the Madonna as the hinge linking these two divisions, and he notes that it is "around the middle of the mission," when St. Gaspar "moves to the joyful functions (*alle funzioni di allegrezza*)."[54]

Besides the celebrations that took place every day that have already been described, St. Gaspar planned to have conferences for

51 Letter 2014.
52 Letter 1061.
53 Letter 1365.
54 AS, Ch. 3.

various classes of people and sermons in the nearby communities during the first part of the mission.[55]

During the first days of the mission, and for "as many days that will be possible according to the circumstances," St. Gaspar indicated that "there will be special spiritual conferences in the form of spiritual exercises for the various classes [of people] that are adapted to them." Specifying the number of days, St. Gaspar says: "It is not necessary, given the time available, for these to be prolonged to be done well. Sometimes three days are sufficient, and with smaller populations, it will be enough for a single day for each group."

During the morning, at a time previously established, the interested group would gather in a church. After some brief spiritual reading from a book suitable for the audience, a Missionary would give the instruction. If two Missionaries were available, the conferences were held in two different churches at the same time, one for the women and one for the men. If only one Missionary was available, he had to speak to the men and women at different times.

> The classes to which the conferences are directed are the Nobility (*Signori*), the Merchants, etc. The Missionaries will organize this arrangement according to the needs of the People. They are not to neglect speaking to the Nuns and in the Schools for Girls (*Conservatori*)...nor omit the exercises for the Clergy.

The conferences for the various categories of men could be held at the Ave Maria hour, that is, in the evening, while the other men were attending the oratory. For the conferences for the clergy, which would begin the day after the introduction to the mission, a time that is most convenient for them was to be chosen.

Among the meetings with the special categories of people we can also mention visits to the sick, to the imprisoned, and to soldiers. These could take place during the function of the first morning.

55 Cf. *Method*.

Besides these conferences, St. Gaspar recommended "visiting sermons" in the parishes of the towns near the central place of the mission, inspired by the method of Fr. Paolo Segneri. These visiting sermons could be implemented in two ways. If the towns were near, the missionaries would go there in procession from the center of the site of the mission. In the church of the parish being visited, a Missionary would give the sermon, after which a procession would return. If the towns were at a distance, a Missionary would go there with one or two men, ecclesiastic or lay, who were delegated to assist the missionaries in some ministries during the mission, and who were therefore called assistants (*deputati*).

The people being visited would be met at the entrance of the town, and a procession to the church followed. There the Missionary gave the sermon, which concluded with the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. He then returned to the town where the mission was taking place.

The parishes visited in turn would go with their pastors to the mission. In this case it was expected that a ceremony to welcome them would take place: A Missionary waited for the procession at the entrance of the town and they went together into the church, where the guests would have a separate place.

St. Gaspar writes that these visiting sermons pulled people in "like so many lines leading to the center," and the grace of the mission would flow to a greater number of souls. In the revision of the *Method*, at the end of the paragraph regarding the visiting sermons, St. Gaspar added that on the occasion of these sermons, one could "bless and erect the large cross in memory of the mission."

If the first part of the mission was mainly a time for sowing, the second was characterized above all by working for the harvest. The harvest had several aspects.

Special attention was given to the sacrament of penance. It is true that St. Gaspar prescribed that the missionaries hear confessions after the functions of the morning, without further specification, but ordinarily on the first days of the mission the missionaries were engaged in meetings with various groups and in the visiting sermons. For this reason, it was mainly during the second part of the mission, or after the first days, that a greater number of penitents began to pour in. Merlini says: "Sometimes the crowd of penitents began immediately after the introduction, but more frequently, one began to see this after the first functions of penitence."[56]

Here we can discuss also the so-called "*svegliarini di semina*" (*svegliarini* of the seed) of the second part of the mission. Like the other *svegliarini*, this took place in the evening. St. Gaspar writes: "during the mission, or at least before the missionaries leave, the *svegliarino di semina* usually takes place." The missionaries, accompanied by a single priest, would disperse to sites in the town. At the sign of the bell all the missionaries would preach, encouraging those who were still hesitant to participate in the mission.

On the mornings of the final two days of the mission the general Communions of the women and of the men would take place. For the Communion of the women, there was no prescribed special procession. For the men, a procession of the confraternities with their special garb was prescribed. The rite was implemented with great solemnity and only those who would be making the general Communion would participate.

Here we include among the tasks of the second part of the mission some additional activities that St. Gaspar places after the closing of the mission. However, he offers the option of conducting them before the sermon of reminders, if the missionaries had to leave immediately at the end of the mission.

On the morning of the first day after the mission, Communion

56 AS, Ch. 3; cf. Letter 2105.

was taken to the sick in a solemn way. The Bishop was invited to participate in this. During the distribution of Communion, offerings for the poor were collected. After lunch, there was a solemn procession with the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of the city, "with the equipment (*apparato*) used for the Corpus Christi procession."

On the second morning, first Communion was administered to the children, who had been prepared by a day of retreat. The ceremony took place "with solemn pomp, because this is the day of the solemn wedding of the soul with Jesus Christ." After lunch, there was the procession of the Madonna. During this procession, there were some *fervorini*, "to encourage the people to have devotion to Mary." The procession headed to the place fixed for the erection of the memorial cross of the mission. Here, the cross was blessed, and a Missionary gave a *fervorino*, reminding everyone that beneath the cross Mary received us as her sons and daughters, and therefore one must "remain embracing the cross," in order to live "united always in the heart of Mary." The procession concluded in the church with the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament.

An important task of the second part of the mission was also the organization of the works of perseverance. These consisted mainly in associations for the various categories of persons. They had as their aim the spiritual and apostolic formation of their members. Here is Merlini's testimony:

> During a mission or at its close, he would see to establishing the various organizations, that is, of the apostles for the clergy, of St. Francis Xavier for the men, of the sisters of charity for the women, of St. Aloysius for the boys, and of the daughters of Mary for girls. He did this as best he could and as circumstances allowed. He had a special concern for establishing the nightly oratory for the men. With these organizations, he managed to perpetuate the fruits of the holy mission.[57]

57 AS, Ch. 3.

4. The Close of the Mission

The close of the mission took place on the morning after lunch of the final day of the mission. The entire function was typically called the "sermon of reminders (*predica dei ricordi)*." If the ceremony took place outdoors, two spaces were prepared, one for the women and one for the men. The clergy and the civil authorities had a special section. The confraternities participated with their distinctive garb. An anvil was prepared in a central place to smash the weapons. A large fire was also kindled for prohibited books, pornographic images, and playing cards. This material was brought by the faithful or collected on various trips through the taverns. Card playing was often an occasion for fights, for homicides, and thus the cause of hatred and of deep-seated vendettas.

Once the people had been gathered in their respective places, the weapons were broken, and the books and cards were burned, while the praises of the Madonna were being sung. The crucifix was exposed on the platform, along with the paintings of the Madonna of the Missions and of St. Francis Xavier.[58] When the weapons had been broken and the books and cards had been burned, the director of the mission gave the sermon of reminders. Then all the missionaries mounted the platform and kissed it, signifying that with this gesture they were "kissing the ground made holy by the Missions."

Immediately afterwards, the Missionary who had given the sermon of reminders put on surplice and stole[59] and blessed the

58 The image of the Madonna St. Gaspar took on the missions is described thus in the *Rule*: "The blessed Virgin Mary carries in her arms the baby Jesus and presents him for the veneration of the faithful. Jesus holds the chalice of his Precious Blood in his right hand and presents it mother. The Blessed Virgin invites sinners to make use of that medicine, prepared for men and women with burning love to destroy sin and restore virtue. (*Rule*, Ch. 6). Conti has written an article on the painting, which can be found in *C.PP.S. Heritage II: Historical Studies*. Carthagena, Ohio: The Messenger Press, 2005, pp. 239-252.

59 During the mission, the missionaries always wore the Crucifix on the breast and never wore a surplice or stole. The meaning of putting on the surplice and

people with the image of St. Francis Xavier and of Mary Most Holy and, finally, with the Crucifix. "During these final moments, he would have them ring the church bells festively and even permitted the people to play instruments, and shoot off firecrackers, if this was their custom."[60] Then the Blessed Sacrament was carried in, the *Te Deum* was solemnly sung, and the Eucharistic blessing was imparted.

If the ceremony could not be held outdoors, the weapons would be broken, and the books and cards burned outside the church, and the rest took place inside.

Now that we have described how in general the mission was implemented according to St. Gaspar, we now turn to examine the various elements that made up the mission. First, we will examine the goal that St. Gaspar wanted to accomplish through the ministry of missions.

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stole at that moment [at the introduction to the mission] was explained by Merlini: "In that case, he would explain the meaning of the surplice and stole, and he would focus his remarks on penance by which souls are made beautiful and sanctified. Then, he would remove the stole and surplice and announce that he would put them on again at the end of the mission after the souls have been sanctified through the sacred, penitential cleansing" (AS, Ch. 3).
60 Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE GOAL OF THE MISSION ACCORDING TO ST. GASPAR

In the Preface of the *Method of the Missions* St. Gaspar speaks of the aim that he expected to achieve with his missions. Addressing his missionaries, he writes:

> The evils of the times in which it has pleased that we live make the Holy Missions even more necessary! Moral laxity (*la perversione delle massime*), the corruption of the heart, the self-styled 'philosophy' – Oh, what a gloomy image they present to us! Holy mother Church weeps inconsolably at these, and raising her voice to Heaven, she tirelessly is concerned with calling souls to penitence and to a sincere change of heart. Because the Mysteries of Redemption and the love of Jesus, which has redeemed us at the price of Blood, have been so forgotten, see, [the Church] seeks to inspire in all the affection for the Crucified Lord. God, who in the treasures of his infinite mercy does not cease to stir up the holy divine Love in souls, willed and arranged that the Roman Pontiff Pope PIUS VII would institute an Archconfraternity under the glorious Title of the MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD, whose special task would be to spread the glories of our holy Redemption. The irreverent system (*il sistema d'impietà*) would like us not to care about the Crucifix or, therefore, the one who gives it glory. Let the untiring zeal of the just, animated by a burning desire to humiliate the Devil, oppose the insults of sinners.
>
> How better could this be accomplished than by the Apostolic Ministry of the Missions? Ah, my venerable confreres...God

> calls you to such an important work. Oh, how dear to the Divine Heart are the labors you sustain for the conversion of sinners. How great is the joy that you show in cleansing the penitent souls in the Blood of the innocent Lamb *slain from the beginning of the world* (cf. Rev 13:8)!

In these words, we have described the goal of the mission according to St. Gaspar: "calling souls to penitence," "to a sincere change of heart," "to stir up the holy divine Love" for "the glories of our holy Redemption." The Missionary must devote his labors to "the conversion of sinners;" the Missionary should rejoice in "cleansing penitent souls in the Blood of the innocent Lamb."

We can, then, confidently state that for St. Gaspar the aim of the mission was the conversion of the heart and the sanctification of souls, prepared for by the enlightenment of the mind in the fundamental truths of the faith, as we will see in chapter four.

1. Conversion and Sanctification of Souls

This is the fundamental aim of the mission of St. Gaspar, and there is ample evidence for this.

Here are some brief descriptions of the nature of the mission, taken from the *Method*. St. Gaspar calls the mission "fishing for souls;" "the great ministry of collaborating in the salvation of souls." It is

> ...one of those extraordinary means of God's providence. Through the mission, our most compassionate father seeks to call people to penance and to a sincere change in their lives. Thus, it is called *an acceptable time* (2 Cor 6:2), in which the Divine Lord abundantly sows his heavenly gifts on souls... "our holy ministry... has multiple relationships and goals related to the sanctification of the people.

Citing St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio, St. Gaspar said that "If conducting one Mission should result in the prevention of a single venial sin, what a great good work that would be!"[61]

Moreover, the choice of topics from catechisms and the great sermons, the hymns, the *svegliarini,* and the functions, aimed at urging the faithful to conversion, as we will see in the following chapters.

We recall especially his insistence on the act of contrition, with which he would conclude the great sermon, the discourse of the evening oratory, and the *svegliarino* of the seed with which the missionaries would encourage "sinners to conversion by warning them that the mercies of God must not be despised!"

The penitential procession and the functions that took place at the end of the great sermon and in the oratory are intended to do the same.

Finally, the aim of the mission as the conversion and sanctification of Christians appears in St. Gaspar's description of the character of the Missionary. He states that

> ...he is a man sent by God *to give his people knowledge of salvation* (Lk 1:77). He is a visible angel sent to bring divine messages to the people... He is the mystic trumpet of the Lord calling those who have strayed to return to repentance. He encourages those already converted and leads the just to greater sanctity..."[62]

Merlini affirms that all of the apostolic aims of St. Gaspar were directed to the spiritual good of souls: "I know this because he spoke of it continuously and wanted us to preach in such a way as to win souls to God. Constantly did I notice that he would study every possible way of promoting, in this fashion, the glory of the Lord."[63]

The conversion or penitence that St. Gaspar preached in the missions, and for which he implored supernatural help, had to bring

61 "Letter 3062.
62 Circular Letter 9, 1835.
63 AS, Ch. 3.

the faithful to the joyful experience of a life lived in communion with God or to helping them persevere in that communion.

All were the intended beneficiaries of the mission: those near and far. All were to benefit "from the holy time of the mission." The Missionary not only had to "call souls to penitence and a sincere change of heart," but also to stir them to "holy divine love," in this way obtaining the greater glory of God.

The instruction on the Decalogue, the conferences for the various categories of persons and the great sermons had as their principal aim to enlighten the faithful, making them aware of their obligations, so that they would be steadfast in the practice of the good and be encouraged to be involved in the apostolate (*animarli all'apostolato*).

Marian devotion, which St. Gaspar so highly recommended to the people to motivate them "to trust in the protection of Mary, through whose prayers the Most High grants us every grace," was intended to make sure that the faithful, out of love for Mary, would make "a complete change" in their lives, remaining always united in her heart as the beloved sons and daughters at the foot of the Crucified.

But the mission of St. Gaspar would have been like fire in straw if he had not provided for the works of perseverance to maintain and solidify the benefits obtained during the mission. These works were ordinarily entrusted to the care of the local clergy, as we will see.

We have stated that the intended targets of the mission of St. Gaspar were all people, but we must also say that he especially targeted priests: "Missions and Retreats give life to so many of the clergy, and in that way, the bishops are assisted well."[64]

2. Devotion to the Precious Blood

The mission of St. Gaspar also had another objective: to spread the devotion to the Most Precious Blood. He writes to Don Gaetano Bonanni on March 1, 1815:

64 Letter 307.

> Msgr. Cristaldi has been begging me to put our community under the title of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus. He makes this observation with every good reason. The Evangelical Workers labor so that the Blood of Jesus will be applied to the salvation of souls, and this they must offer continually, asking for pardon for sinners; if other Institutes assume the charge of propagating the one or the other devotion, this one of the Missions must be intent on the propagation of that devotion which incorporates all the others, that of the Price of our Redemption.[65]

This intention is spelled out in the *Method of the Missions* as well, with phrases that are more or less explicit: "Because the Mysteries of Redemption and the love of Jesus, which has redeemed us at the price of Blood, have been so forgotten, see, [the Church] seeks to inspire in all the affection for the Crucified Lord." The Crucifix was in fact the great sign of the mission of St. Gaspar.

Devotion to the Precious Blood in the missions was instilled by means of the daily recitation of the chaplet of the Precious Blood and of the Seven Offerings, which, as he writes in the *Method* of 1819, was to "stir the fervor of the people for this tender devotion even more." Also recited was the ejaculation *Eternal Father,* which was always recited with the people before the morning catechism and in the afternoon, along with praises in honor of the Divine Blood.

The high point for the public devotion to the Precious Blood was the day in which preaching on the Precious Blood took place. The solemn procession of the dead Christ took place during the evening oratory. All the confraternities participated in it, and the clergy wore red vestments. The coffin of Christ was decorated with flowers. Many lights were carried by the participants or were placed in the windows of the houses along the route of the procession. The bells rang festively. The streets echoed with songs of praise to the Blood of

65 Letter 105.

Christ. What was the aim of the procession? St. Gaspar writes: "[it] stirs the people to divine love." "The intention of this procession is to offer compensation for injustices and public scandals which have profaned Jesus, who has redeemed us with his Blood."

The flowers that adorned the coffin were a sign of "virtues by which a soul arrives at the garden of the Lord's delights." "If the sinner sought to revile Jesus with his malice and impiety, now, with grateful pomp, which is the fruit of the love for the Divine Lord that has grown, Jesus is glorified and blessed…and with the solemn sound of the bells, the people are called to bless the Blood of Jesus, by which we have been saved. At the end of every *svegliarino* there will be a song: *We beseech you, therefore, help your servants whom you have redeemed by your Precious Blood."*

> St. Gaspar concludes the description of this function with this summary:
>
> Thus, this function will lead that soul to the illuminative or unitive way after passing through the purgative way, according to its need. It serves, moreover, to promote the loving devotion to the Blood of Jesus Christ, whom we will bless a hundred and a thousand times. Through these Religious acts, [the Blood of Jesus] receives compensation for the insults he receives from the wicked.

The aim of this function, therefore, was to prompt in the hearts of the faithful a loving response to the love that Jesus showed in the gift of his Blood.

The loving devotion, fixed in the hearts of the faithful during the mission in a continuous crescendo and taught by appropriate preaching, was solidified at the end of the mission with the institution of the Pious Union of the Most Precious Blood, which all were invited to join.

The aim of the mission according to St. Gaspar, then, is conversion from sin, the sanctification of souls, and spreading the devotion to

the Most Precious Blood by the appropriate proclamation of the word of God. We could also add that devotion to the Precious Blood was not something that was added to the conversion and sanctification of the faithful but was the domain in which the conversion and sanctification took place. St. Gaspar harks back to this idea often in his writings. In a circular letter to his missionaries on the occasion of the annual spiritual exercises, he says:

> [Jesus] offers us the Red Sea, a symbol and type of the mysteries of his Precious Blood. It is in that Blood that we find provisions for our welfare. The mystical soil of souls, arid because of sin, is cultivated and watered. A way is prepared for the sinner by which he may go out of Egypt, image of this wicked and desert-like world. To the penitent person, as well as to those souls burning with love for Jesus, he gives a motivation and an incentive even to become shipwrecked in that mystic sea, thus spelling out another victory for the bountiful and divine Redeemer of all.[66]

Thus, the Missionary of the Precious Blood, himself formed by the Blood of Christ, must spread his spirituality in the mission, so that "when people recall such an important devotion, it prods them to rise from the fatal sleep of spiritual death which oppresses them."

> By means of the application of this inestimable price by which we are redeemed, may the sinful soul find the sacred and religious motivation to hope for mercy and pardon; may the penitent find in this [price] inspiration to grow in the virtues and in holiness; and finally, may the just person find a most ardent zeal to save souls for the Lord.67

66 Circular Letter 8.
67 From "Exhortation for the Month of the Divine Blood," in *C.PP.S. Heritage II*, pp. 82-83.

CHAPTER III

THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE MISSION OF ST. GASPAR

In the preceding chapter we saw that the aim of the mission of St. Gaspar was to enlighten the faithful with the truth of faith to lead them to conversion and sanctification, bringing them to stand with Mary at the feet of Christ Crucified, so that they would receive the saving effects of the Divine Blood for their own benefit and that of others.

How did St. Gaspar reach this aim? To respond to this question means to enumerate those elements in St. Gaspar's mission that constitute the "multiple relationships and goals related to the sanctification of the people." It seems to us that one can identify these "multiple relationships" in the following elements: supernatural action, missionary preaching, the functions, the sacraments, the witness of the missionaries, the organization of the mission, and the establishment of works to promote perseverance in living a good life.

We begin our examination of the nature of these elements and how they function to accomplish the purpose of the mission with the "presence" of the supernatural.

By the term "supernatural" we mean all that St. Gaspar asked or suggested in his mission as a way of imploring from on high the grace suitable for the mission. St. Gaspar knew very well that it is in vain for a human to build if God does not also build. Thus, in various ways he asked God for the grace of conversion and sanctification not only for himself, but also for the faithful with whom he ministered.

1. Prayer

First, he asked for the grace suitable for the mission in prayer. St. Gaspar offered this advice to his missionaries: "Never do anything without prolonged prayer and deliberation."[68] Every day the communities of missionaries would pray for the success of the holy missions. St. Gaspar asked for prayer from his correspondents. For example, he writes to Giovanni Battista Tobia on July 25, 1830: "I ask that you do not fail to pray for me and have others do so too, as well as for our holy Missions. You know that prayer is the key to heavenly treasures and through it come the illuminations, the affections, and the energetic activities of divine glory."[69]

Above all, it was the missionaries, preachers of the mission, who had a very special obligation to pray. They were to refrain from looking at "unusual things" (*cose curiose*) in the places where they exercised their ministry, but they could express "sentiments of religion in visiting the sanctuaries, praying for the great abundance of divine blessings in them." Regarding the functions of the mission, Gaspar writes: "The one who oversees this ministry should make great use of prayer, and he will see how God accompanies him with the sweet abundance of his mercies."

Besides the missionaries, the faithful where the mission was held were charged with praying to obtain the grace of conversion and of sanctification from the Lord.

The missionaries would make courtesy visits to the authorities of the town where the mission was to be held immediately after the opening of the mission so that they "may organize everything to assure the public order that ought to be specially observed in these days, and all else for the glory of the Most High." They would ask them for the aid of special prayers. Prayer is also requested explicitly from the "principal Priests of the clergy" and from the "Superiors of religious communities." The missionaries were to ask "all of them for

68 Letter 3224.
69 Letter 2062.

the spiritual assistance of Prayers." The same is asked of monasteries of nuns and from the academies for girls: "particular prayers for the benefit of souls are to be placed before the Throne of the Most High." "Each morning the litany of the Most Holy Madonna was to be added in the public choirs, and at Mass, the Collect *pro petitione lacrymarum* 'to ask for tears' or *pro remissione peccatorum* 'for the remission of sins" was to be recited.

In addition to these special categories, all the faithful united their prayers to achieve the desired aim. During the mission, the town took on the aspect of a praying community, not only in the various religious functions that were taking place, but also from the frequent prayer that resounded in every street. St. Gaspar, in fact, wanted the faithful to recite the Rosary as they returned to their homes after the afternoon functions and after the evening oratory. He also set aside one evening of the mission, preferably coinciding with the preaching on death, in which the bells tolled for an hour for sinners who were still resistant. During that time the faithful were instructed by the missionaries to pray for unrepentant sinners.

2. Mediators

These prayers were strengthened through the intercession of the Precious Blood, of the Holy Madonna, of St. Francis Xavier, and of the souls in purgatory.

The chaplet of the Precious Blood, which would be recited during the first Mass in the morning, aimed at "inspiring the people to hope for every benefit from the Eternal Divine Father, by means of the inestimable price of our Redemption, which is offered on the Altar in the bloodless Sacrifice."

The aid of the Holy Spirit and in a special way of the Holy Virgin was urgently prayed for, to the extent that one could say that the mission of St. Gaspar had a distinctive Marian character.

From the very beginning of the mission the relic of the Madonna was exposed "to commend the Apostolic Ministry to the maternal heart of so sweet a Mother." Every morning, after the Mass with the Rosary, the people were blessed with the relic of the Madonna while singing: "I ask you, dear Mother, from heaven, bless my soul," At the central point of the mission, the image of the Madonna of the Missions was presented and kept on display on the platform; before it many lights were kept burning, and into St. Gaspar "entrusted the mission" into her hands.[70] At the end of the mission, the Christian community remained united "in the heart of Mary."

St. Francis Xavier, whom St. Gaspar had chosen as the patron of the missions, was called on to reach the goal of the mission. Devotion to St. Francis Xavier was "to obtain the protection of the saint over our holy Missions."[71] Many times during the missions St. Gaspar experienced the extraordinary intercession of Xavier through various miracles: "One cannot describe how prodigious is our apostle of the Indies. In a special way, God is given glory through him."[72] For this reason, St. Gaspar prescribes that each morning an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be are to be recited in honor of St. Francis Xavier, protector of the missions. In the evening as well, before the little procession of the brothers of the confraternities to conduct the *svegliarini* would depart, an Our Father was recited to invoke the protection of St. Francis Xavier.

Sometimes during the course of preaching at the oratory, St. Gaspar would give some example from the life of Xavier or would bless the holy water of the saint for the sick.[73] An image of St. Francis Xavier was displayed daily on the platform along with the Crucifix.[74] In the revision of the *Method*, he prescribed that there also be a

70 AS, Ch. 3.
71 Letter 2010.
72 Letter 776.
73 AS, Ch. 3.
74 Ibid.

sermon on St. Francis to show all – priests, religious, and lay people – a model of apostolic zeal.

The souls in purgatory were also asked to pray that the mission bear spiritual fruit. In the *Method* Gaspar writes:

> Also contributing to the greater glory of God is celebrating the Holy Mass for the Souls in Purgatory for the benefit of the Holy Missions, without receiving a stipend from anyone. Therefore, during the Introduction one should tell the People that the Holy Mass is being offered for the good of the Mission and that in the Blood of the Innocent Lamb, who offers himself on the Altar, abides all our hope.

The great success in accomplishing the goal of the mission was due to prayer strengthened by the merits of the Divine Blood, the intercession of Mary Most Holy, of St. Francis Xavier, and of the souls in purgatory. St. Gaspar was well aware of this:

> Up to the present time there has not been a single Mission given by our men which has not been accompanied by heavenly blessings, thanks to the merits of the Divine Blood... However, we will not cease praying, since the glories of the ministry are the noble products of prayer and humility. All ultimately redounds to the greater glory of God, *a quo omnia etc.*[75]

Thus, he also invited his missionaries to give thanks to God for the benefit of the missions: "Let us give thanks to God for the good achieved and the fruits of the Missions. *Ipsi enim honor et Gloria* 'to him be honor and glory.' It is God who makes us fit for the ministry."[76]

Prayer, the fundamental condition for realizing the aim of the mission, was also requested for perseverance in the fruits of the mission. St. Gaspar writes to Don Rafaelle Rosati: "It is the obligation of the one who conducts the Mission there to pray always

75 Letter 1010.
76 Letter 1576.

for permanence in the fruits of the holy Mission."[77] To Don Pietro Spina: "Let us pray for perseverance *ut fructus maneat* 'that the fruit may endure.' This too is one of our obligations."[78] Just as he asked his friends to pray for graces before the mission, he likewise sought prayers for the perseverance of the fruit of the mission. He writes to a religious, Mother Maria Nazzarena de Castris, for whom he was spiritual director: "At least through prayer, be of help in achieving great fruit in our holy Missions *ut fructus maneat*."[79]

3. Penance

Prayer for the fruit of the mission had to be confirmed by the practice of penance or mortification. St. Gaspar writes: "Whoever engages in the Missions must keep in mind that he may suffer to gain souls for Jesus Christ. He will exercise mortification by abstaining from viewing those things that pique his curiosity in the places where he exercises the ministry."

The use of the discipline by the Missionary at some moments of the mission had this aim: "to make war on sin" and to humbly implore the divine mercies for souls.

Sometimes individual men were asked to perform some penitence for a particular aim, which was always within the goal of the mission. Thus, on one evening during the evening oratory, the men were made to kiss the ground many times. The *svegliarini* on one evening became a penitential procession.

By means of prayer, confirmed by some penitential practice, and by means of the mediation of the Precious Blood, of the Madonna, of St. Francis Xavier, and of the holy souls in purgatory, St. Gaspar begged God for the grace of the spiritual success of the mission and for its the enduring fruit.

77 Letter 1756.
78 Letter 2315.
79 Letter 2109.

CHAPTER IV

PREACHING IN THE MISSION OF ST. GASPAR

The second element that constitutes every mission is preaching. It is a fundamental element of the mission of St. Gaspar.

St. Gaspar had a strong faith in the effectiveness of the word of God. He used to say that in a time of "fatal [religious] indifferentism" and the general crisis in faith, that there was a need "to give all of the souls...the nourishment of the divine word," "because the faith has been spread among the people" by means of the word, so by means of the word "we can look forward to a renewal: *fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi* 'faith comes from hearing, but hearing through the word of Christ (Rom 10:17).'"[80] Preaching the word, therefore, was necessary both so that the faith is spread among the unbelievers, and so that is revived among people already converted to the Gospel.

With these words, Gaspar was certainly referring to the two forms of missionary preaching: first, to preaching in the foreign missions, which have the fundamental aim of building the church among those people where it does not already have roots. Secondly, it refers to the internal missions, which have as their principal aim "the revival of the faith" among those who are already Christian.

We are interested only in the second form of missionary preaching, although St. Gaspar did envision foreign missionary activity for his Missionaries.[81] So what was preaching like in the missions of St. Gaspar?

80 Letter 1214.
81 *Rule*, art. 33.

We will reply to this question by examining the various moments in which the word of God was proclaimed during the mission. In the early morning, this would be the catechism and presenting the example of Mary, which would be open to all. Later in the morning would be the children's catechism. In the afternoon, catechism for the adults and the great sermon were given. There were more *svegliarini* and the evening oratory for the men alone. In addition, there were conferences given to various categories of people and the visiting sermons. We will treat the *fervorini* given during the general Communions and in the Communion to the sick in chapter six.

1. Catechism and the Example of Mary

Immediately after the first Mass of the morning, the *catechism of the Decalogue* took place. In the *Method*, Gaspar writes: "[The missionary] will begin by explaining the precepts of the Decalogue, the subject for instruction in the morning." He does not say explicitly the intended aim of this catechetical instruction, but it is obvious that he wanted to remind the faithful of the fundamental obligations of the Christian life. The catechism instruction aimed at enlightening the mind, given the use of the verb "explain" and the noun "instruction," rather than moving the heart and the will, even though this aim would not be ruled out automatically. For this reason, St. Gaspar did not prescribe a special function for the catechism, because, as we will see, such functions were principally aimed at moving the heart and will through feelings (*sensibilità*).

St. Gaspar wanted the catechism to present material that was not subject to debate. The explanation was to be clear and with a balanced delivery (*con tono posato*). He writes to Don Raffaele Rosati on February 22, 1831, giving him some advice on how to present the catechism: "You are to avoid anything that is questionable. Your delivery should not have the tone of a sermon, but one that is

relaxed, instructive and dignified, presenting practical cases, as you can well imagine."[82] Elsewhere, St. Gaspar is more precise and adds:

> [In giving catechism instructions], one must have as a basic principle never to use the pulpit for treating topics that are debatable, for the pulpit is to be used only for explaining those things that are certain and incontrovertible. In the second place, one must have read well and meditated on the Council of Trent, the Roman Catechism, drawing from those teachings the things that are adapted for the instructions.[83]

The *example of Mary* was, as we know, a short discourse on the Madonna, which the Missionary would give during the second Mass of the morning. With this discourse he would encourage the people "to trust in the protection of Mary Most Holy, through whose prayers every grace is given to us by the Most High." The Missionary had to relate "an example from the life of Mary, followed by some brief moral teaching."

The *catechism for children*, ordinarily held in the late morning, aimed mainly at instructing young people about the truths of the faith, either to prepare them for the sacraments, or to deepen their understanding of these truths. Preference was to be given to following the text of the *Dottrina Cristiana* of St. Robert Bellarmine. St. Gaspar reminded his missionaries to advise "the fathers and mothers, who are usually present for the classes, to listen to the explanation of Doctrine, so that at home they insist on the repetition needed in order better to impress on the minds of their children what has been explained." Such catechetical instruction "is very useful for adults as well, who have either forgotten or who were ignorant of the catechetical material, and who now acquire the necessary knowledge in the classes."

82 Letter 2126.
83 Letter 232.

This catechetical instruction, therefore, while having as its principal aim teaching the truths of the Christian faith to children, and secondarily reminding adults of the doctrine they had already learned, was a valuable pastoral catechetical practice for the clergy and was the start of the schools of Christian Doctrine, which St. Gaspar left behind as a work for the perseverance of the fruits of the mission, as we will see in chapter nine.

The *catechism* that took place in church in the afternoon before the great sermon was directed toward everyone. St. Gaspar indicates that: "The subject of catechetical instruction will be the Sacrament of penance, and in the final instruction, the subject should be the dispositions necessary for receiving Communion worthily." This catechism was to instruct the faithful on the two sacraments that were the immediate goals of the Mission: reconciliation and communion. The instructions intended to recall the conditions for a valid, licit, and fruitful reception of these sacraments, especially of the sacrament of penance, which took up nearly all the time set aside for this catechetical instruction.

2. The Great Sermon[84]

The central moment in preaching of the mission was certainly the great or general sermon. It was the axis of the mission.

For the choice of topics, St. Gaspar offers the following suggestions:

> As much as possible, the sermons should draw on topics from the golden book of spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. One should never omit, beyond preaching on the eternal maxims, preaching on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the Most Holy Madonna, and on St. Francis Xavier. The preaching should seek to be adapted to the time

84 The Italian reads: *La predica grande o di massima*.

and circumstances, not forgetting the preaching on peace, and should always conclude with the act of contrition and the blessing with the Crucifix.

St. Gaspar thus indicates precisely some topics that should never be omitted but allows for freedom to choose others according to the needs of the locality. He often had to adapt to those needs. Sometimes he included "... a sermon on Purgatory so that the holy souls are not deprived of this good work."[85] In some places the sermons given were of an apologetic nature. He writes to Cardinal Cristaldi on November 28, 1822: "In certain locations, it is truly necessary to have training in apologetics."[86] He did this especially in the Marches, which were infested with sectarianism.[87]

To get an idea of the varied themes that St. Gaspar treated in the missions, their sequence and development, we refer to the titles of the great sermons given in specific missions.

In the mission preached in Ancona in September 1816, after the introduction, the subjects of the sermons were:

- Who is God?
- Death
- The unrepentant sinner
- Last judgment
- Hell
- God's mercy
- Mary's mercy or the triumphal sermon
- Impurity
- The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
- Scandal
- Peace or pardoning the enemy
- One cannot serve two masters

85 Letter 859.
86 Letter 659.
87 Sectarianism refers to the secret revolutionary societies that existed in Italy in the first half of the nineteenth century. This is probably and more specifically a reference to the *Carbonari,* who were a secret society similar to the Freemasons and were often anticlerical.

- Paradise
- The sermon of reminders.[88]

The mission of Sanseverino in May 1818 saw Gaspar preaching on these ten topics:

- the end of man
- death
- judgment
- hell
- God's mercy
- the triumphs of religion
- dishonesty
- panegyric of the Madonna
- mortal sin
- the sermon of reminders.

In the mission at Ascoli Piceno in June 1821, he preached two sermons on religion, then dealt with the eternal maxims, dishonesty, God's mercy, the Madonna, the passion, the Precious Blood, eternal salvation, and paradise.[89]

We have a brief synthesis of the contents of the grand sermons preached during the mission in Teramo in November 1822 in the account that Canon Don Nicola Palma had printed:

> The first sermon had as its theme the obligation of serving God and on the misery of the person who does not satisfy this obligation. The second sermon, which was apologetic and produced a profound effect, was on religion, proving its possibility, its necessity and the existence of revelation. He emphasized the glories of the Catholic religion, especially its miracles.
>
> The topic for the third sermon was a series of conclusions based on the preceding apologetic sermon, and demonstrated the obligation to love, respect and be zealous

88 *Notizie del Fondatore*, I, 549. This is found in the general archives of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in Rome.
89 Cf. AS, Ch. 3

for a religion already proved to be divine. He combatted indifferentism toward religion and the accusations made by unbelievers with respect to the externals of Catholic cult, the severity of the Church in condemning evil books, and the practices of monasticism.

He gave a sermon on the evil of mortal sin and showed how abominable it is as being opposed to all the attributes of God, as well as how injurious it is in its consequences in the social and moral orders, including its effects regarding a future life. He ended this sermon with the chanting of the *Miserere*, moving all. Furthermore, he presented another sermon on disillusionment. He went into detail about the seven sources of anguish that go to make up the desperation of the sinner at the point of death. Finally, he held up before them a skull and had them ring the death toll that night. His sermon on the final judgment pointed to God's power, his wisdom, and his justice.

In still another sermon, he spoke energetically of the triumph of the most Precious Blood, restricting himself to the three principal blood sheddings: in the garden, in the tribunal courtyard, and on Calvary. He listed the happy effects that we all enjoy because of that Divine Blood.

...In his sermon on mercy, he singled out the reasons why God waits patiently for the sinner to return and the way he welcomes those who repent. He likewise gave a sermon on the spirit of Christianity as opposed to the spirit of the world, demonstrating the need, the wisdom, and the sweetness of practicing one's religion.

His sermon on hell was meant to remove the stupidity of those who went about saying: "If I am damned, I won't be alone; a person is damned for one sin as well as for many; God will not keep count of our sins." He showed how the reprobate will always be out of tune with his companions, with himself and with God.

In his sermon on heaven, he referred to the incidental and extrinsic joy of the blessed, the product of the praise given by their glorified bodies; of their dwelling with and in the company of God, deriving from the beatific vision, the very essential and intrinsic joy.

He preached on the glories of St. Francis Xavier, a model of purity before his becoming an apostle, and then strong and intrepid in the work of the apostolate; also, how he yearned with impatient love to be united with his God through death.

With that type of energy that flows from a soul singularly devoted to the great Mother of God, he described her in terms of the sea, because of the expanse of privileges that are hers and because of her power of intercession. In the first part, he showed what God had brought about in her. In the second part, how she works in our behalf.

...when he spoke on the theme of the vice of impurity, he rejected the frivolous excuses that lascivious persons usually assert, by showing that this sin in its consequences produces a host of evil effects; that it is not sheer weakness but the subtlest of evils and that it brings down the severest chastisement from God. [90]

As one sees from the simple titles and brief descriptions of their development, the great sermon dealt with dogmatic and moral fundamentals, meant to call the Christian to the practice of religion, making him or her aware of the seriousness of eventual separation from God, and giving them an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of being with God. These sermons were forcefully exhortatory. They always concluded with an act of contrition and were accompanied by functions that reinforced the emotional tension already aroused in the sermon.

90 *AS,* Ch. 2.

The sermon and its related function never had to present the truths of faith in a restricted and Jansenist spirit. Merlini writes:

> He preached of God, of the soul, and of eternity with a fullness of heart. He was thoroughly distressed with any stifling of his spirit. His manner of developing the exposition of even the most difficult truths of our religion was such that it drew every soul to the love of God. When he noticed a certain hardness of heart in his listeners during his sermon, he would say: *Sentite de Domino in bonitate* 'Think of the Lord in goodness' (Wis 1:1).[91]

The great sermon was not only exhortatory, seeking to move the will, but was also instructive. The orator had to bring the audience to emotional involvement in the topic. To achieve this, however, he had to educate his listeners with convincing proofs from the Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and theology. Regarding the sermon on eternal salvation that St. Gaspar preached in Ascoli Piceno in June 1821, Don Francesco Amici, professor of preaching, has this to say in his narrative about how the Saint spoke on the theme of eternal salvation: "The invincible arguments were handled with the most robust and convincing eloquence, bringing his talk to a final point of proof whereby the intellect, overwhelmed from every angle, could find no escape or avenue of flight."[92]

It was the same for the other topics, as we learn from the Amici's reports, and as we will discuss further when we treat the knowledge of the Missionary.

The great sermon lasted for about an hour. If it was to bear the desired fruit, it had to be constructed with rigorous logic. This was the form of preaching that was the most difficult and complex of the mission. It constituted the aim of the oratorical career of a Missionary, a goal that not everyone was able to reach, but for which

91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.

the Missionary would prepare step by step. St. Gaspar writes to Don Orazio Bracaglia:

> In the matter of preaching, the ministry is facilitated by presenting examples from the life of the most holy Mary. *Svegliarini,* etc. after acquiring a certain facility, it will be easier to make use of the platform, and a beginning can be made by giving *fervorini* for general Communions. Above all, have trust in God and you will be victorious. Become accustomed to being brief, and you will be doing a greater good.[93]

Precisely because of the special difficulty of delivering the great sermon, given that the Missionary had to include an instructive and an affective element, speaking "heart to heart,"[94] it had to be given by a preacher "sufficiently mature."[95] The task ordinarily fell to the director of the mission, who was also responsible for the introduction and the sermon of reminders, "elements connected to the grand sermons."[96]

3. The *Svegliarini* and the Evening Oratory

The *svegliarini* consisted of hymns and *fervorini* or short exhortations that were given in the evening during a short trip through town by a Missionary and brothers of a confraternity in order to gather men for the evening oratory. The hymns had to be "related to the great sermon" of the day. The Missionary, at one or two points on the route where all could more easily hear the word of God, building on the sentiment of the last strophe of the hymn that had been sung, would deliver a brief exhortation to the men, inviting them to the oratory.

These *svegliarini* also served to rouse those who were resistant. Referring to the thought of St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Gaspar writes:

93 Letter 2674.
94 Letter 2725.
95 Letter 1981.
96 Letter 1982.

> It is not enough to give sinners notice that the mission has begun, nor is the sounding of bells sufficient; they must be moved by preaching, giving them notice of the divine punishments that are reserved for the unrepentant. Experience teaches that in this way many needy souls turn to penance.

In the revisions made in 1835 he adds: "They are useful also for those poor sick persons who are not able to participate in the Mission, and they are a compensation for the public profanations of the Lord that take place."

The *svegliarino* of the seed (*di semina*), which was held "during the mission, or at least before the departure of the Missionaries," had as its aim "stirring sinners to conversion, warning them that the mercies of God are not to be held in low esteem." It was an extreme appeal directed to those most resistant to divine grace. "Liguori called such sentiments the sentiments of the seed, because they are a sudden stimulus that can result in the harvest of many souls."

The character of the *svegliarini*, therefore, was primarily exhortatory. As the name suggests, they were meant to admonish the faithful to *wake up* from their spiritual torpor to receive the grace of the mission in the fullest way possible.

The preaching of the *evening oratory* consisted in making a "summary of the preaching of the day. This will reinforce the Divine instruction related to the theme treated, and at the same time will give those who were not able to attend the preaching after lunch some acquaintance with the topic. This brief discourse ends with the act of contrition..."

The character and goal of the sermon of the evening oratory were the same as that of the great sermon. We can define the *svegliarini* and the evening oratory as missions within the mission, reserved for men alone.

4. Conferences for Special Groups

The *spiritual conferences* had as their principal aim to make various categories of persons aware of their respective moral obligations. For example, to nuns and schools for girls, the conference was to "reawaken" or "enhance the commitment to observing the Rules." The clergy were to be brought to "serious meditation on the obligations of the Ecclesiastical state."

Don Nicola Palma gives us a summary of the meditations that St. Gaspar gave to the clergy during the mission at Teramo in 1822:

> In the Mission in Teramo, the first point for the renewal of the clergy was to impress upon them the obligation that priests have, namely, to be saints. Second, the duty of growing in perfection day by day. Third, the means to personal holiness, that is, mental prayer which must never be omitted on any day, even when busily occupied in the work of the ministry. Such was the example given by St. Francis Xavier, St. Charles, and Father Avila, never excusing themselves from it. Fourth, the zeal that all, even the simple priests, must exert for the salvation of souls, demonstrating that the apostolic life is inherent in the sacerdotal character, and that the means to be used are: purity of intention, application to study and, in practice, not to be limited by consideration of persons or time, not to be discouraged by difficulties, but to be concerned for the salvation of souls with a spirit of gentleness and charity. Fifth, there are obstacles standing in the way of a priest attaining sanctity, perfection, and apostolic zeal, namely, impurity, pride, and avarice; emphasis is to be placed on the chastity, humility and detachment that is required in the priest. Sixth, there is the Sacrifice of the Mass which he called the mystery of faith since it contains in compendium form, all the other mysteries which, in turn, flow from it. As a reminder, he would give them a saying of St. Joseph Calasanctius: 'The good priest speaks little, works hard, and suffers all.'[97]

97 AS, Ch. 3.

Sometimes St. Gaspar offered advice to his missionaries on how to lay a foundation for the meditations and reforms of the clergy, and on the sources to use for this. Writing to Don Luigi Mosconi, he suggests this:

> The arrangement of materials could be as follows: regarding the meditations, use the method of St. Ignatius as applied to priests. Read thoroughly the collected materials of Liguori and the commentaries of Cornelius a Lapide on the scriptures where he refers to priests. Doctor del Monte, in his book, will be able to supply for you a format of ideas. With regard to their reform, you should consider the priest in relationship to himself, to the Church, and to God.
>
> With regard to himself, *mortificationem Jesu in corpore nostro, etc.* 'mortification of Jesus in our body.' The spirit of humility, the spirit of purity, the spirit of detachment etc. *Vos estis mei* 'you are mine,' *etc.*
>
> With regard to the Church, the sanctity of the apostolic ministry which must be maintained and the aims to be kept in mind in the ministry. *Omnia honeste et secundum ordinem fiant* 'Let everything be done honorably and in order.' Stress the learning that is necessary to have to sustain the ministry.
>
> With regard to God, to seek union and closeness with him: 1) through meditation; 2) through the vocal prayer of the Divine Office; 3) through exercising continuous love for him by means of the Holy Mass which should be treated, etc. [98]

To Don Giovanni Chiodi he writes:

> You would do well in preparing for the clergy conferences, which I would like to check again, and, to complete the preaching materials for Lent. With respect to the talks to

98 Letter 394.

> the priests, the most useful books to consult are: the book of meditations of St. Bernard *ad Eugenium*; the letters of St. Jerome to Nepomuziano;[99] the writings of St. Charles Borromeo; the interpretation of the letters to Titus and Timothy, read especially in Cornelius a Lapide; the books on the priesthood by St. John Chrysostom. Anyone who is unable to get these conveniently should get them through the pastor in Lione... For the clergy, you can also make use of the sermons of Segneri at the apostolic palace, using your own good judgment.[100]

5. The Visiting Sermons

The *visiting sermons* (*prediche di visita*) aimed at stirring up the neighboring parishes "to profit from the mission." St. Gaspar writes: "One cannot say what fervor is born from such sermons, which remove all obstacles and reticence in the people. Instructed and animated by the Divine word, one will see how they will go in procession with their Pastors to the Holy Mission."

The visiting sermons, thus, instructed the people on the importance of the mission and encouraged them to participate in it, while eliminating those obstacles or difficulties that could be easily taken care of (distance, lack of time, etc.)

From the analysis of the various forms of preaching that were given during the mission according to the *Method* of St. Gaspar, we can conclude that the preaching of the word of God, in the variety of ways in which it was managed, looked to the revival of faith by means of instructing the mind and moving the heart and will.

Some forms of preaching highlighted the instructive nature in a more pronounced way, while others, the exhortatory. The grand sermon mixed both equally.

Regarding the doctrinal contents, the preaching during the mission could not range over the entire field of faith and morals.

99 This seems to be a reference to Letter 51 to [St.] *Nepotian*. [Translator]
100 Letter 1745.

Only those elements were chosen that were indispensable for arousing people to conversion and returning to or increasing the practice of the Christian faith.

In a mission of fifteen days, if this objective was reached, much had been achieved. The works of perseverance would provide for preserving and ripening the benefit that had been obtained.

6. St. Gaspar the Speaker

Even if this is strictly speaking off the topic, at the end of this chapter on preaching in the mission I would like to cite the testimony of Don Giovanni Merlini on St. Gaspar as a speaker, all the more because, as we will see in the tenth chapter, he was sometimes criticized for his oratorical style.

> Besides his deep love and natural aptitude for preaching, as I have mentioned elsewhere, as a young man the Servant of God learned the art of preaching by attending the lectures of Monsignor Marchetti and Monsignor Baccolo. At times, he would speak to us about these two outstanding men and he would repeat, during our recreation periods, a selection from the sermons of Monsignor Baccolo. I learned from Paolina del Bufalo and from others that while he was yet a deacon, he substituted for Monsignor Marchetti in explaining the Scriptures in the church of the Gesù and that he appeared to be a second Marchetti, so perfect was he in imitation of him.
>
> I maintain however, that beyond his natural endowments and his study, there was in him the grace of his vocation to the apostolic ministry. I am convinced, indeed, that he had the gift of the word. I understand that this was also the judgment of others.
>
> It is certainly true that one could see the spirit of the Lord in him; otherwise, he could never have spoken with such

readiness, persuasive power, strength and decisiveness in such a manner, that one could never repeat, unless a much higher spirit dwelt in him.

More than in his writing, I admired his force of his spoken words, although, even in his writing, one could feel the spirit of Jesus Christ, but it was much more energetic in his preaching.

At times, I witnessed him as though he were outside of himself, as happened at the mission in Marino during a sermon which I attended. Great was his fluency of speech, superlative was the naturalness with which he poured out his argumentation; I did not hear him ever repeat a word.

He handled the Scriptures and the Fathers with utter ease and especially paraphrased the Psalms in a marvelous manner. He would select only those themes that were substantial, and he would avoid topics that were not completely clear. He was particularly careful to observe rigorously the correct theological terminology, which he also insisted that we do by setting down rules for exactness in expression. It was his principle to preach to the people only what was certain and also to distinguish between commandment and counsel, in order not to confuse consciences. He respected the opinions which the Church respected, without, however, making those things the topic of a sermon or of an instruction.

The propositions that he would discuss were always noble and broad and avoided being dry and arid, and he warned me about such things. He preached of God, of the soul, of eternity with a fullness of heart. He was thoroughly distressed with any stifling of his spirit. His manner of developing the exposition of even the most difficult truths of our religion was such that it drew every soul to the love of God. When he noticed a certain hardness of heart in his listeners during

his sermon, he would say: *Sentite de Domino in bonitate* 'Think of the Lord in goodness' (Wis 1:1).

Always in control of himself, he would take hold of his theme in a wondrous way. The fullness of his treatment, the skill with which he anticipated difficulties, the outstanding naturalness with which he unfolded the theme and the fluency with which he expressed it, commanded the attention of the learned; furthermore, through his own proper gift of weaving things together, the unlettered also were able to have their hunger sated. Many times, they were moved to compunction by his gestures, by the tone of his voice, by his very comportment.

Especially stunning were his digressions, which came to him spontaneously and, although prolonged occasionally, he skillfully worked his way back to the thread of his thought without anyone scarcely realizing it. During these digressions, he would get down to the practical level and, in as far as he was able, he would adapt himself to the level of his audience, selecting pertinent comparisons but at the same time not detracting from the dignity of the holy word of God. This was something that he advised all of us to be careful about.

His talks to the clergy and to the higher class of people were distinguished. In giving them, he spoke with evangelical liberty, but, at the same time, with respect, thus winning over the esteem and veneration of all.

I was told, I do not rightly remember if it was Fr. Biagio Valentini, that on the occasion of talks given by the Servant of God to the higher ranked people and their employees in Frosinone, one or more (I do not remember exactly) said that if anyone else had said to them all the things that del Bufalo preached they would have been displeased. But, since it was he who said them, they listened willingly.

This was his usual manner, namely, to speak with the freedom of the Gospel but always respectful of his audience. He would season his discourses by saying, for example, 'while we intend to do good, we fail through ignorance, through inadvertence, through thoughtlessness, and that is, indeed, the fact.'

In giving Mission sermons, besides the ones that stressed the basic principles according to the method of the Ignatian Exercises, he was accustomed, in some places and according to the circumstances, to give one or more apologetic sermons. I heard one that he gave in Gaeta, dealing with the necessity of having a revealed religion. It was handled with such accuracy of argument and with such completeness that I was stunned. In addition to the sermons already mentioned, he would also preach about the Blessed Mother, about peace, about the Precious Blood of Jesus, as well as other sermons that he judged necessary according to the diversity of places, but always asking them for their prayers and seeking their advice.

In reference to this topic, I shall tell you what was reported in the records covering the Mission given in Ascoli in June of 1821. It was written by Father Francesco Amici, of happy memory, who was at that time an Olivetan monk, and the report was printed in Ascoli.

Among other things, in speaking of the talks given to the clergy, the report said the following: 'In those conferences, which might better be entitled a public schooling in religion, the highly esteemed missionary (he is speaking of the Servant of God) was the source of constant amazement because of his gentle and winning manner, his interweaving of ideas as he poured out his exposition with surprising naturalness and dignity, and because of his skillful handling of the Sacred Scriptures, along with his inexhaustible

storehouse of sacred erudition. They were seasoned and delivered with his unique style, unhesitating as the flow of a river, and holding his audiences spellbound. At that moment when the intellect is illumined by the irresistible light of truth, supported by reason and revelation, he would lead one on, or, should I say rather that he drew one almost insensibly along with him by a secret, wonderful enchantment which one could not possibly imagine, unless one heard him. With assurance, it can be asserted that in this type of quiet, yet discursive, eloquence, it would be quite difficult to find his equal. He was greatly helped in this regard because of his Roman dialect, in itself a thing of dignity. Also, it was due to his many natural talents, evident in his voice, his gestures, his bearing, not to mention that sacred unction that pervaded his words and gave such verve and force to his jolting concepts which never just stopped at the ears but worked themselves into the very core of the hearts of his listeners.'

Then, speaking of his sermons, it said: 'With the crucifix and the image of St. Francis Xavier being carried before him as an escort, and, reciting devout prayers in a low voice, he would ascend the platform. After the usual preparations and the customary greeting with the ejaculatory prayer to the Blood of Jesus Christ, he would begin by first instructing the people in the various functions that would be included in the daily program during the Mission. (I point out that this was the usual method observed. I myself have seen the Servant of God do this on the Missions that I worked with him. He was accustomed to give, at that time, the basic principles in a more concise and direct form for the renewal of their lives.)

Amici continues: 'Having given a brief resume of what the sermon would contain, he would cite his text and state his theme again, which he always divided into its component

parts, identifying the steps that he would follow throughout the presentation. In this outline, the main points would allow him, during the course of the sermon, the possibility of bringing in and using the many gifts that adorned his fertile imagination. If, in the ardor of his zeal, he was carried away with apostolic freedom, since 'the word of God is not fettered' (2 Tm 2:9), sometimes he gave the impression of having strayed from his theme, while giving practical examples in useful digressions; yet, he did that so pleasantly and with such dexterity that instead of losing the attention of his listeners, he captured it wondrously and opened it up to the enjoyment of a vast field of pertinent, sacred erudition which he had accumulated. That type of freedom, not really in keeping with the strict rules of sacred eloquence, was in him a unique merit.

Without prejudice to his main theme, he would extemporaneously proceed to discussing the lack of morality in his time and, in doing so, would allow himself to become emotional, but with moderation, never losing his composure. Rather, more correctly stated, he allowed himself to be moved by the spirit of the Lord who, *blows where he wills,* urging him on in those precious moments.

However, what no one knows how to explain and what seems to be something far above the human condition in this rare genius of sacred eloquence, was his ability, with scarcely three hours of sleep per night, to keep up sufficient strength, to preserve his forceful and thundering voice for the continuous exercise of preaching, even to the extent of giving as many as six different sermons a day, being done quite often out in the open air. How could he continue giving, with that same vigorous voice, sermons that were so meaty in content and yet within the space of no less than an hour and a half, never stopping for a pause, not even in going from one point to another, never repeating a thought

already expressed, never stopping to cough or spit, *sit venia verbo* 'pardon my language,' content only on rare occasions to mop his brow with his handkerchief. How could he, with such a variety of material and thoughts, often punctuated by gasps of discomfort from the teeming crowds, always adhere to his original outline as well as to its development, without ever reproducing the same ideas, yet maintaining from beginning to end, the same presence of mind, the same strength of voice, the same cheerful look on his face. In truth, these were talents or extraordinary gifts, and all of them were his.[101]

101 AS, Ch. 3

CHAPTER V

FUNCTIONS IN THE MISSION OF ST. GASPAR

Except for the catechetical instruction for the children, the conferences for the various categories of people, and the visiting sermons, St. Gaspar used the term *functions* for the other activities of the mission.[102]

In a general sense, therefore, the term *function* means a kind of celebration that takes place during the mission: the opening of the mission, the meetings of the first morning and afternoon, the *svegliarini*, the evening oratory, the general Communions, the processions, the closing of the mission, etc.

More specifically, however, the term *function* means an action undertaken by one or more persons to impart or reinforce some teaching. In this sense, St. Gaspar speaks of "the functions that usually take place at the end of the great sermon" or of the "Functions of the Oratory."

1. Principles Regulating the Functions

Functions understood in this sense were a support that was necessary in preaching a mission. The missions differed from spiritual exercises or retreats precisely because the latter did not have functions.

What were the motivations for St. Gaspar's need for functions?

First, he held that they were necessary because with them he could better communicate his message to the people. He writes:

102 The term *functions* recurs more than a dozen times in the *Method*.

"When dealing only with spiritual persons, Religion always animates them, but when dealing with those who must be led by the hand to the good, one must not think that this is the case." In this sense, the function highlights the "popular style" of preaching in the missions.

Second, St. Gaspar sees the function as necessary by the very nature of human beings, apart from whether one deals with "spiritual persons" or persons of the "people." He writes:

> The human being is not pure spirit; what comes through the senses makes a big impression on the spirit. It is one thing to think about death, and another to meditate on a cadaver. How many are the conversions we read about following such paths. Jesus Christ himself, says St. Thomas (literally, "the Angelic [doctor]"), wanted to institute the Sacraments by means of sensible signs, because in this way it is easier for a person to become aware of invisible things. We see that the Church strips the Altars in the final days of Holy week and uses so many other rites and ceremonies at different times, in order to help her children to perceive the more important realities to which these point.

The function is necessary so that a person is helped to understand the truth that is being presented through signs that can perceived by the senses.

Finally, the function is necessary because for some, it becomes a substitute language for the spoken word in the mission. St. Gaspar writes:

> Moreover, we have a debt to the learned and to the ignorant; the Mission amounts to fishing for souls, and it therefore follows that some are converted by the sermons, others at the sight of the Image of Mary. Let the same be said for the rest.

So that a function can fulfill its role to communicate a message, some conditions must be met.

First, it must have the power to communicate the message. It must be a sign that is easy to read. To accomplish this, St. Gaspar refers to the example of great missionaries in choosing the functions for his *Method*:

> One must follow the teachings left to us by the most illustrious workers ... let all take to heart the maxim of the famous P. Pinamonti, who, as he lay dying, said to his companions with a deep expression of affection, that the Holy Missions should continue in the format practiced by P. Segneri. He had been Segneri's close friend and knew by his experience of thirty-eight years the great benefit that resulted from the missions.

Precisely because a function should be a sign that is intelligible to the audience, St. Gaspar required that the functions practiced by the famous missionaries be used discerningly, according to the demands of the times and places. In the revision of the *Method,* at the end of the paragraph that treats of "the functions that customarily take place at the end of the great Sermon," he has added the following: "everything is to be adapted to the times, places, and circumstances, while prudence carefully dictates what is beneficial in promoting good fruit." This is why he makes this recommendation to the director of the mission in the *Method* of 1819: "prudence and the careful study of the lives of the Missionaries will make the Director of the Mission wise in managing these things systematically and exactly." Prayer is also necessary to achieve this: "The one who oversees this ministry should make great use of prayer, and he will see how God accompanies him with the sweet abundance of his mercies."

Thus, the second condition for the effectiveness of the functions is novelty (*novità*). Novelty has two meanings: that which has not been seen before, and variety. Regarding the first meaning, St. Gaspar writes: "...people will be more moved by the high order of providence

by that which occurs unexpectedly." He thus recommends to the director of the mission "not to communicate anything about the functions that are going to be carried out, except at their due time and only to whom it is necessary."

Regarding this second condition, St. Gaspar has this to say: "Father Baldinucci used to note that when missions took place near one another that it was good to vary some of the functions, substituting others used by missionaries of distinguished memory." Another variation would be to adapt the same functions but using them in different sermons. The motive for this was that variety in these functions produces greater benefit for souls, because *ab assuetis non fit passio* 'the habitual does not create passion.' That is to say, what is habitual or customary does not stimulate wonder or excitement, which is stirred by something new and packed with strong and expressive energy.

Finally, the third condition for the effectiveness of a function has to do with the method in which it is carried out. The function, since it is a sign that must communicate a message, must be performed with perfection and dignity. For this reason, it was ordinarily a Missionary who had to oversee its performance, at least for the principal functions. Those who were to perform the function were given the appropriate instruction in detail.

> St. Gaspar was also an expert in this. Merlini offers this testimony:
>
> These and similar functions were the practices that the Servant of God used during Missions. I noticed in a particular way that he did them so naturally and so easily that it was hardly believable. Alert to the needs as they arose, he knew how to adapt himself to the diverse localities.
>
> When he carried out the functions by himself, I would stand in amazement at his skill. On those occasions, when he would take me along with him on a Mission, he would

> usually put me in charge of directing those functions at which he was unable to be present and would instruct me with the minutest details. I observed that every function was worked out with solid reason and was based on well thought out ideas. As a result, they turned out to be quite spontaneous and effortless. I further noticed the gravity, the majesty and the dignity involved, so that far from dissipating his spirit, they made him even more recollected. If some particular function did not turn out well, he experienced displeasure and sought to correct it.[103]

Now that we have seen the significance, principles, and conditions that regulated the functions in the mission of St. Gaspar, we will analyze the functions that took place at the end of the great sermon, the evening oratory, and in the *svegliarini*.

2. Functions at the End of the Great Sermon

These functions varied. We present them according to St. Gaspar's description in his *Method*.

2.1 The Discipline

St. Gaspar writes: "Once or twice, the one who is giving the great sermon during the mission will take the discipline after the act of contrition." The discipline used by the missionaries was a whip made of iron strips without sharp points. Holding this by its handle, the Missionary would beat himself with it on his shoulder, over his cassock.

Referring to a phrase of Fr. Segneri the Younger, St. Gaspar calls the discipline "the holy sword given to him by God, just as of old the weapons were given to Joshua, to make war on sin." It was a sword to be used with moderation, however, as St. Gaspar writes to Don Domenico Silvestri on March 2, 1826: "Tell Don Rafaelle that on

103 AS.

the platform the discipline [is used] no more than once, and with moderation."[104]

The discipline could be used in the preaching on judgment or on dishonesty. In choosing the sermons that would end with the discipline, the Missionary was to follow "the spirit of the Lord."

Sometimes the Missionary who gave the great sermon would use the discipline with other missionaries, as St. Gaspar suggests for the sermon on judgment, or to offer some variety to the function, the brothers, vested in their habits with the hoods over their heads, would beat themselves with a whip made of cords.

2.2 The Skull

At the end of the sermon on death, a skull was displayed, so that the people would detach themselves from the vanities of the earth.

2.3 The Crucifix

The Crucifix, which was received at the beginning of the mission as a sign that the souls of the people were entrusted to the missionaries, always accompanied the Missionary and was continuously present on the platform during the preaching. He blessed the people with the Crucifix each day at the end of the great sermon, in the evening oratory, and at the end of the mission.

Sometimes St. Gaspar made use of the Crucifix to instill in the people a sense of the desolation of the sinner, who has put himself outside the mercy of God. At the end of the sermon on judgment, while calling to mind the blessing that the just will receive on the day of judgment, he would turn his discourse to those persisting in sin, warning them that on that day they would no long hear the voice of a Father who invites them to penitence, "but to the voice of an implacable judge who condemns them to a deserved punishment."

104 Letter 1348.

On this point, to stir the audience to a change of heart, the Missionary would have the Crucifix taken away by the brothers, who would place it in the sacristy. This removal, the Missionary would explain, signified the abandonment that the reprobates would find on the day of judgment. The Missionary would emphasize this by saying: "that God, according to our way of understanding, will turn his back to sinners." When the audience was sufficiently moved, the Missionary would invite them to penitence: "...may the Tribunal of Justice become the Tribunal of Mercy, and may a reprobate never be found among you. Let us give ourselves to penance..."

At this point, all the missionaries would mount the platform with a cord around their necks ("The cord points to the reining in of the passions...") and kiss the platform as sign of humility, singing *Parce, Domine* 'Spare, O Lord' three times, and in between there would be *fervorini* exhorting to penitence. Finally, they take the discipline for the duration of a *De profundis* (Psalm 130). At the end of the rite of the discipline, an ecclesiastic in surplice and purple stole, a sign of penitence, brings the Crucifix back to the platform, accompanied by lighted candles. Meanwhile, all beg "the most benevolent God to be merciful." "The present function, which awakens or supports penitence in hearts, generally concludes with the blessing with the Crucifix..."

In the sermon on hell, the Crucifix also had an important symbolic value. The Missionary would mount the platform accompanied by the Crucifix, as was the usual practice. His face would be "full of distress and suffering." He would immediately begin to explain the reason for this: "The Crucifix is the triumph of God's goodness, but today we are speaking of his retribution (*vendette*)." Toward the end of the sermon, however, the Missionary was to bring his hearers "with sentiments of religion and repentance, to feel the need for the vision of the Crucified, our righteousness," Then, to "console the wounded souls with shafts of love," he would have the Crucifix

brought to the platform as was done at the function of the sermon on judgment.

2.4 The Image of the Madonna of the Missions

At the end of the sermon on the Madonna, St. Gaspar called for the solemn entrance of the image of the Madonna of the Missions or the Madonna of the Chalice into the church, from either the central or another door of the church.

> At other times, he would have that image brought in at the same time as the Crucifix, but from two different points, both accompanied by many candles, palms and flowers, the ringing of church bells, the organ, other bells, and the procession of the clergy. Having filed through the aisles of the church, he would then have these two images brought forward to the platform...[105]

In the *Method,* he also states that:

> Out of love for Mary, there is a search for prohibited weapons, and these are arranged around the Image. Playing cards and prohibited books are also sought. There is a plea for improvement in women's dress, that scandalous pictures be removed, and for whatever else will lead to obtaining a complete change in the people.
>
> Meanwhile, the people will be told that the iron from the arms that are smashed would be used to buy wax to burn before the picture of the Madonna, and that the precious gifts, accurately recorded, that were offered to the Madonna of the Missions, would be left as a religious offering (*ex voto*) to some image 'most highly venerated in the place where the Mission is held.' Such gifts will always remind the people that they have dedicated themselves as children of Mary and have consecrated their hearts to such a tender Mother.

105 AS.

From that point, the image of the Madonna remained on the platform until the end of the mission, and lights burned continuously before it.

In describing this function, St. Gaspar recalled some happy memories of the benefit for the faithful that this produced: "Oh, here it would be appropriate to spend a long time expounding the wonders that have taken place with the sudden appearance of the Image of Mary Most Holy as we are describing it!... Oh, how all that has been mentioned so far produces so much good..." In addition, this function, as we know from the testimony of Merlini, marked the beginning of the "functions of joy"[106] and thus, the second part of the mission.

2.5 The Coffin of the Dead Christ and the Sorrowful Mother

At the end of the sermon on the Divine Blood, the coffin of the dead Christ was brought in from the main door of the church, representing Jesus taken down from the cross, along with the statue of the Sorrowful Mother.

> The coffin is covered with red damask, and beautifully adorned with flowers, so that in this function one comprehends the reason for what is practiced on May 3 [formerly the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross] and on September 14 [feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross], and one says to the people: 'behold how far the love of Jesus Christ reaches.' If none of this is possible, one can carry the Relic of the Holy Cross. Priests carry the coffin vested in red tunics, and others with matching stoles precede and accompany it.
>
> Lacking the clergy, the brothers take their place. He continues:
> Such a loving function, animated as well by seeing the Sorrowful Mother, arouses the people to kiss in spirit

106 Ibid.

> those sacred wounds, the sources and springs of eternal life, and to hold in affectionate memory the sorrows of Mary. In such noble and delightful themes, they will always find peace and health.

This function, as we will see, will reach its greatest solemnity in the procession that will take place with the same sacred images through the streets of the town.

2.6 The Function of Peacemaking

During the sermon on mercy, after reminding the people of the obligation to be merciful as the Father in heaven is merciful (cf. Mt 6:14-15),

> . . .the people are to hear about the peace that is to be made with whomever they have a disagreement. *Be merciful as your Father is merciful* (Lk 6:36)...The people should be zealously instructed that they will receive blessings when children are reconciled with parents, husbands with wives, etc., in order to receive the blessings of God.

> Following this Merlini describes the rite for peacemaking:
> The priests then would step down from the platform, wearing their choir garb and the solemn stole or surplice and stole. Where there were few priests, he would substitute the men of the various confraternities that had assumed the task of assisting at the Mission. While all that was going on, he urged the people to exclaim: 'Peace with God, peace with everyone, long live peace.'[107]

Then the peacemakers, both men and women, were chosen, and their names made public. These were persons responsible for being mediators in cases of public discords only, "because secret matters are to be kept secret."

107 AS. Ch. 2.

3. Variations of the Functions

As we have said previously, St. Gaspar suggests that "on the occasion when missions are close to one another it is good to vary some functions." In the *Method*, he gives some examples of these variations.

3.1 The Image of a Damned Person

In the *Method*, Gaspar notes:

> Segneri the younger, for example, sometimes showed the people an image of one of the damned. Liguori also uses this in the sermon on Hell and says that in the Missions it happens that one who had been hardened during all the other sermons is moved to conversion at the sight of this image.

Sometimes St. Gaspar would show this image but during one mission, "he was advised by one in the Institute that it would be better not to have this sort of demonstration," and he did not use it anymore.

3.2 The Image of the Holy Face of the Redeemer

Fr. Segneri the younger "would sometimes show an Image of the Holy face of our Divine Redeemer, in order to stir up compassion through gazing at the Divine face *on which Angels gaze* (cf. I Pt 1:12)." He does not indicate in which sermon this would take place.

3.3 Objects Specially Venerated in a Place

"In places where there might be a sacred object of special veneration, like the holy Thorn, the holy Wood of the Cross, etc., these can be presented at the end of some sermon." St. Gaspar often made use of such variations.[108] In his letters he recalls affectionately the mission in Offida because of the procession with

108 AS, Ch. 3.

the relic of the Precious Blood, which was venerated in the church of Sant'Agostino.[109]

3.4 The Same Functions in Different Sermons

Another example of the variations that St. Gaspar suggests consists in carrying out the same functions, but in different sermons. He writes:

> To strengthen compunction, it is sometimes useful to present a skull during the sermon on impurity, or at the end of the preaching to have a statue of the Sorrowful Mother brought in, pointing out to the people that the sword that pierces the purest heart of Mary is especially the shameful vice of incontinence. In some Missions at the end of the preaching on hell or on judgment, the Image of Mary of the Missions is brought in, and then on another day the sermon on Mary is given, which speaks of the peace [obtained] through the love of the Virgin.

These are the only indications that St. Gaspar gives. It is principally a matter of prudence, the study of the lives of the missionaries, and the prayer of the director of the mission to choose the function adapted to persons, times, and places. St. Gaspar was very creative in all his missions.

4. Functions of the Oratory

St. Gaspar describes the principal special functions of the oratory thus: "What takes place during the day is the norm for good guidelines for the functions of the evening." The same message that the function strongly emphasized to the people during the day should be repeated in another way to the men alone.

The functions that he describes for the evening oratory are the following:

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109 Letter 2181.

4.1 Singing of the *Miserere*

"For the function of the Mission, the *Miserere* [Ps 51] is sung, in the middle of which there would be a *fervorino*, and this is said on one of the evenings of the sermon on judgment, or of another topic if one chooses."

4.2 Function of the Peace

"When the peace (*le paci*) is announced from the platform, in the evening the men will embrace the crucifix, singing some verses of a hymn to Mary." All the men would repeat in the evening what had been done earlier only by the ecclesiastics or some of the brothers. While the men were carrying out this function, "all of the festive bells are sounded for the space of a good hour." At this sign, according to the notice the Missionary had given in the great sermon during the day, the obligation to be reconciled should be carried out in the homes, or there should be a firm intention to repair the scandal caused by discord on the following morning, if there is no way of doing this at the sound of the bells."

4.3 Kissing the Earth

On one evening, with the aim of eliminating the vice of blasphemy from the men and to repair the insult to God, they are made to kiss the earth many times. Even those not guilty of this sin should do this out of humility and to implore God's pardon for sins of speech.

4.4 Tolling the Bells

To stir the more resistant sinners, on one evening all the bells of the town would toll for the space of an hour. During this time, according to the announcement made by the Missionary during the preaching that day, all were to pray "for resistant sinners." This function could take place at the preaching on death of on some other

topic, as judged to be more suitable. "With the sound of the bells, accompanied by the inner voice of Divine grace, one is preaching to whoever avoids attending the mission. Oh, how the sound of the Bell refocuses the idea of the brevity of our life!"

5. Functions of the *Svegliarini*

St. Gaspar also prescribed some functions for the brief rounds that the Missionary would make to call the men to the oratory, that is while the *svegliarini* were taking place. For example, in the *svegliarini* in the sermon on death, a skull would be carried. At other times, they would carry the banner of the Sorrowful Mother, etc. On two evenings when the evening oratory was held, the *svegliarini* took on the aspect of a true and proper procession, reserved for the men alone.

5.1 The Procession of Penitence

On one evening during the first part of the mission, before moving on to the "functions of joy," St. Gaspar would organize a penitential procession, which aimed at instilling in the people sentiments leading to conversion and reparation for sin. In this procession the clergy, the confraternities, and the men were free to participate. The clergy wore the cord hanging from the neck, symbolizing the restraining of the passions. All the others were to be furnished with a discipline made of rope which signified that "the lower appetite must be tamed by the reign of religion and faith," or, as he corrected the text in 1835, as a "sign of eternal penitence." In the procession, they carried the "mysteries of the passion" if possible: crosses of moderate size, crowns of thorns in the hands, "so that they might meditate on the pain that these gave to Jesus, etc.," and finally, the banner of the Sorrowful Mother. Some of the brothers, located at various points of the procession, held up skulls in their hands. During the procession, penitential songs

were sung. From time to time *svegliarini* were given, which were followed by some blows of the discipline by all in the procession. St. Gaspar recommended that people not perform penance which was disproportionate or ridiculous, and that "the external demeanor is to be a sign of internal compunction. For this reason, the duration for taking the discipline was regulated by the missionaries, and to avoid problems, those who participated in the procession barefoot had to have a separate and more suitable place in it."

If the city was large, the procession was divided into two groups, so that they could go through the principal areas of the city. At the end, they would enter the church. Here the missionaries kissed the feet of those who had walked barefoot as an act of humility. The function concluded with the blessing using the Crucifix.[110]

5.2 The Procession of the Dead Christ

This procession took place in the evening on the day in which the coffin of the dead Christ and the image of the Sorrowful Mother were brought into church, after the great sermon on the Precious Blood. As we know, the procession had a solemn character: the clergy put on red tunics, the confraternities, vested in their distinct garb, and other men participated. The coffin of Christ was adorned with flowers. The procession was furnished with many lights, and other lights were placed in the windows of the houses adjoining the route of the procession. The bells were rung festively. Along the route songs in honor of the Blood of Christ were sung, and in between them there were appropriate *svegliarini*. With this procession St. Gaspar intended "to offer compensation for injustices and public scandals on the public streets which have profaned Jesus, who has redeemed us with his Blood" but principally intended "to promote the loving devotion to the Blood of Jesus Christ" as strength for a new life in Christ.

110 Sometimes St. Gaspar would hold the procession of penitence in place of the great sermon. In that case the women would also participate. Cf. AS, Ch. 3.

5.3 The *Svegliarino* of the Seed

St. Gaspar places the *svegliarino* of the seed among the functions of the evening, which, as we know, aimed at stirring up those who were more resistant to the action of grace. The missionaries would station themselves at various points in the city or town, each accompanied by a single priest. A sign would be given using the main bell, and immediately the missionaries would begin preaching, encouraging people to conversion. After seven or eight minutes, the bell would ring, indicating the end of the *fervorino*.

6. Conclusion

At the end of this review, perhaps we have sometimes found ourselves smiling at these "functions" that St. Gaspar embraced in his *Method*, for the most part drawing on the practice of other missionaries. We live in a historic and cultural context that is different from the times of St. Gaspar. For the record, we should note that St. Gaspar was challenged on the use of these functions even by his contemporaries, as will be described later in this volume, especially before they were to take place. Quite pertinent in this matter is the testimony of Venerable Giovanni Merlini, a man who by nature was not easily given to enthusiasms. He was a man who was convinced only by reason, and thus, a person naturally resistant to these functions. He honestly confesses:

> I will say, in all truth, that I myself, before getting involved in the Missions, believed those ceremonies were mere externals that could very well omitted. It seemed to me that to exert every effort to appeal to the intellect of people would be the better approach and therefore not to use, for example, the discipline. I expressed this idea to Monsignor Spalletti, now bishop of Nepi, and also to Fr. Antonio Lipparelli, since I had been engaged in Missions with them before I joined up with the Servant of God. The fact is that I have seen firsthand how, in our times, these ceremonies

and the use of the discipline are not only just useful, but very effective means in giving Missions, thus producing the results that I have seen flowing from them, not only in one or the other place here and there, but wherever I shared the mission work with or without the Servant of God. Even though I was, at first, prejudiced at the time of those earlier Missions, I have become more and more convinced that those ceremonies are the very soul of the Mission. In dealing with those people who say that past ages were times when people were simpler and hence functions of this type were called for in the practice of noteworthy missionaries, I have discovered and experienced firsthand that these present times are just the same as those of the past, so that what was applicable then is just as applicable now.[111]

111 AS, Ch. 3.

Chapter VI

THE SACRAMENTS IN THE MISSION OF SAINT GASPAR

In the missions of St. Gaspar, we are dealing with the sacraments of penance and Eucharist. The aim of the mission was the conversion and sanctification of the faithful, and this was achieved in a very visible and direct way by means of the administration of the sacrament of penance and in Eucharistic Communion.

Let us examine these two sacraments in the *Method* of the mission of St. Gaspar.

I. The Sacrament of Penance

In the preface to the *Method,* St. Gaspar writes to his companions in the Missionary apostolate:

> Ah, my venerable confreres...called by God to such an important work. Oh, how dear to the Divine Heart are the labors you sustain for the conversion of sinners. How great is the joy that you show in cleansing the penitent souls in the Blood of the innocent Lamb *slain from the beginning of the world* (cf. Rev 13:8)!

The administration of the sacrament of penance along with the proclamation of the word of God was an essential part of the mission. This is why St. Gaspar prescribed in his *Rule* that every Missionary, according to the measure of the gift Christ had given him, had to be able to preach missions and spiritual exercises to various categories of persons. If he was not able to do this, it was

enough that he at least knows how to administer the sacrament of penance correctly.[112]

Unlike the preaching of the mission, the task of confessor did not necessarily have to be carried out by the missionaries alone. In fact, among the various activities of the mission, St. Gaspar established that the overall good of the mission should take preference to the individual good of a penitent, and that the Missionary should first of all look after the preaching, to the pious works to be established, and to the order of the mission, and only then to confessions.[113]

This order of priority, however, was not to prejudice the administration of the sacrament during the mission. The missionaries had to attend to confessions during the times when they were free from the responsibility of preaching: "It will be the norm of the Missionaries that on the occasion when men and women are gathered for confessions, they divide themselves among the men and for the women, so that external order and tranquility be maintained." Also: "After the morning function comes the ministry of confession, and if one of the Missionaries has special responsibilities, he is dispensed from these because of what is being noted in the present method."

The missionaries thus also had to be engaged in conscientiously assisting in the administration of the sacrament of penance. Ordinarily, however, there were not enough missionaries to satisfy all the requests of the penitents, so St. Gaspar anticipated the need for the assistance of other "external" confessors from other towns: "...whoever directs the mission will have as many confessors as needed from outside to be present for the benefit of the population." The choice of these confessors had to be made "with the agreement of the Bishop." These had to be "virtuous, trusted (*probi, accreditati*)."[114]

112 Cf. *Rule*, art. 2.
113 *AS*, Ch. 3.
114 Letter 1380.

The director of the mission could be assisted in making this selection by a prudent and practical priest from the area. Thus, St. Gaspar writes to the learned Don Nicola Palma of Teramo on December 18, 1822: "You will make the selection of confessors, since you are the more practical one."[115] If the number coming to confession was not that numerous during the early days, these confessors would be called to help toward the middle of the mission.[116]

The director of the mission not only had the responsibility of choosing confessors, but was primarily responsible for giving them their instructions, so that there would be a certain consistency in the administration of the sacrament. This would mean forming "the sacred league of Blessed Leonardo."[117]

Every director of the missions had to be informed "in all things by the bishops concerning their special faculties, concerning reserved matters that should be told to the penitents…on the way to deal with the denunciations of the Carbonari…"[118] He had to counsel "the highest caution in the administration of the sacrament."[119] St. Gaspar wanted penitents to be treated with gentleness.[120] "There is little doubt, ordinarily, as to dispositions [of the confessors]; but, with regard to precision in questioning, or prudence in their approach, etc."[121] In the matter of making restitution, St. Gaspar offers this norm:

> The Missionaries are not to attempt to receive the restitutions of penitents on their own. In case it is necessary to do this, they are to require a receipt from those who receive the restitutions, with the method noted for such cases, so that they can show these to the penitents.

115 Letter 667.
116 Letter 1664.
117 Letter 859.
118 Letter 1380.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
121 Letter 667.

In doubtful cases, the Missionary was to consult the moral manual of St. Alphonsus Liguori that he carried with him: "Take along your Liguori" he writes to Merlini,[122] or he would have to consult with competent persons: "Consult [others], if necessary."[123] Merlini notes that St. Gaspar "...did not want them to discuss conscience cases [during lunch] but told them that if anyone needed help or counsel, they should do that in private" if there was danger of breaking the seal of the sacrament.[124] A Missionary would not go to hear confessions of the sick by himself, but was to be accompanied by ecclesiastics or lay people.

The missionaries were to give preference to hearing men's confessions. St. Gaspar followed this rule himself, especially because "...when one leans his head toward a man, he is contacting a whole family."[125] For this reason, he would assign more confessors for the men than for the women.[126] He valued the evening oratory because it offered "...an opportunity for confessions to very many men who could not confess during the day, either because they were not able or because they were embarrassed."

He gave the same advice to young missionaries: "See that your young men are careful and even a bit uneasy when hearing the confessions of women. Let them be more available for the confession of men and for older women. The devil is a shrewd one. In matters such as this, there is never sufficient caution."[127]

Confessors had to be "alerted to have a special preference for the reconciliation of those who will be making participating in a Communion on those days." However, if at the end of the mission all the confessions had not been heard, some missionaries would be permitted to remain for a few days. He writes to Don Pietro Spina

122 Letter 1380.
123 Ibid.
124 AS, Ch. 3.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Letter 1756.

on March 29, 1832: "If the confessions are not finished, you can stay on for a day or so with Marcello so that there will not be any complaints…The confessions are very important."[128]

The confessions of the faithful were important to the Missionary during the mission. This is apparent not only from what we have said up to this point about the confessor of the mission, but also from the importance that this sacrament had in preaching and in the appeal to the faithful.

We already know that the topic of the catechetical instruction in the afternoon centered largely on the sacrament of penance.

Moreover, in the *Method*, St. Gaspar counsels that:

> …one should not neglect visits to the Hospitals and prisons, so that everyone profits from the holy time of the Mission. The fervor of Sacramental confession will increase where this is a preparation for receiving the Blessed Sacrament. The reverend Pastors will impress this upon the sick of their parish, and the special external confessors will be those who with generous zeal agree to assist with the aforementioned matters. Soldiers should also be taken into consideration in the allotment of ministers.

Every sermon, especially during the first part of the mission, was an invitation to conversion and thus to sacramental reconciliation. The faithful understood this message well, and many went to confession "after the first functions of penance" and sometimes there was a crowd immediately after the introduction to the mission.[129]

The reports from the different missions witness to the fruit of this catechetical instruction and to encouraging the reception of the sacrament of penance. Merlini affirms this:

> I will say only (since generally I took care of hearing the confessions of men) that I have heard the confessions of sinners of every sort and, in untold numbers, of those who

128 Letter 2307.
129 AS, Ch. 3.

> for years and years had not approached the sacraments and were weighed down with misery. I was not the only one besieged by penitents, for the very same thing could be said for all our helping companions.[130]

In some places they finally had to provide guards to keep order, so great was the crush near the confessionals.

2.0 The Sacrament of the Eucharist

If the sacrament of penance was the supreme sign of conversion in the mission of St. Gaspar, the supreme sign of sanctification was the Eucharist, in which the faithful expressed a newly acquired or strengthened communion with God and neighbor. In the mission of St. Gaspar, the Eucharist was considered both under the aspect of sacramental Communion and under the broader aspect of Eucharistic devotion.

2.1 Sacramental Communion

St. Gaspar wanted to bring the faithful to celebrate sacramental Communion during his missions. It was the immediate objective. In the *Method*, speaking of visits to hospitals and to prisons, he states: "The fervor of Sacramental confession will increase where this is a preparation for receiving the Blessed Sacrament." We also know that the final instruction of the afternoon catechism was to treat "the dispositions necessary for worthy reception of Communion."

An important aspect of the Eucharistic mystery taken into consideration in the mission of St. Gaspar would be the sacramental Communions at the end of the mission: the general Communions, Communion to the sick, and First Communion, if this was to be celebrated.

130 *AS,* Ch. 3.

2.1 – 1. General Communions

General Communions, one for the women and one for the men, took place on the last two days of the mission in the church chosen, at four hours before midday. Everyone was free to receive Communion on other days and in other churches during the mission. What the *Method* deals with "only…with the persons who are to participate in the public function [of general Communion] and the way that this is carried out."

The church was to be available to accommodate the group of persons who would be participating in the general Communion.

Every woman carried either a rosary or a crucifix in her hands. At the beginning of the Mass, the director of the mission invited the women to place a crown of thorns on their heads, according to the practice of Fr. Segneri, which was then taken off at the end of Mass. This sign gave the cue to the Missionary to preach a *fervorino*. According to the principles of Segneri, "the crown of thorns is used to renew the renunciation of vanities."

The Missionary should remind them that:

> We are members of a head who was crowned with thorns, and that one should have a special memory of the Passion of Jesus Christ…The one who consents to worldly thoughts, as far as this is due to human malice, weaves a new crown of thorns for the Divine Lord… It will be noted that sin has its origin in the will, but the will must be fixed in the will of the Most High…
>
> In addition, let it be said that if they love the lily of purity, it needs to be guarded by the thorns of mortification. Let them see that in the future they will not contract the stain of sin that constitutes the thorns in our heart…They will be urged to keep the crowns, and when the enemy tempts them to offend against God, they will take those crowns of thorns in their hands so that they have a very vivid memory of the Mission, etc.

In the Communion of the men, all the confraternities are to participate in a procession, and they will have a separate place in the church. The men could have a crucifix or the crown of Mary in their hands.

The celebrations took place with great solemnity, animated by hymns and the sound of the organ.

2.1 – 2. Communion to the Sick

On the morning of the first day after the sermon of reminders, Communion was solemnly taken to the sick. All the pastors of the place participated, along with the bishop or his vicar. Before administering the Eucharist, a Missionary addressed a brief *fervorino* to the sick person. If the place where the mission took place was very large, there would be two processions. At the end, the procession returned to the church, where another *fervorino* followed, during which the Missionary urged the people to practice Eucharistic devotion, a topic to be treated later.

According to the deposition of Bartolomeo Panzini[131] in the processes for St. Gaspar's beatification and canonization, during Communion to the sick St. Gaspar would collect alms, which he then left with the neediest sick persons:

> ...when the day for the general Communion for the sick arrived, he would have some of his confreres go out seeking donations, and then those alms that were collected were divided among the sick people who were most in need, giving to each one a certain share. This is how he regulated this part of the program. When Communion was brought

131 Bartolomeo Panzini (1791-1874) was St. Gaspar's helper for seventeen years. He accompanied him on missions and visitations of the houses of the Congregation. Because of his abrasive character he was not always well liked by many other missionaries, and this was a source of humiliation and criticism of St. Gaspar. Panzini was obviously very dedicated to St. Gaspar, who in turn trusted in him and could speak freely with him. He gave two testimonies during the process for the beatification and canonization of St. Gaspar. His testimony here is taken from an unpublished English translation. The testimony is available in English translation only in a digital version.

out, one, two or three of the confreres went through the audience collecting alms from the people nearest to the first sick person. After the priest gave Communion to that sick person, he would make his exit and then one of the confreres would approach the sick person and, emptying the collection basket, would present him with all the alms that he had collected up to then. So, if there were other poor sick people in that same area, the confrere, or the confreres, involved would extend their appeal, and then after that second poor person received Communion, he was taken care of in just the same way as the first one, and so on, with any other poor people.

2.1 – 3. First Communion of the Children

On the second morning, the first Communion ceremony of the children took place. They had been prepared by catechism and a retreat day during the mission. Everything was to take place with the greatest recollection of spirit and with loving devotion.

Those receiving Communion would gather in the assigned church. Two processions formed, one for the boys and one for the girls, and they would then process to the church chosen for the ceremony. The boys wore "the sacred scapular (*abito*) of the Madonna" prominently over their clothing, a sign of the "inner habit (*abito*) of justice, with which their souls must be adorned." The girls wore a white mantle with a crown of flowers. "These flowers will remind them of the collection of virtues that must form the mystical crown of the soul."

When they reached the church, the boys took their places on the decorated benches. The entire church was to be festively decorated, "because this is the day of the solemn wedding of the soul with Jesus Christ, alluded to by the crown of flowers worn by the girls." Hymns and the playing of the organ would accompany this rite, as with other general Communions.

When Mass ended, every child would receive some devotional object and immediately the *Te Deum* was sung, "in thanksgiving to the Lord for the benefit given to those who just received Communion." Meanwhile the boys would proceed two by two to kiss the Crucifix, and at the same time, two missionaries kissed their feet, recalling the humble gesture "performed by Jesus Christ when he washed the feet of the Apostles" and as a sign of respect toward the boys who have been "made holy in a special way."

The girls remained in their places and the missionaries offered the Crucifix for them to kiss. The function ended with the blessing by the Crucifix. Then the boys returned in procession to the church from which they came and from there to their own homes.

2.2 Eucharistic Devotion

St. Gaspar was not only concerned with bringing the faithful to Eucharistic Communion, but also developed pastoral activities aimed at renewing in their hearts Eucharistic devotion in various aspects.

First, there was the Mass. Each day of the mission began with the celebration of two Masses: The Mass of the Chaplet of the Precious Blood and the Mass of the Rosary.

With the Mass of the Chaplet, he intended to encourage "the people to hope for every benefit from the Eternal Divine Father, by means of the inestimable price of our Redemption, which is offered on the Altar in the bloodless Sacrifice." In this way, the people are reminded of the truth of the sacrificial banquet, the holy Mass. Reciting the Seven Offerings at the end of Mass was the continuation of the prayer of intercession offered during the Mass.

A similar emphasis on the Mass as the actualization of the sacrifice of Christ came at the beginning of the mission, when the Missionary made the introduction and would speak of the Mass that would be celebrated for the souls in purgatory to ask their

assistance during the mission. He would tell the people that "in the Blood of the Innocent Lamb, who offers himself on the Altar, abides all our hope."

The thanksgiving after Mass, moreover, emphasized by the witness of the Missionary each morning, was a call to the faithful.

The people were urged to make adoration of the Eucharistic Jesus every time they entered a church. From the opening of the mission, after meeting the people at the entrance to the town, they would go to the principal church to adore the Blessed Sacrament. Every day, before the afternoon sermon, the missionary catechist would enter the church with the brothers and would visit the Blessed Sacrament. The same held true for the visiting sermons: The Missionary who went to the neighboring parishes would meet the people, and then he would adore the Blessed Sacrament. The various parishes that participated in the mission processions would also be accompanied to the church and would immediately make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Another aspect of Eucharistic devotion in the mission of St. Gaspar was benediction with the Blessed Sacrament.

Benediction was not restricted to the opening and concluding functions of the mission. Every day, at the end of the great sermon, there would be solemn Eucharistic benediction in the church or piazza, depending on where the function had been held.

Another form of Eucharistic devotion was the procession with the Blessed Sacrament. The first procession took place to bring Communion to the sick, as we have previously seen. In this situation, the final *fervorino* was meant to

> offer the people all the appropriate information related to the devotion (*culto*) that is to be given to such a Divine Mystery. He will instruct the people of means (*possidenti*), and others who are able, to consider it an obligation to accompany the Blessed Sacrament with a torch or candle in

a public triumphal act of Religion when they hear the bell announcing this.

On the afternoon of the same day in which Communion was distributed to the sick, "a solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament [was held], using the equipment (*apparato*) used for Corpus Christi." The procession would leave the city by one of the gates, and from there the entire territory where the mission was held would be blessed, preceded by a *fervorino*. During the procession, stops were made in front of hospitals, girls' academies, and jails to bless the sick, the students, retired people, the imprisoned, etc.

In the *fervorini* that were given during these processions or at their conclusion, the Missionary was to "give the appropriate information related to the devotion (*culto*) that is to be given to such a Divine Mystery," and was to encourage "all, with devout discourses, to venerate Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."

3. Conclusion

The presence of the sacraments in the mission of St. Gaspar went hand in hand with the goal that had been set for the mission: the conversion and sanctification of Christians. This sanctification was not limited to confession and sacramental Communion in the mission, but was also to give life and growth in grace to the faithful after the mission, as the Missionary encouraged in the *fervorino* at the general Communion of the women. All the people had been reconciled, and indeed, their very nature was blessed by Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in communion with God and in peace with one another.

CHAPTER VII

THE TESTIMONY OF THE MISSIONARIES

In a letter to Merlini written in Rimini in May 1829, St. Gaspar expresses his regret at not being able to personally preach the mission in Gaeta because of all the commitments he had, and he says, among other things:

> Besides, Gaeta could be taken care of without me, for there is nothing that I am good for except *to glory in my infirmities* (2 Cor 12:5, 9). We are only channels or aqueducts (cf. Col 3:11). *[It is] God, who works all things* in all *people* (1 Cor 12:6).
>
> Experience, however, has shown that, in a given place, when they imagined that the Mission would not turn out to be successful if I did not appear, nevertheless, a great fruit ensued. Such an observation merits repetition so that God will be praised in all things. Likewise, one might come to know that God *alone works great wonders* (Ps 136:4), and in addition, the minds of men will be relieved of apprehensions, so that his goodness is made available to souls who are more anxious.[132]

This text could lead to the erroneous conclusion that the Missionary was not an essential part of the mission: since God alone works miracles in the missions, one might be tempted to conclude that the human instrument has little relevance. This is certainly not the thought of St. Gaspar. For the mission in Gaeta, as with

132 Letter 1932.

every other mission, he did not simply replace himself with just any priest, but only with one of his own missionaries. Precisely because they had been given a special vocation, they could be channels and aqueducts of God in the missions, just as he was. In the same letter, anticipating the eventual difficulty that not all had his gifts ("But they will say: one must acknowledge God's gifts"), St. Gaspar makes an important response: "But these [gifts] are in the Institute and for the Institute, without excluding our personal gifts and faithful cooperation."[133]

In saying this, St. Gaspar intended to say that to be an instrument of God to bring fruit in the missions was a charism "in the Institute and for the Institute." It was a charism for each of its members, if they personally cooperated in the vocation they had received. It is not just any person or priest, therefore, but only those given a special vocation who can be living instruments of God in achieving some fruit of the mission.

According to Gaspar, what is the identity of the Missionary, so that the mission can be a channel and aqueduct of God's grace for souls?

We respond to this question by examining primarily, although not exclusively, what St. Gaspar says in the *Method of the Missions*, in which he offers a fragmentary sketch of the characteristics of a Missionary.[134]

1. The Identity of the Missionary According to St. Gaspar[135]

Above all, St. Gaspar considers the Missionary a person given a special vocation: it is a call from God for an important work, that of the missions. For this reason, he would repeat to his confreres that "after the grace given us by the Lord to be born in the bosom of the

133 Ibid.
134 Quotations that are not footnoted are from *Method of the Missions*.
135 For additional material on St. Gaspar's idea of the identity of the missionary, a review of the *Circular Letters* of the Saint would also be instructive. These letters were written to members and students on the occasion of the annual retreat.

Roman Church and instructed in the Catholic faith, the greatest destiny to which we have been called is to the sacred ministry."[136]

The Missionary, for his part, was to join to this gift his infinite gratitude, collaboration, and perseverance: "We must therefore thank God continuously and pray always for the grace to collaborate and persevere in his wisest designs."[137] "Let us together bless God, who *called us by his holy calling* (2 Tm 1:9), and may life be completely occupied in obtaining his greater divine Glory." This gratitude had to be more profound to the extent that the Missionary experienced his own wretchedness (*meschinità*): "Let us acknowledge the fact that God, in his goodness, makes use of our wretchedness," he writes to Don Rafaelle Rosati.[138] To Don Francesco Pierantoni: "Yet, we are not worthy of working for God, and he surely does not have need of us. It is his grace that raises us above our own misery."[139]

Given that the missionary vocation is a special gift of God, appropriate discernment is needed, as with any other vocation.

The discernment to discover the will of God requires prayer: "Whoever wishes to dedicate himself to the Apostolic life of the Missions must first come to know the will of the Most High in prayer." In addition, it was necessary to reflect "in holy recollection," on the "gifts required in a Gospel Worker."

Beyond prayer and personal reflection, a spiritual guide was needed for a more objective judgment:

> Because, as De Sales would say, everyone needs a guide, so that he does not err in knowing the Divine good pleasure, then one must discuss this at length with a spiritual director, since this is a principle followed by all the saints. We Ecclesiastics especially need a learned and fervent director,

136 The reference is to a document, *Super virtutibus,* which was part of the process of St. Gaspar's process of beatification and canonization.
137 Ibid.
138 Letter 2313.
139 Letter 558.

> to whom may be entrusted the inner governance of our soul, which animates and sanctifies external activities.

St. Gaspar adds another means of discernment for reaching complete certitude in judging a missionary vocation: the practice of ministry and a holy life in the Congregation. He writes to Don Luigi Locatelli on November 1, 1820: "The certificate of the Missionary is not granted until one has participated in a Mission and after obtaining sensitive (*delicate*) information from the Ordinary. I esteem all applicants, but you know very well how exalted a ministry this is."[140] To Fr. Vincenzo Giovannelli on October 29, 1830, he writes:

> Thank you very much for your charity in advising me in the selection of new members. I can say to you that your observations are most correct. However, I am duty-bound to require this, that and the other, plus so many documents. I write to the bishops to get information so that from all this I can determine that true spirit of God by which our Missionaries are animated. They serve the glory of God amid inescapable thorns and tribulations here below...[141]

The reason he gives for such a rigorous selection process is this: "For this type of work surely requires persons with merit and men who are suitable for this ministry. It is a matter of an institution which has such an important work in giving Missions and of providing to the clergy good examples of apostolic life."[142]

The "missionary helpers" (*i missionari in subsidium*), that is, those priests who remain in their own residences and commit themselves for part of the year to assist in the mission, would receive, a year after their request, the "certificate" of aggregation in the Institute. However, St. Gaspar very quickly began to use only

140 Letter 359. Apparently, the practice of granting a "certificate" (*patente*) to a missionary only after some experience continued for many years. A missionary was "confirmed" and given the mission cross after a period of probation. [Translator]
141 Letter 2091.
142 Letter 196. The emphasis is St. Gaspar's.

those who lived in the Houses of the Institute for the ministry of the missions.[143]

The desire to form missionaries more capable of the ministry in the missions spurred St. Gaspar to open the formation houses (*convitti*) of the Congregation, where young men had formation for the priesthood. He expresses his satisfaction when he writes to Pietro Barcaroli on August 6, 1836:

> ...the status of our Institute nowadays is in a period of growth because of the supply of members and foundations that have been made, ever since the time of Leo XII's pontificate. We go out on Missions only with individuals who are *de gremio* 'of the womb' and live in our Mission Houses, with all due respect to those priests who were of assistance in the beginnings of our Society.[144]

In a letter of May 8, 1832, St. Gaspar laments that the bishop of Sora went directly to the Missionary Don Domenico Silvestri, who was at home with his family, asking him to give missions and spiritual exercises to the people with another priest who was not of the Congregation. He writes to Silvestri's uncle, Don Giuseppe Maria Silvestri:

> I respect the bishop, but when an individual has offered himself to an Institute, it is not proper nor in keeping with good order for him to operate in that fashion. Hence, I now feel distressed, since from the time of the Pontificate of Leo XII, the Institute, while maintaining respect for each worker, does not accept in the ministry priests who do not live in our Houses.[145]

So far St. Gaspar has told us that the missionary vocation is a special vocation that God grants to some. It is a vocation to be discerned in prayer, in personal reflection and in consultation

143 Letter 2332.
144 Letter 3207.
145 Letter 2332.

with a spiritual director. It is a vocation to be experienced in the practice of missionary life, which is both a communitarian and an apostolic life.

In the *Method*, St. Gaspar points out the signs or the "gifts" of a missionary vocation. They are: holiness, knowledge, and health.

1.1. Holiness

Holiness is most important. It is St. Gaspar's firm conviction that "people…think of missionaries as holy men, and this is also the expectation of the Church."[146] Missionaries must therefore be holy men, witnesses and living models of the message of conversion and of sanctification they announce. To be holy means to have a heart filled with the love of God and of neighbor and a sincere and ongoing commitment to grow in that love: "an ongoing desire to grow in holiness each day, along with an uninterrupted study of clerical perfection."

Holiness is the first requirement of a Missionary. St. Gaspar held himself to this as well: "I am in special need of being recommended to our most merciful God since ministers of the sanctuary must have a solid foundation in virtue and such a strong love for God so that he can sustain his own fervor and even increase it by sharing it with others."[147] He prayed for holiness in his missionaries, writing to Don Adriano Tarulli on Christmas of 1821:

> God knows how greatly I wish that you receive copiously every heavenly favor so that you will become increasingly saintly and filled with the love of God to be able to instill fervor in the people through the holy Missions and whatever else you promote with zeal.[148]

In his *Method for the Spiritual Exercises*, St. Gaspar exhorts his missionaries with these heartfelt words:

146 *Praxis* of the *Rule*, art. 7.
147 Letter 128.
148 Letter 523.

> If the apostle St. Paul was fearful that, after preaching to others, he might become more reprehensible than all of them, what ought we to say if the Apostle felt that way? Keep well in mind that since we are to communicate a spirit of fervor to others, it is necessary that we be well supplied and filled in a special way ourselves.[149]

Only by means of a continuous growth in holiness, encouraged by the spiritual director that every Missionary should have, will the Missionary "become what God calls him to be."

There are certain virtues that must characterize the holiness of the Missionary.

Moral strength is especially important, as it sustains the Missionary in the great tests that he encounters in his specific ministry. The history of the missions records great successes and enthusiasms, but also rejections and disparaging comments. St. Gaspar, who experienced such trials many times in his ministry, also writes in *Method*:

> Without doubt, the great ministry of collaborating in the salvation of souls is subject to great misfortunes. The Devil is not content with devoting his strength to these misfortunes, not only using the tongue of evil men, but even that of decent persons. They are seized by reckless zeal and allow the tongue or the pen to slip and discredit the work or the workers. The celebrated Padre Segneri, of distinguished memory, often repeated that one who does not have a generous heart, one that is ready to accept great pain, should not engage in this ministry. The Missionary should not expect anything but that his efforts will be considered of little value. It is a secure principle to always wish to gain the glory of God and the benefit of Souls.

149 *Method for the Retreats Prescribed by the Rule for our Communities*. This document is available in digital form along with the Circular Letters of St. Gaspar.

Later in the *Method* he writes: "On the other hand, the Devil, ever the enemy of the good, never ceases to present such a holy ministry in a terrible and repellent light. From the very accounts of the missions, it is easy to see how great his efforts are."

In the face of these and other difficulties St. Gaspar exclaims: "Courage, then, in the apostolic labors, because the suffering is short, but the joy eternal."[150] He comforts his missionaries: "Amid pains and thorns, do not abandon the ministry. The act is that much more meritorious the more difficult it is."[151]

The holiness of the Missionary, moreover, had to be grounded in a profound humility. It is true that the Missionary had to have a chest of bronze to put up with the distress of ministry, especially from those who disparaged the missions, as frequently occurred, but it is also true that perhaps even more often, he would find himself immersed in an atmosphere of special honor. If in the first case he had to be sustained by his courage, in the second case the Missionary had to be thoroughly humble. St. Gaspar urges: "If he sees that he is honored from time to time, let him give those honors to God, repeating with the Psalmist: *Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory* (Psalm 115)."

Humility was not only the remedy in these moments, but rather was the fundamental virtue that rendered the Missionary a supple instrument for the grace of God. "As has been shown, what is needed is the diligent exercise of profound and sincere humility. Without this virtue, one hopes in vain to succeed as a suitable instrument for giving glory to God." In the letters to his missionaries, St. Gaspar often returns to this virtue, as in this letter to Don Domenico Silvestri: "If we always strive after holy humility, God will also add special, extraordinary helps in proportion to that humble life. *Humble yourself in all things* (Sir 3:20)."[152] "The ministry

150 Letter 105.
151 Letter 3162.
152 Letter 1590.

requires profound humility, which continues steadily to grow in its degrees."[153] Again to Silvestri:

> I thank God for the good work that you are doing there with the aid of divine grace, and may the honor and glory always redound to God. Do not be surprised if all hell should unleash itself at the time when the ministry calls you, a battle such as that is beneficial for one in getting himself to concentrate his soul on the idea of abandonment to God and in frequently repeating: *I am the man who sees his poverty* (Lam 3:1); also, Fr. Segneri (the Elder), who said: 'the deep of mercy calls out to the deep of mercy (cf. Ps 42:7).'
>
> To obtain an increase of gifts, therefore, it is urgent that we immerse ourselves increasingly in the pursuit of holy humility and often meditate on the short verse[154] dealing with that virtue which we hear day after day. Let the morning examination be concerned with this virtue of humility...[155]

In further describing the characteristics of a Missionary in the *Method,* St. Gaspar writes: "To such humility one should join a soft and discreet spirit of mortification, *so that Jesus should be made manifest in us* (cf. 2 Cor 4:10). Whoever engages in the Missions must keep in mind that he may suffer to gain souls for Jesus Christ."

In describing the holiness of the Missionary, St. Gaspar focuses on moral strength in the face of difficulties, on humility, on mortification and obedience, but certainly these are not the only virtues characterizing the holiness of the Missionary.

Elsewhere we have spoken about the spirit of prayer which was to animate the Missionary. Certainly, the holiness of the Missionary had to stand out in his zeal: the hardworking

153 Letter 1997.
154 This appears to be a reference to a collection of 31 couplets for meditation on the virtue of humility. In English translation, these formed part of the manual of prayers of the Congregation until relatively recently. [Translator]
155 Letter 1735.

charity of the ministers of the Gospel had to be untiring for the honor of God. The holiness of the Missionary was to be animated by his deep devotion to the Precious Blood. It is significant that he wrote so much about the pictures that were to adorn the walls of the Houses of the Institute. It is a practical detail, but one that reveals the very kernel of the spirituality of the Missionary. "One can…have some pictures that depict Apostolic Men exercising the holy ministry of the Missions, or which nurture a special devotion to the Divine Blood. Let these adorn the walls where they will encourage our spirit to be even more zealous concerning the good of our ministry."[156] Among the saints, as we know, the most important was obviously St. Francis Xavier, patron of the Institute.

We have a sufficiently complete synthesis of the spiritual and apostolic characteristics of the Missionary in the list of topics that are to be treated in the preaching called "reform" during the retreats for the missionaries: 1. The duties of a Missionary regarding his own sanctification and the means of attaining it…; 2. the duties of a Missionary regarding his fellow-companions and to the brothers-in-service…; 3. The duties of a Missionary, whether they relate to Pious Organizations that our Mission Houses promote or pertain to private or public Retreats or sacred Missions. Adhering to this method, we are referring opportunely to the Mass, to the ministry of hearing confessions, to the manner of proclaiming the divine word, to the mortification of ourselves, to our love for suffering, our sprit of prayer, of humility, of obedience without which the holy ministry entrusted to us by God can never be properly regulated. Each one of us must recall that *an obedient man speaks of victory* (Prv 21:28).[157]

156 *SF*, XII, 161.
157 *Method for the Retreats.* The NRSV has "a good listener will testify successfully."

1.2 Knowledge

St. Paul, in declaring his readiness to announce the Gospel to the Christians in Rome, articulates a principle that could be applied to all missionaries: *I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish* (Rom 1:14).

In the missions, the Missionary would encounter simple people with whom he sought to reawaken the practice of their faith or to educate them and urge them to live a more committed Christian life. He would encounter learned persons, priests or lay, to whom he was to proclaim the word of life. He would encounter persons hostile to the Church, full of prejudices and doubts, which the Missionary had to resolve with charity. All of this, having to deal with the learned and the ignorant, required a store of knowledge.

In his *Method*, St. Gaspar speaks explicitly of the knowledge only when he is speaking of the gifts required in a Gospel worker. But the discussion of the knowledge of the Missionary is always implicit: when speaking of different kinds of preaching, of the sacrament of penance, of the organization and good order of the retreat, of the works of perseverance, and of the rapport with the priests and local authorities, etc.

Treatment of the knowledge of the Missionary is covered well in the *Rule* of the Institute. St. Gaspar recalls this when writing to Don Domenico Silvestri on March 16, 1827: "The responsibility of a Missionary is great and hence it requires sanctity and knowledge. Our rule, when it is observed well, will provide us with the means to that end."[158] We turn to the *Rule*, then, to see how St. Gaspar presents us with the knowledge of a Missionary.

The *Rule* speaks of the knowledge of the Missionary in article 17: "It is fitting that [the missionaries] serve as examples to others by their knowledge of human and divine matters as well as by their conduct." This is a general principle: above all, the Missionary must

158 Letter 1590.

also excel in his knowledge, both human and divine. In the *Rule,* St. Gaspar sets forth the means for reaching that goal: "Therefore, besides the time which they will devote to private study, let them hold educational meetings on appointed days of the week in which they treat dogmatic, moral, and mystical theology, the liturgy, and sacred eloquence." In addition to the time dedicated to private study, in which the Missionary must not neglect whatever is related to the Missionary vocation, he participates in community meetings during the week, of at least an hour and a half in duration, for the study of fundamental subjects of theological and pastoral knowledge. The *Pro Praxi* of article 17 sets Monday for the study of Sacred Scripture, Tuesday for dogmatic theology, Wednesday and Thursday for moral theology, and Saturday for liturgy, spiritual theology, or preaching. St. Gaspar highly recommended this community study, which, in a spirit of service, was open to ecclesiastics from outside the Congregation. "The period of study can be held in the evening for the time being [it ordinarily took place in the morning] for one must spare time for both hearing confessions and preaching and I would like that it not be neglected."[159] These meetings were held throughout the year, except on those days on which everyone had to hear confessions, and from September 28 through November 4 inclusive, that is, during the autumn vacation.[160]

To assure the orthodoxy of the studies and a certain uniformity in formation, the Moderator General was to indicate the authors to be adopted for use in these community meetings.

St. Gaspar proposes a method to follow: first, the text is read, then questions (*dubbi*) are put forward. Each member then expresses his opinion, and finally, the meeting ends.[161]

Article 18 recommends distinguishing between "defined dogma and the opinions and beliefs (*placitis*) of the Scholastics,"

159 Letter 642.
160 Cf. *Praxis* art. 17.
161 Ibid.

because, as specified by the article in the *Praxis*, "according to the doctrine of Benedict XIV, one must hand on to the people only that which is certain. Because the Missionaries distinguish the certain from the uncertain and precept from counsel in their studies, let them express all this with accurate theological terms." Article 18 also recommends that missionaries use the obligatory method in discussions: "let them observe the method for disputations." The *Praxis* specifies: "In discussions, one should avoid excessive passion and stubbornness in maintaining one's own opinion. Because there is 'liberty in doubtful matters,' it is permissible for each to politely express his opinion. However, when the superior orders silence, let all cease, humbly and without delay."

What was the aim of the private and communal study made by the Missionary? The response is implied in what St. Gaspar has already been quoted as saying: "for one must spare time for both hearing confessions and preaching."[162] Study had to assist the Missionary to be educated and to be up to date as a preacher and confessor.

The specific apostolate of the Institute was giving missions and retreats.[163] Its members, therefore, had to have special preparation, competence, and commitment to proclaiming the word of God. In *Method of the Missions* St. Gaspar writes:

> It is also good, by way of an appropriate digression here, to note that whoever engages in the ministry of the missions several times a day should administer the Divine word according to his own strengths. Regarding this, if one reads the life of the famous Padre Baldinucci, one will see how God always accompanies the minister with the particular assistance of his mercy.

An aptitude for preaching was one of the criteria for selecting a person to be accepted into the Congregation: "Our practice of

162 Letter 642.
163 Cf. *Rule*, art. 2.

giving Missions and Retreats makes it clear that whoever does not wish to apply himself to the study of preaching should not consider joining this Institute, nor would the Institute admit him."[164]

Every priest of the Congregation, according to the measure of Christ's gift, had to be competent to preach missions and to give retreats to various categories of persons.[165] To achieve this, the Missionary had to apply himself to the study of sacred eloquence over and above his private and community study,[166] educating himself through the works of the great orators.[167] He had to prepare sermons and dedicate himself to "the exercise of public preaching."[168]

Regarding the preparation of sermons, article 24 of the *Rule* is especially valuable:

> When they are to deliver a sermon to an assembly let them construct it with care, having first implored the help of God. Disputed subjects are to be less acceptable than others. Let them select for moral instruction teachings which are certain and clear to the people and beneficial for their salvation. Let them adapt themselves by facility in speech to the feelings and the understanding of the audience, so that they may not weaken in any way the worth of the Divine word.

The *Praxis* for this article offers more precise instructions:

> The listeners should be given due respect, and all harshness and scolding that come from a false zeal are to be avoided. Let them cultivate the reverence and respect peculiar to clerics and say nothing that would harm that. Let their words not only speak about the vices to avoid, but also of the virtues to strive for, and to serve God with all one's heart, mind, and strength. They should present the truths of faith and the moral law to their hearers and let them speak to

164 Letter 619.
165 *Praxis*, art. 2.
166 *Rule*, art. 17.
167 Letter 1993.
168 *Rule*, art. 30.

> the heart and not only to the intellect. The Missionaries will reach this goal if they apply themselves to prayer and the reading of the Sacred Scriptures and of the works of the Fathers of the Church.

In the matter of preparation for catechetical instruction, some of the methodological suggestions that St. Gaspar offers to some missionaries are interesting. He writes to Don Orazio Bracaglia:

> Here is an example: you wish to give a catechetical instruction on charity. First read Segneri; next, check the index found in the *Manna* by the same author. There you will find other points beyond what you have discovered in his *Cristiano Istruito*. Then arrange your thoughts and proofs in successive order, supporting then with opportune examples, avoiding questionable matters in your preaching, and thus producing only certain doctrine. God will richly bless you. See that your preaching is simple, dignified, clear, and tending toward obtaining results. Avoid being monotonous and learn how to distinguish Fervorino from Instruction by the inflection of your voice.[169]

In another letter, St. Gaspar refines the methodology just noted:

> Meanwhile, one should keep an alphabetically arranged notebook in which the aforementioned doctrines are listed, and one should have Fr. Segneri's book, *Il Cristiano Istruito*, which will be very helpful. You can likewise extract from it whatever you find adaptable, and this too should be incorporated into your alphabetically arranged notebook. Then, too, do not forget sacred theology, and when that notebook is quite filled, including other thoughts and reflections that might occur to you, then you should work on placing all that material into an orderly and methodical system using as many notebooks as are necessary for giving the lessons. The alphabetical arrangement will serve to bring all the topics together

169 Letter 2674.

so that you can work on them for the instructions. This procedure will be most useful for you.[170]

Everything that the Missionary had to consider in preparing his preaching and catechetical instruction was meant to obtain the conversion and sanctification of the people. He also had to train himself to preach in various forms,[171] especially so that he could instruct young secular priests.[172] In the exercise of preaching, the missionaries "are all to learn to be modest in what they say, in words, gestures, and approach."[173]

Besides being a preacher, the Missionary also had to be a minister of the sacrament of penance. We have already noted that St. Gaspar would not admit into the Institute anyone who did not want to apply himself to preaching. In the *Praxis*, article 2, he makes an exception, as already noted. After recalling that each priest of the Congregation had to be suitable for preaching missions and retreats, he says: "But if someone is not able to engage in [preaching], it is enough if he is able to administer the sacrament of Penance. In this way he will be able to support part of the ministry in another way." Thus, in article 30, having spoken of the commitment of the Missionary to "the exercise of public preaching," he immediately adds: "hearing confessions." As in the case of preaching, so in the ministry of the sacrament of penance, the missionaries had to become teachers, especially of young priests,[174] to the extent that the bishops could entrust them with the responsibility of solving moral cases for the diocesan clergy.[175]

In his letters, St. Gaspar often urged his missionaries to study moral theology, indicating the authors to be followed. He writes to

170 Letter 232.
171 *Rule*, art. 30
172 *Praxis*, art. 30.
173 *Praxis*, art. 24.
174 *Praxis*, art. 30.
175 *Praxis*, art 17.

the young Missionary Orazio Bracaglia:

> With reference to hearing confessions, read *The Penitent and the Confessor*, instructions by Father Segneri; then there is the *Directorio* of Blessed Leonard; also, finally, there is the *Directorio* of Ven. De Rossi. Father Tommaso must have a copy of that. Lastly, there is the third volume of the *Operetta* of Blessed Liguori. In addition to your diligent study, add prayer, stimulated by humility.[176]

The *Rule*, above all, sheds light on the second "endowment" that St. Gaspar required of the Missionary, that is, knowledge. This is a knowledge of matters human and sacred, a knowledge that is being updated continuously, so that the Missionary, by means of the word and the administration of the sacrament of penance, could communicate to the faithful certain doctrine that was useful "to their moral instruction and salvation (*ad morum informationem salutemque*).[177]

1.3 Health

This is the third endowment that St. Gaspar requires of a Missionary. The ministry of the missions requires good health in those who dedicate themselves to it. There are different reasons for this: the difficulties in traveling, the intense work in giving the mission, fatigue in speaking because of the lack of the means of amplification, the continual change in diet and lodging, fatigue from confessions. A mission that is prepared and conducted well was an "assault on the people" and a spiritual "earthquake."

It was spiritual, but it was always an earthquake for the health of the missionaries. According to Bartolomeo Panzini, St. Gaspar often repeated to his missionaries "that they are hunters and fishers of souls, and just like hunters and fishers, bad weather does not deter them, and they have only one thing in mind, namely, the catch

176 Letter 2674.
177 *Rule*, art. 24.

which they want. That is exactly how missionaries must conduct themselves."[178] He used to say, however, "that our mortifications and penances are the roads to the missions," as Don Domenico Silvestri testified in the canonization process. One needed good health to deal with the difficult times and the fatigue of ministry. For this reason, St. Gaspar recommended frugal but sufficient meals, and punctuality in observing the schedule to get the necessary rest so that the Missionaries could endure the exertions of the ministry.

Gaspar's concern for the health of the missionaries is mentioned in the deposition of Don Domenico Silvestri, speaking of charity toward one's neighbor.[179] Sometimes St. Gaspar had to recommend moderation in the work to Don Domenico and others. He writes to Silvestri on March 16, 1827:

> I learn with pleasure of the fruits of the Holy Mission. Let us praise God who makes use of the weakest of instruments for the great work of His glory. I wish urgently to encourage a prudent regard for your health, since you have not fully recovered from a very strong fever. If one loses his health as a young man, *the deed is done*... There will always be that remorse of not having set things in the right order. I have insisted on this very same thing with Canon Betti, asking him to take care of himself as he does the others. We will need still another month, so to speak, to achieve the fulfillment of all our commitments. But the apostle's saying will thus be verified: *Let everything be done honorably and in order* (1 Cor 14:40).[180]

At other times, by contrast, he had to goad one or the other Missionary who was dispensing himself from ministry, claiming that the reason was a health matter, when the truth was that it was

178 Testimony of Panzini in the process for the beatification and canonization of St. Gaspar.
179 A reference to the testimony given in the process for the beatification and canonization of St. Gaspar.
180 Letter 1590.

only his anxious character. Don Pietro Spina had a case of serious timidity and often needing nursing because of stomach problems, coughs, and other discomforts. St. Gaspar, knowing well the origin of such illnesses, writes to him:

> Your stomach distress and other ailments will vanish as you continue to preach. To give in to them and to set aside your preaching is to abandon the pursuit of the greater glory of God. You should be like a helmsman who, in contrary winds, sets sail for port. The fact that your condition is a bit out of the ordinary is something that has not escaped the attention of the person who directs you. It matters little for you to know its origin.[181]

And in another letter:

> Regarding your stomach distress, two things: First, keep in mind that Jesus accomplished much good through suffering: offer it up and you will be comforted. Second, take a little water of St. Xavier. But my dear friend, do not set aside doing good because of that ailment. If God so disposes it, it is because he wants you to be a victim of obedience: *The obedient man will speak of victories* (Prv 21:28).[182]

St. Gaspar knew from his long experience that "the marks of the apostolate are [found] in great patience."[183] This was a phrase that he wrote again a month before his death. But he also would say: "Your work in the ministry will produce a beautiful crown for heaven, and through it you are becoming a true imitator of the great Xavier."[184]

So, as we have recounted, he never forced the hand of another, knowing from personal experience the limits of "brother body." He sought to give his missionaries a ministry with the necessary

181 Letter 2407.
182 Letter 2423.
183 Letter 3598.
184 Letter 1982.

rest. He expresses this in a letter: "The continuous application to the work of the ministry has quite a number of our men traveling about. Indeed, always half of the number of men are in motion and the others take a bit of respite from the hard work, remaining there in our Houses."[185] In the case of continued missions, he provides for "a little respite": "If during the course of the missions a little rest is needed, they are to choose some religious house apart from populated places, and there take time for quiet and repose in God, using proportionate care."

If St. Gaspar was so sympathetic with others, he did not have those kinds of concerns about himself: "We can rest in Paradise!" he would respond when invited to take "a little rest." Very interesting in this regard is the following letter of Monsignor Stefano Bellini, bishop of Loreto and Recanati, where St. Gaspar had preached missions in 1818:

> You should remember that whoever wants to work so hard must pace himself. I am old (in my eighties) and have seen many who have wanted to push themselves more than necessary who then had to give up rather quickly. Excuse me if I say all this, but please attribute this to my desire that you do greater good."[186]

His niece Luigia demonstrated her concerns about the fatiguing trips for ministry that he was making in continued urgings, and St. Gaspar responded with a certain indignation:

> For the last time, it is understood that you must always be equally cheerful about my travels. This is the great teaching of De Sales. St. Francis Xavier was born in Spain, and yet God wished him to go as an apostle to the Indies. There would be very little good work done in the world if each person were to seek only his own comforts. I, too, would be pleased to remain at home; but then I would be adapting myself to

185 Letter 1891.
186 Testimony from the beatification and canonization process.

> the human will and not to God's, which is something that should never occur. That is why one says: *Your will be done*. It is not good to have inappropriate desires, for in doing so one could be displeasing to God whom we are to serve with cheerfulness. I shall remain away whenever God wills it...[187]

This "pressing" (*spremere*) of himself for the love of God and his brothers and sisters without limit, following the example of Christ, was the "occasional cause" of his death, as Doctor Mazzucchelli states:

> The death of the great Canon Del Bufalo was a suppuration of the lungs. The inflammation of the chest lasted many months, and the occasional causes were his apostolic labors, the cold, and hardships. Because he did not want to stop his apostolic commitments, he neglected the cure that in principle could have helped him. He made himself a victim of charity. I, the undersigned, can testify to this because I was his physician during the last period of his life.[188]

At the end of this analysis we can sketch the character of the Missionary of the Precious Blood according to St. Gaspar: he is a priest – member of a missionary Congregation – endowed with a special vocation to be a collaborator with God in the salvation of souls by means of the special ministry of popular missions. This ministry requires that he have, as fundamental gifts, an exemplary sanctity animated by devotion to the Blood of Christ, an excellent theological knowledge, and good conditions of health.

It is good to remember, finally, before treating the witness of the Missionary in the mission, the condition that St. Gaspar held to be indispensable for the personality of the Missionary: a recollected life (*la vita ritirata*). He writes that "the Missionary is a

187 Letter 2088

188 Testimony given in 1838. *Notizie del Fondatore,* II, f. 533. This is a reference to a document in the General Archives of the Congregation in Rome.

Carthusian at home and an Apostle in the field."[189] The Missionary must know how to join a very active apostolic life with an intense life of recollection, of silence, and of contemplation: "In solitude, the spirit is cultivated; in solitude, knowledge etc."[190] In solitude one restores his strength in every sense. As he says in another letter, citing a selection from St. Lawrence Justinian, solitude "is the haven of tranquility, refuge of sinners, mother of graces, gate of heaven, a place of prayer, mother of compunction, seat of righteousness, incentive of meditation, singular help of holy contemplation."[191]

2. The Witness of the Missionaries in the Mission

In a letter to Monsignor Annibale Ginnasi, speaking of the "marvelous effectiveness of good example," St. Gaspar addresses priests with the following Gospel passage:

> *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house* (Mt 5:14-15). You, my ministers, (says Jesus) in a distinct way must be the light of the world with the sanctity of your life, the salt of the earth with the wisdom of your teaching. Remember that you form that mystical City visible to all because it is founded not indeed on the level of any one virtue alone, but on the structure of the symbolical mountain of ecclesiastical perfection. Your practices and your deeds must be resplendent in my Church like burning lamps; and if in your zeal for my glory and for the fulfilment of my precepts you so conduct yourselves that the deeds confirm the words, you will come to the point of not only persuading souls of what they must do for eternal salvation, but even convincing them that they can be joyfully successful in the very undertaking. Your life will serve as a norm for them, and you will be the practical teachers of virtue and evangelical

189 Letter 2968.
190 Ibid.
191 Letter 2522.

perfection. *In all things show yourself to be an example of good works* (Ti 2:3).[192]

These words, written in 1813 when St. Gaspar was seriously thinking about devoting himself to the ministry of the holy missions,[193] ring true for every priest, but are especially valuable for his missionaries. With the witness of their exemplary life, they must be a living Gospel as much as they proclaim the Gospel in the missions. "Let us think of ourselves and let us preach to others by our good example…"[194]

The good example incumbent on the Missionary encompassed all aspects of the priestly life lived according to the Gospel, so that the Missionary had to be and to conduct himself like any faithful minister of the Lord.[195] Regarding the witness to be given in the missions, St. Gaspar called to mind only some aspects that he considered most important. At the end of the "Advice for the Missionaries" he says: "These are the principal counsels that are to be called to mind, to fulfill our holy ministry correctly. Observing these will make us know the greater [benefit] which comes from them."

What are these special counsels?

Some of them concern the behavior of the missionaries during the trip to the site of the mission. Others, the behavior of the Missionary as the mission is carried out, and others, at the end of the mission.

2.1 Traveling

The missionaries had to begin giving witness to their holiness when traveling toward the site of the mission. St. Gaspar had some pertinent recommendations on the topic.

192 Letter 42.
193 Cf. Letters 77 and 79.
194 Letter 1202.
195 Cf. *Rule*, art 1 and 2.

When on a journey, he admonishes, "the method of cultivating a proper spirit, indicated above, is not to be interrupted." This means that while traveling, the missionaries had to perform all those practices of piety (personal meditation, community prayer, etc.) that they would ordinarily perform in the Mission House.

The second recommendation regarded dress: "One always travels in the habit of the Missionary, which is distinguished primarily by the Crucifix that is worn hanging from the neck, and the recommended cincture." It is interesting to learn the motivation for this: "The good example of this garb will be of great influence on the public, as well as being a comfort to the gospel Workers."

Another recommendation: "If it is necessary to admit someone to their company in the coach, this should be an honest person, and never one of the opposite sex." This is to protect the reputation of the Missionaries and for other obvious reasons.

When staying at an inn or hostel, the Missionaries had to conduct themselves with reserve: "In the hostels in which they necessarily find themselves, they should choose to retire and take whatever food is necessary in their own rooms, always demonstrating the greatest spiritual recollection."

The Missionaries had to conduct themselves like missionaries during the trip: they were not to deplete their energies and they had to preserve the "Carthusian" style of life that they led in community.

2.2 During the mission

During the journey, but especially during the mission, they were to remember what was characteristic of their holiness: not to become despondent in the face of difficulties, but to have a "generous heart, ready to endure great disappointments." They should not expect recognition of their labors from others, but rather "contempt and complaints," without ceasing to glorify God. When they meet with some sign of esteem and honor, they should humble themselves, etc.

Besides these basic observations, St. Gaspar also mentions others describe the Missionaries as genuine witnesses to the faithful and aim to establish in the missions a certain style of life like that of the Mission Houses.

In the mission, the Missionary team had to consider themselves to be a temporary community, formed from members coming from various communities, under the authority of the director of the mission. This is discussed in article 55 of the *Praxis* of the *Rule*: "The Director of the Mission is the acting Superior of the Ministers, to whom the others are subject from the time they leave the Mission House until they return to it." He was to be obeyed: "He is chosen as Director of the Mission; let the others practice submission and docility." This was a very important norm for the peaceful conduct of the ministry of the missions and for the witness of common life among the Missionaries. St. Gaspar emphasizes that, by means of submission and docility, each of the Missionaries gave "good example to one another by the practice of the virtues," in such a way that all would be "a single heart and a single will." A visible expression of this community was living together: The Missionaries were to stay together in the same dwelling and not separated into various houses to eat or to sleep. A brother-in-service of the Congregation provided the ordinary necessities for the community.[196]

The director of the mission was assisted by his confreres in the decisions that he had to make. Gaspar adds: "It is not contrary to obedience to offer the one directing [the mission] some observation for improving things." Having given such suggestions, they need to accept the decisions of the director regarding the assignment of responsibilities, the distribution of ministries, etc., as we will see in the next chapter.

The members of this missionary community also continued to cultivate an interior spirit while living in community during the mission:

196 Cf. SF, XII, 57, 152.

> Above all, one should keep one's own perfection in sight (as St. Francis Xavier used to write to Father Gaspare Barzeo). During a mission one should not fail to fulfill faithfully what is owed to God and to one's own conscience. In this way one becomes capable of rendering service to one's neighbor and producing much fruit in souls.

To nurture the spirit, the Missionaries had to attend a half hour of mental and community prayer, "in which they replenished their spiritual forces." After the meditation they recited seven *Glorias* to the Divine Blood, the Angelus, and some verses of Scripture. During the midday meal, "for at least half the meal" there would be spiritual reading, ordinarily the responsibility of some cleric of the place. In the evening, after supper, there was prayer in common: the examination of conscience, Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Gloria in honor of St. Francis Xavier.

This community was also to observe the order of the mission. The schedule of the mission was posted in the sacristy of the principal church and in the place where the Missionaries lived. "Let it be noted in passing that...all the missionaries should take care to be ready for community functions (*atti comuni*) by obeying whoever would be in charge of the Prayer."

As was prescribed for the Mission Houses,[197] "women are not permitted to enter their rooms. If it is necessary to speak with them, this is to take place in a suitable place that is not secluded. The conversation should be concluded as quickly as possible."

As in the Mission House, the Missionary was to live a recollected life, so that

> Whoever engages in the Missions...will exercise mortification by abstaining from viewing those things that pique his curiosity in the places where he exercises the ministry... each should refrain from taking walks for diversion outside

197 Cf. *Rule*, art. 13.

> the house, as well as from standing next to the windows or loggias of the house where he lives. Withdrawal and recollection are proper to the missionary! He will be modest in his glance and in his speech: every act, every action of ours should be ordered to the excellence of the ministry.

Except for the courtesy visits at the opening of the mission, the Missionaries should not go "to any house to receive empty compliments." They can visit families only for "confessions of the sick" or for other urgent matters for the glory of God, but "never alone." They always had to be accompanied by persons designated for this.

In the same way, the table of the Missionaries during the mission was to reflect their usual frugality.

> Let the food be frugal, excluding sweets and liqueurs. They are to content themselves with the food that is served in the Houses of the Institute through the year. They are not to accept fine foods or the like, but only those simple foods that would be necessary for sustenance in those days, if such would be the practice of the place, and what is sufficient. On the last day there will be a third dish but never a sweet.[198]

This witness to moderation in food had to take into account the church rules on fast and abstinence. On this point St. Gaspar was severe: "Whoever cannot stick to the foods prescribed by the Church in ministerial activity will remain in our Houses to do something

198 Cf. the testimony of Merlini (*AS,* Ch. 3): "At the table, he would not permit sweets nor liqueurs or any such luxuries. He would either send them back, or give them to the prisoners or the sick, as though the donation had not been made. This practice of his was done as a tribute to the ministry even though that ministry may have been accompanied with a person of note, for example, a prelate... However, he insisted that the food be healthy and in sufficient quantity so that the companions would be sustained during the labors of the ministry. For that same reason, he also permitted the use of coffee or some other beverages that could help the voice. He himself made use of them for that same motive, although during his final years he was more sparing."

equally beneficial."[199] The Missionaries "are not to be separated from one another for meals." He adds: "The [Missionary] is not to leave the house to eat the midday meal, even though Prelates or persons of importance make the request." Only other Missionaries are to be admitted to the table, lest "people think that others have informed the Missionaries of the failings of the people."[200]

After the reading, the cleric [who was doing the reading] was dismissed and "they began to speak about the functions, they assigned the official responsibilities, and dealt with everything else specified for the success of the mission."[201] The Founder did not, however want cases of conscience to be discussed at the meal, to avoid a violation of the sacramental seal: "If someone would have need of counsel, he should take care of this in private."[202]

While on mission, the Missionaries had to offer a clear witness to their detachment from material goods. In the next chapter we will treat the expenses for the mission. For the rest, the Missionaries could not accept anything, "even some sacred object." "Missionaries do not receive personal gifts, not even stipends for Masses."[203] They could really say with the Apostle Paul: *I have not coveted any man's silver or gold* (Acts 20:33). The clergy and the people had to understand that the Missionaries came to preach, not for their own enrichment, but only to spread the word of God for the benefit of souls.

This detachment was announced to the people from the first day of the mission, when they were told that the Missionaries would not accept a stipend from anyone for the Mass that would be celebrated in suffrage for the souls in purgatory for the benefit of the mission. It was part of their rule, as Gaspar would specify in the revision of 1835.

199 SF, XII, 152
200 This is the testimony of Bartolomeo Panzini for the canonical process for beatification and canonization.
201 AS, Ch. 3.
202 Ibid.
203 SF, XII, 58, 153.

> This detachment is the basis for other prescriptions:
> They are not to be involved in collecting the alms that are collected from time to time by order of the Superiors. An Ecclesiastic chosen by the Bishop or his Vicar should be sent to do this, and he should be given all requests that are made by those who are indigent, so that he will seek to provide for them in the best way possible.

In addition, "The Missionaries are not to attempt to receive the restitutions of penitents on their own. In case it is necessary to do this, they are to require a receipt to show to the penitents."

The same detachment was foreseen in the notice that the Missionary had to give when he was preaching on the Madonna regarding the disposition of the arms that were being handed in, along with the books, playing cards, and valuable gifts that were being brought, candles, etc. The language introducing these prescriptions seems to emphasize that the Missionary should be free of any accusation of profit: "In order that the very sensitive ministry we exercise be justified, the weapons must be broken up..." Everyone had to know how everything that the people were bringing would be disposed of, in the spirit of transparency.

Finally, related to this theme of detachment from temporal matters, in addition, we naturally can recall what he said on the theme of prudence and zeal, apropos peacemaking:

> Lastly, it will be their responsibility to seek every opportune means for repairing *public* scandals. Regarding *public* discords, they are to induce both parties to making peace as the holy Gospel enjoins, *without the Missionaries involving themselves in temporal decisions*.

The resolution of these matters was left to the peacemakers (*pacieri*) who, as noted previously, and as we shall see in the next chapter, collaborated with the Missionaries in promoting reconciliation.

St. Gaspar gives his Missionaries a very important admonition for the time of the mission: "The Missionaries should hold in esteem the holy Clergy, whether Religious or Secular."

These were, as we know, the "principal admonitions" which were especially important for the Missionaries to keep in mind to discharge their ministry carefully. St. Gaspar says that if one cultivates these well, the Missionaries would be able to know "the greater good that derives from them."

In this way, the missionary community gave witness in the mission by means of charity, the spiritual life, poverty, zeal, the respect of the clergy and of the faithful, prudence, and the other virtues. All of this contributed to being accepted by the clergy and people, and thus helped them to be instruments of the grace of God for souls.

2.3 The Conclusion of the Mission

The arrival of the Missionaries was characterized by a solemn ritual of welcome, with the aim of presenting the mission as a special time of divine mercy. The departure from the place of the mission, by contrast, had to take place "as secretly as possible, to avoid any applause." In the first years of his ministry, Merlini tells us, St. Gaspar "was accustomed to give a "farewell sermon."[204] He eliminated this function rather early on and it does not appear in the *Method* of 1819.

> The Missionary was an instrument and channel of God; only God is to be given honor and glory. He had to reject any invitation that to stay and rest at the place of the mission. St. Gaspar advised his Missionaries not to have contact with people from places where missions were held, even if it is by letter and is of a spiritual nature. He writes to Don Rafaelle Rosati in 1832:

204 AS.

> Once you have completed the ministry, and wishing to have my advice, do not take up correspondence with anyone regarding spiritual matters. Keeping to the practice that I have learned from excellent teachers, you will gradually become formed for the ministry, while giving evermore prominence to the glory of God. In time, we will say more.[205]

With such spiritual and cultural preparation, with the special testimony that St. Gaspar required of his missionaries, and naturally, with the special gifts from God, he had ample reason to say to Merlini in a letter of 1829: "We are channels and aqueducts. God is all in all things (Cf. Col 3:11)."[206]

205 Letter 2394.
206 Letter 1932.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE MISSION

St. Gaspar defines the mission as "a holy machine that runs like a clock (*una machina santa a forma di orologio*)."[207] What St. Gaspar means by this phrase is that the external order of the mission supports the fulfillment of its purpose. Thus, he calls the mission *a holy machine*.

This idea is explained better elsewhere. In a letter to the archpriest Mazzoni in Velletri, giving him some information about a mission, he says that he very much likes "the precise order *that so greatly affects doing good for the glory of God*."[208] In the *Method*, in the context of external order, St. Gaspar says that the mission "has multiple relationships and objects, *all for the sanctification of the people*."

According to the thought of St. Gaspar, the external organization of the mission must certainly be considered as a constitutive element in accomplishing the purpose of the mission, that is the sanctification of the people.

This conviction is the basis for the ongoing calls for order and exactness that we find throughout the *Method*: "It is not enough just to do good, but it is also necessary that it be accomplished with methodical regulation and direction." Also: "It is necessary that everything be carried out adequately and at the hour that has been previously indicated, and that progress will be noted." In the matter of the brothers who were maintain order among the people, he says: "This will achieve the good, but with order and exactness." In the

207 Letter 160.
208 Letter 275.

svegliarini for the evening oratory he prescribes that there should be "from time to time two brothers with torches for the convenience of those who follow the Crucifix..." and he gives the motive for this: "...in this way, the divine events are carried out with the precision that is required."

In the matter of the variations of the functions in the missions, St. Gaspar gives the following suggestion to the director of the missions: "In the end, prudence and the careful study of the lives of the Missionaries will make the Director of the Mission wise in managing these things *systematically and exactly*." Similar recommendations for good order are found in treating confessions, the general Communion of the women and the men, etc. "Good order," "precision," "exactness," "good system," etc. are appeals found very frequently in St. Gaspar's *Method*.

This good order in carrying out the mission required careful preparation, without which the mission would not have achieved the desired effect through a finely tuned process. In treating the organization of the mission, we will speak of both the preparation for the mission and the order followed in carrying it out.

I. The Preparation for the Mission

The preparation for the mission encompassed two basic moments: the authorization for the mission and the prior agreements regarding the mission.

1. Authorization for the Mission

The mission had to be authorized by the bishop of the diocese or by his representative. This was Gaspar's rule, according to the testimony of Merlini: "He did not accept a mission or other ministry if it had not been requested by legitimate authority, or without having obtained their approval."[209] Writing to Fr. Giovanelli in Ascoli Piceno,

209 *A Saint*.

he says: "The missions must be promoted by the Bishops."[210] In this way the missionaries had a *canonical mission*, and in the face of eventual difficulties in being received in a place, as happened with the mission at Nepi in 1836, appeals could be made to legitimate authority. Only the requests of the bishops would determine the field of ministry. Writing to Cristaldi on April 8, 1824, St. Gaspar confesses that he was going on a mission only "to obey, not because I want to; it is not my choice."[211] Sometimes the requests of the bishops came by way of appeals to the Pope, as was the case of the bishop of Atri and Penne in the Kingdom of Naples, whom Gaspar did not even know.[212]

If sometimes others – pastors, lay people, religious – took the initiative in requesting a mission, the authorization always had to come from the bishop. In 1836, in a letter to Mother Maria Nazzarena De Castris of the monastery of Priverno, he writes: "I have not received the decisive letter regarding the mission of November 6. I am awaiting this from the Bishop or from the Vicar General so I can arrange everything properly."[213] In another letter, of January 18, 1837, he writes to Pietro Barcaroli: "I have scheduled the Mission for the feast of the Ascension…A letter from the Curia covering the usual requirements is necessary; and this should be taken care of immediately."[214]

Just as he wanted to have the approval of the bishop to accept a mission, he wanted that the bishops, in requesting mission, would deal directly or indirectly with the legitimate authority of the Institute, the Director General or the director of the missions in the houses of the Congregation, who would submit the requests to the house meeting of the community. In a letter to Don Giuseppe Silvestri on May 8, 1832, St. Gaspar laments that the bishop of Sora, without asking the competent authority of the Institute, had sent an invitation for some ministers directly to the nephew of Don Giuseppe, the

210 Letter 3131.
211 Letter 866.
212 Letter 967.
213 Letter 3240.
214 Letter 3320.

Missionary Don Domenico Silvestri, who was at home with his family. "I respect the Bishop, but when an individual has offered himself to an Institute, it is not proper nor in keeping with good order for him to operate in that fashion."[215] The Missionary was sent to ministries of the missionary community, which had gifts from God.[216]

Once the acceptance of the mission had been agreed upon on the part of the legitimate authority of the diocese and of the Congregation of the missionaries and had been confirmed by the Director General or by the meeting of the community,[217] he began to make arrangements for organizing the mission. The *Method* prescribes this: "The Missionary who directs the mission is responsible for communicating in advance all that relates to the smooth running of the ministry. He is especially responsible for the entrance to the Mission. It is for him to speak with those helpers (*deputati*) chosen for such a great work, after having given the introduction."

These arrangements were ordinarily made by letter, and thus required a great amount of work and adequate time. St. Gaspar, who almost always took care of the negotiations for the missions undertaken by the Congregation, writes about this to Bishop Nicola Mattei, bishop of Camerino, on July 12, 1820: "I cannot tell you what a struggle it is to deal with the correspondence regarding the dates of the missions."[218]

With whom were the arrangements made? What did they deal with?

1. Arrangements for Organizing the Mission

The director of the mission made arrangements with the diocesan bishop, with the ecclesiastical superior of the place in which the mission was to be preached, and with the Missionaries who were to collaborate in the mission.

215 Letter 2332.
216 Cf. Letter 1932.
217 Cf. *Praxis*, art. 29.
218 Letter 306.

1.1 Arrangements with the Bishop

The director of the mission had to arrange for all faculties from the bishop, so that the mission would be carried out easily and successfully.[219] In the "Notes to directors of the missions," St. Gaspar recommends, among other things:

> Every Mission Director should be informed in all things by the bishops concerning their special faculties, concerning the reserved sins that should be communicated to the penitents... as well as the bull for the Jubilee year...The direction of the bishop should be observed regarding denunciations of the Carbonari.[220]

Ordinarily the bishops were very generous in granting the appropriate faculties. For example, we cite a letter of the bishop of Marsi, from whom St. Gaspar had requested faculties for the mission of Cappadocia:

> With the greatest joy I hear by way of your most kind letter of the 6th of the arrangement made with the Pastor of Cappadocia to conduct the Holy Missions there. I therefore most willingly grant to You and to your priest companions in the apostolic ministry the cases reserved in the first and second section of the lists of reserved sins, as well as all the other faculties necessary and appropriate. Also worthy of special mention, I am sure that accomplishing the work, with the help of the Lord, will succeed in providing great spiritual benefit to souls, and glory also to You. In Cappadocia you will be advised of the other missions to be held...Giuseppe, Bishop of Marsi.

This letter of August 15, 1824, along with many similar letters, is found in the C.PP.S. General Archives, in the volume "Ministero."

The bishop was asked to grant other faculties. For example:

...the faculty of blessing the Cross and attaching 100 days

219 Cf. AS.
220 Letter 1380.

> Indulgence to the new Cross that will be erected as well as to another already erected. Also, that the same 100 days apply also to whatever function of ministry one might participate in during the time of the Mission. Regarding the Crosses, that the Indulgences are acquired *toties quoties*…"[221]

This is contained in a letter to Pietro Barcaroli dated September 30, 1837.

In addition, according to the prescriptions of the *Method*, the Bishop was to invite the monasteries and girls' academies to pray for the mission. He was to make public announcements and, in agreement with the director of the missions, determine the parishes that the missionaries would travel to for the visiting preaching. It was also the responsibility of the bishop to assign a confraternity with the "penitential habit" (*sacco di penitenza*) to assist the Missionaries during the mission. This was done to respect local customs and to avoid the possibility of arguments among the various confraternities.[222]

The director of the mission had to agree with the bishop over the choice of "external confessors" according to local needs. If during the mission alms for the poor were collected "by order of the Superiors," the bishop was to designate an ecclesiastic of the place of the mission for this task, so that the missionaries did not involve themselves with the process.

Finally, the bishop or his vicar was invited to preside at the opening of the mission and to participate in the solemn Eucharistic procession for the distribution of Communion to the sick.

1.2 Arrangements with the Ecclesiastical Superior of the Place

The arrangements with the ecclesiastical superior (pastor or

221 Letter 3543. A *toties quoties* ("as often as") indulgence can be gained as often as the required conditions are met. This is an exception to the general norm that a plenary indulgence can be gained only once a day.
222 Cf. AS.

archpriest) of the place of the mission had various goals. To give an idea of these, we offer two citations from St. Gaspar's writings on the topic.

The first is titled: *The Principal Notes for the Holy Missions*. In eight points he calls to mind the most important matters to be arranged in preparation for a mission.

1. If it is a question of a smaller populations, two workers are sufficient, and if four workers go, they form two companies, and each one will have a lay brother who is engaged in providing the temporal needs, and they will go among the people with success. Sometimes three of the four workers collaborate with the larger populations, and one goes to the small towns with his lay brother.
2. The dwelling of the Missionaries should be as free as possible for easy access as needed for the ministry.
3. Two Helpers (*Deputati*) are selected in each population, one an Ecclesiastic and one a lay person (*secolare*) or two Ecclesiastics, who will assist in whatever is needed in carrying out the ministry.
4. Sometimes the Missionaries go by coach to a certain given place, according to the route of the mission, and to shorten the journey, sometimes horses are sent by those who are among the prominent people of the place of the missions. When the Missionaries reach the first place of the missions, they take care of arranging matters for those who are following [in the coach], and the shared expenses become minimal.
5. The Missionaries do not receive gifts for themselves and are not even concerned about Mass stipends. Food is prescribed by the rule, and they are to eat separately with readings at the table, which are read by a cleric of the place, or as best as this can be provided.

6. Except for lodging, Bishops and Pastors are free to say what method they choose to use about temporal matters, and the Institute offers and suggests, according to the individual cases, the means likely to achieve the goal.
7. In general, the expenses are very moderate, relying on the intelligence of the one who directs the Holy Missions.
8. Further explanations will be given as needed.

Although some points of this text treat topics like preaching several missions in the same area, at the same time or successively, it nevertheless contains a great deal of the material on which the director and ecclesiastical superior had to come to an agreement.

The other text is one of many letters of "instruction" to Don Giacomo Cocumelli on preparing for the mission that was held at Ferentino (Frosinone) from April 14-28, 1825. Although it is lengthy, we are quoting it in its entirety, because it attests to the diligence of St. Gaspar when preparing for a mission, not only regarding the logistical details, as in the first text, but also on preparing for the mission in view of the fruits it was intended to produce.

> Thank you for your letter. Regarding the entrance ceremonies, everything is fine, and will be carried out as it will please you to inform me.
>
> With respect to the platform on the Epistle side, you make the decision according to the necessary arrangement that you find to be practical. Never, however, should it be set at the door or near the door of the church, something which is not to be done as we will discuss in person. So, for the introductory services, please see that the platform is set up according to the details I gave in a previous letter. As for the festive days, we shall discuss it together and in common agreement after the fashion of the place. Do not think that the observations that I indicate to you are the product of my own whims; they are, rather, based on practice and experience.

We agree about the transportation. For the introductory service the church will be adequate, seeing that the main door as well as the smaller entrance is kept entirely open. Ventilation does not bother me, but, on the contrary, is good for me. After having been given the consignment of souls, a missionary will take charge of directing the people. As for the singing that is to be had for the introduction, instead of the litanies, perhaps some hymn of praise could be sung; but this is incidental.

After the introductory service, on that very same night, the oratory will be conducted for men only; during the Mission, this is done for reasons that I will explain to you in person, and it always takes place in the cathedral. For that reason, the brethren of the oratory should be on hand.

For the sake of public edification as well as for all the other good motives that you can imagine, on Friday morning, after choir, there will be a conference for all of the clergy whom you will direct to come to the gathering in the sacristy of the cathedral; that gathering can then be continued for three successive mornings in the form of a triduum, in order to revive the spirit of fervor.

On that same Friday morning, two hours before noon, we shall initiate the private exercises for the leaders of the primary assembly as well as nobility, in the church which you are to select according to the information that you have on hand. Try to select a church that is centrally located and not occupied with other pious exercises.

Inform the nuns that on Friday morning, at an early hour, there will be a conference for them, and it will be so scheduled for three successive mornings. On the evening of the day of the introductory service, they should send someone to the hospice where the Missionaries are lodged

to get the precise information about the exact time which will correspond to the desires of the nuns.

If there are inmates in the prisons, we will likewise begin a triduum for them on Friday morning, two hours before noon. Each missionary has his own assignment of work, and during the first days, at various times of the day, general encouraging speeches are given, so that the number of souls approaching the sacraments will be increased for the greater glory of God. One must not overlook or delay the exposition of facts, which is something that we can better discuss in person. With a holy enthusiasm, set everything in order and prepare well so that these projects can be productive from the very first mornings. Whatever doubts may arise, we will discuss them immediately upon my arrival. As soon as I get there, let me know which church is to be used for the exercises for the leaders, as well as the schedule to be observed for the laborers in the morning, keeping in mind that before the catechetical instruction there will be a Mass offered by one of the Missionaries. During that time, a priest, selected from that area who has consulted with me after the introductory service, will read the Christian acts etc. Let us agree.

As for other things and projects, more in person. This ministry presents a special sacred army. If there are or are not any new communicants, we will discuss that when we get together. However, what must not be overlooked is the teaching of Christian Doctrine in every parish during the Mission, with the priests in various assignments assisting the pastors, and this is done for two reasons: 1. that the people be given awareness of this holy work of teaching; 2. to bring home and repeat more forcefully those things that pave the way for the cleansing; of consciences, and also for the preparation of the children to make their First Communion or Confession. As to this, you people should

decide whether to use this program which, in other places, in keeping with the rules, is usually not omitted. You should likewise select a cleric who, living near the dwelling place of the Missionaries, will be able to read at table, only during the morning meal, the life of St. Francis Xavier which I will give him.

For greater regularity during the Missions, each parish will carry a crucifix followed by the men, with the pastor bringing up the rear. Right after them, a small picture of the most holy Mary or St. Francis Xavier, if one is available, to serve as guide for the women. Then, after the entrance, the confraternities will be lined up along the way, the clergy will go to the church of S. Agata, and in the open area near the church of S. Agata, all the women, while the men without uniforms are situated on the other side. The missionary who is directing everything, after having received the consignment of souls, will order the procession toward the cathedral. If someone is not healthy enough to manage this, he can, it is understood, be exempted from the procession, especially the most reverend bishop who, I believe, is not yet fully recovered.

After the noon meal, during the days of the Mission, at the signal from the Mission director, each parish must make its way with devout recollection to the central church, following the method described above. There, the men and women are immediately put in separated groups. At the end of the Mission, the missionary Director will announce in a loud voice: the parish of ... may now leave ... since it is more distant etc. and so on.

A schedule is to be announced at the introductory service. If that does not occur, one should do whatever is possible, but, Father Segneri says that one cannot measure the advantages of using that sort of procedure etc... Prepare for me a concise

> listing of all the pious organizations, confraternities etc. in existence there etc. with your own personal evaluation of what is still in force and what has become defunct, but still worthy of being revived. Pray for me.
>
> Greetings to all etc. Continue looking for a suitable place for erecting a Cross as a remembrance of the Mission, and perhaps even two of them, if necessary. These Crosses will be financed by two of the leading families there whom I will contact after receiving the information. A thousand greetings to the most reverend bishop.[223]

From these two texts, from other writings, and from the *Method* we can understand the variety of details that the director of the mission had to arrange with the ecclesiastical superior (St. Gaspar writes: "the Pastor or whoever is in charge") "for the smooth running of the ministry" and "especially" for the entrance to the mission.

Given the special prominence that St. Gaspar gives to the preparation for the entrance to the mission, we will discuss the various arrangements for the entrance to the mission and how it was prepared. We will highlight the most important of these arrangements.

1.2.1. The Appropriate Time for the Mission

In the *Method* nothing is mentioned about the time of the mission, but in general it speaks of the need to arrange everything for the smooth running of the mission. In his letters, St. Gaspar turns often enough to the topic of the suitable time for the missions. He writes to Mother Maria Nazzarena de Castris on August 6, 1836: "As for the Mission, if the time is not definitively set, nothing can be concluded."[224] To Fr. Vincenzo Giovannelli in Ascoli, in a letter

223 Letter 1097
224 Letter 3211.

of August 19, 1824, he noticed that the harvest and other business makes the ministry inopportune: "It seems to me, at the present time, that the grape harvest, the confusion (*casini*) in Campagna and other matters will give us little possibility of the apostolic ministry in the Kingdom."[225] He writes to Pietro Barcaroli on July 20, 1837:

> Upon the advice of prudent people, I have been made to reflect that it is not a prudent move to begin the Mission there on August 10th because of the ending of the fair in Sinigaglia. Likewise, that it would be better to defer it until after the feast of the Assumption when the climate will be a bit fresher for those people who will be wanting to come from neighboring towns. This is an incidental matter and will not in the least change the situation substantially. I find their observations to be quite plausible. However, let me know what your sentiments are, which I suppose would be in agreement. In this way, every sort of distraction will be removed. In a general way, the substantial situation is completely settled.[226]

St. Gaspar would accept missions in behalf of the Congregation throughout the year but sought to choose a time that was appropriate for the place. He would avoid those times in which the people, who were mostly engaged in agriculture, were busy working in the fields. We have seen this in the letter to Fr. Giovanelli just cited.

1.2.2. The Number of Missionaries

In the "Principal Notices," St. Gaspar gives the norm for the number of Missionaries: "If it is a matter of small populations, two workers suffice" along with a lay brother; "in larger populations" three Missionaries and a lay brother would be the norm, but "in smaller towns or in villages in the hills (*castelli*)," one Missionary and a lay brother.[227]

225 Letter 945.
226 Letter 3476.
227 SF V, 357.

This norm, which held for missions preached in the same area, was for the most part followed in other situations. Nevertheless, the number of Missionaries in proportion to the number of inhabitants of the place had to be agreed upon, so that the ecclesiastical superior could prepare a place for the Missionaries to reside. The number of Missionaries, however, had to be the minimum needed in order not to raise the expenses of the mission.[228] St. Gaspar was convinced that with a few companions one could successfully complete the ministry even in the big cities."[229]

1. 2. 3. Information on the Spiritual Situation of the Place

The director of the mission had to obtain some information on the socio-religious situation of the populace from the ecclesiastical superior. In fact, this is apparent because the *Method* prescribes adapting some of the great sermons "to the characteristics of the times and circumstances." Merlini tells us that St. Gaspar would give "other sermons that were indicated by the diversity of the places, "and assures us that he would ask "advice."[230] This advice had to be sought prior to the mission, because ordinarily the Missionary would go to the mission with the sermons already prepared.

1. 2. 4. Expenses of the Mission

In the previously cited "Notices" for the missions, St. Gaspar says: "In general the expenses are very minimal, relying on the good judgment of the one who directs the mission."[231] The common norm that St. Gaspar followed for determining the expenses of the mission was this: one need not "give anything to the Missionaries beyond their frugal food and traveling expenses (*acesso e recesso*),"[232] that is to say, the expenses for food and for the trip to and from the

228 *A Saint*.
229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
231 SF XII, 58.
232 Letter 1835

place of mission. This is how it is expressed in the *Method*: "[The Missionary] is not to receive anything but the minimum necessary for food or some other necessary expense."

In order not to interfere with the benefit of the missions in the face of understandable concern about the expenses of the mission, Merlini tells us that St. Gaspar "wanted the Missions to be financed by private donations, by what was left over from offerings made to pious places, from Lenten contributions or, finally, from benefactors..."[233]

In this regard, the testimony of Merlini on how Gaspar regulated the expenses of the mission is very valuable:

> In speaking about Mission expenses, I must, above all, mention that the Servant of God, during the early years, did not want to have anything to do with temporal matters.
>
> I also know that it is a fact that from the beginning, when I first started going out on the Missions with the Servant of God, he had the practice of not getting involved with temporal matters and would say, as I remember well, that it was not a Missionary's concern and it should not interfere with the delicate work of the ministry. But then, when he realized that proper attention was not being given to the question of expenses, he immediately became concerned.
>
> On one Mission which I shared with him, I do not recall where it was, he asked for an accounting of the expenses. Likewise, I know that on another Mission, he appointed one of our lay helpers to handle the accounts, urging him to be thrifty...I also point out that the Servant of God often did not include under those expenses the amount that he paid out for devotional materials which, at times, were quite extensive. Sometimes he would not even include the cost for shipments that were made, often even overlooking travel expenses...There were occasions when he gave a Mission

233 AS.

gratis...I know that when outside confessors were needed, he would ask benefactors to lodge them in their homes and to do so without any charge, thus reducing the burden of Mission expenses. He would make every possible effort to convince us that when a Mission was being conducted, we should be willing to support it even without compensation. He himself began cutting down on some of the solemn functions during the Mission and made adaptations according to the locale where he happened to be.

Finally, I must note that even though the meals provided during the Mission were frugal and excluded such things, as I mentioned before, as liquors, sweets, etc., he restricted himself even further by depriving himself of a bit of butter or some hot beverage that he used to take for the sake of his voice. It seems to me that he began doing this around 1823 or 1824. I know that he would abstain from these things even though, from time to time, I advised him to make use of them, for I could see that he needed them. In addition, he would say that as often as possible, we should also be sparing in the use of coffee after the noon meal.[234]

1. 2. 5. Lodging of the Missionaries

The *Method* prescribes that "the Missionaries are never to take their meals separately, nor should they sleep in different houses." The local ecclesiastical superior, therefore, had to obtain a vacant dwelling for the Missionaries that had "easy access," for those who wanted to speak with the missionaries.[235] The lodgings had to be ready for the beginning of the mission. The Missionaries were to have separate beds. It would not be necessary, however, for the missionaries to have single rooms.[236]

234 *AS*, Ch. 3.
235 Ibid.
236 Cf. Letter 2494

1. 2. 6. Choice of the Helpers, Peacemakers, and Cantors

The ecclesiastical superior was to choose some persons who would have to assist the missionaries in certain ministries. These persons were the so-called *helpers* (*deputati*), consisting of two ecclesiastics and two or four lay persons; the *peacemakers* (two ecclesiastics, two women and two men); and the *cantors* or singers (chosen from among the ecclesiastics and lay persons).

These persons, who would receive their respective responsibilities from the director of the mission after the introduction, had to be selected prior to the entrance of the mission. They also had to be exemplary persons. Merlini recounts the case of one lay assistant who privately led a dissolute life, was told by St. Gaspar after his confession "that he should not attempt to be an assistant in other missions, because God did not give him the gift."[237]

1. 2. 7. The Platform

The platform or stage was a typical mark of missionary preaching. In *Dilucidazioni e Ricordi pratici sulla nostra Regola* 'Explanations and practical Reminders about our Rule'... article 4 reads: "The reasons why one always preaches on a platform are derived from the popular idea of a Missionary in the act of preaching. Also, St. Philip [Neri] orders a chair on a platform (*catedra*) and not the pulpit (*pergamo*) for his confreres."[238] The use of the platform for preaching that is proper to the congregation is codified in the final *Rule* approved in 1841. The *Pro Praxi* for article 30 says: "Under the term of Mission and of Retreats are included also Tridua, Septenaria, and Novendalia, Lent and Advent preaching, *and this will customarily take place from a stage, in Italian, Palco*."

The platform had to be erected "on the Gospel side, in the middle of the church, and be of ample size."[239] The platform in the

237 AS.
238 SF XII, 152-153.
239 Letter 1692.

middle of the church allowed for all to hear the word of God more easily and allowed for a greater immediacy to the preacher and the functions. In this way, "the divine word arrives more fruitfully."[240] The platform also had to be large enough, because during the mission it served not only for the preacher but had to accommodate several persons at one time. As a sign of humility and respect, whenever the Missionary would ascend the platform to preach, he would prostrate himself and kiss it.[241]

St. Gaspar attached great importance to the platform. If sometimes there was opposition to it, he became rather firm, as we see from a letter to Don Luigi Gonnelli of March 3, 1822:

> If the failure to erect a platform is due to a need to reduce expenses, then, upon receiving this letter, go ahead with it and charge it to me. If it is due to some other policies, I repeat *let us agree*. This year we shall move forward but moving ahead while declaring clearly that if I were to come there, they should not utter a word to me about Lenten preaching until they refrain from their uncivil manner of acting, and their disregarding the fact that I will not carelessly manage the works of God.[242]

Along with the platform, the ecclesiastical superior had to provide whatever else was needed for the mission, especially for the liturgical functions.

2.2.8. The Entrance of the Mission

St. Gaspar recommends that the director prepare the entrance to the mission in a special way.[243] To facilitate this, he had a pamphlet published, titled *Entrance to the Holy Mission,*[244] which contained the details for the entrance of the mission. He reproduced this word

240 SF XII, 63.
241 This is mentioned several times in the *Method*. Cf. also Letter 2744.
242 Letter 552.
243 SF XII, 62.
244 Letter 900.

for word in the *Method*, from the entrance to the mission until the moment in which the Missionary begins the introductory sermon from the platform. It closes with these words: "The rest will be announced by the Director of the Mission." St. Gaspar assigned this to the one who had the duty to inform him what had to be arranged for the entrance of the mission.[245]

He set the time for the entrance to the mission so that there would be enough time to send the horses to a predetermined place to carry the missionaries and the baggage of the mission, that is, the trunk that contained sacred objects that the missionaries carried with them for their ministry.

A scout was to be stationed as a lookout, so that when the missionaries approached, the bells would be rung, and the procession of the clergy and people would move to meet them at the gate of the city.

From the entrance, therefore, everything had to be controlled with exactness to "avoid diabolical fabrications" leveled against the mission and so that "the people know that they should be filled with joy in their hearts, while the mercies of the great God are being manifested [during the mission]."

2.3. Agreements with the Missionaries

The preparation of the mission also required the task of putting together a group of Missionaries. We know that during his life, it was Gaspar himself who for the most part established the diverse "companies" of Missionaries and the roles that each was to fulfill in the mission.[246] Merlini offers this testimony:

> ...whenever he entrusted the ministry to companions, he would assign its direction to the individual that he felt was most fit and then distributed the other tasks. He would instruct them minutely in everything: the traveling, the

245 Letter 2058.
246 Cf. Letter 504.

> lodging, the faculties, the ceremonies, the number of days the mission would last, and similar items, while at the same time directing them to adhere to their daily schedule, their pious works. So, he required exactitude in the fulfillment of those things, noting especially the needs present, particularly at the beginning of the Institute, for their practices would, in time, make the ministry a bit easier.[247]

The *Rule* of the Congregation, as already noted, entrusts the task of forming the groups of Missionaries to the Director General for the missions of greater importance and for the others, the *congressus* of the community.[248]

The director had the obligation to "read carefully the method to be used in the Missions as well as in setting up the Pious associations, to be properly handled in keeping with the practice of the respective localities, the circumstances, etc."[249] In addition to knowledge of the *Method*, St. Gaspar recommended humility, prayer, and constancy (*fortezza*). Writing to Missionary Don Giovanni Chiodi, he writes: "You know how to conduct yourself as Director: humility, prayer, and decisiveness etc... Be firm in the observance of the rule and make it clear that this is the obligation that I must adhere to. It is understood that everything should be done in proper form."[250]

The other Missionaries assigned also were to read the *Method* attentively and observe it diligently and in detail, except for those things that the director judged appropriate to omit in light of the diversity of times and places.[251]

The missionary teams had to be furnished with everything that was needed for the mission: disciplines, large Crucifix, painting of the Madonna of the Chalice, the banner of St. Francis Xavier, skulls,

247 *AS,* Ch. 6.
248 Cf. *Praxis* of the *Rule*, art. 29.
249 Letter 1590.
250 Letter 1400
251 Cf. *Praxis*, art. 29.

etc. Writing to Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi on March 18, 1820, St. Gaspar reveals one of his desires: "I have in mind to set up a Mission fund that will provide for what is needed for the ministry, so that our services during the Missions can be carried out with greater splendor."[252] Each Mission House had such a fund, if individual Missionaries were not always provided with one.

The Missionaries also carried printed materials and devotions useful for the missions.[253] For the most part, these were related to devotion to the Precious Blood or they were pamphlets that contained reminders about blasphemy[254] or other prayers. These printed materials were distributed without charge.[255]

Above all, the Missionaries had to be furnished with the appropriate faculties and privileges for the spiritual good of souls. From Pius VII, St. Gaspar had obtained some faculties and privileges *in perpetuum* to be exercised in the missions for himself and for his missionaries. This was the contained in a list of the faculties and privileges enjoyed during the missions by the missionaries:

1. The thirteen cases of the Sacred Penitentiary.
2. Dispensation from the Divine Office during the Mission.
3. The faculty of blessing Crucifixes, Chaplets, Medals, and Scapulars at the time of death.
4. To celebrate Holy Mass two hours before sunrise and one hour after noon.
5. To enjoy the privileged personal altar daily.
6. The indulgence of seven years, and as many indulgences of forty days *(quarantene)* applicable to the Holy Souls in Purgatory, each time that one assists at any function of the Missions.
7. A plenary indulgence on the occasion of the general Communion, and for whoever assists at the Benediction that closes the Mission; all applicable to the Holy Souls in Purgatory.[256]

252 Letter 271.
253 Cf. Letter 913.
254 Cf. Letter 859.
255 Cf. *A Saint.*
256 SF XI, 67.

Other privileges and faculties, as we know, were requested from the diocesan bishop.

When everything was prepared, and the opening of the mission was imminent the director had to arrange a place for the Missionaries to meet, if they were coming from different communities. From there they would continue the trip together or mounts would be provided for them by the place of the mission.[257]

II. The Execution of the Mission

The preparation for the mission was carried out with the greatest scrupulosity. Once complete, the entrance of the mission followed and was prepared with great attention, as we have seen.

The good order of the mission was regulated by the director and by the other missionaries with the collaboration of some residents of the place.

1. The Director of the Mission

The great organizer of the mission was the director. St. Gaspar said: "The Director of the Mission must always be in motion, because otherwise the good would be accomplished but it would not be the genuine good (*il vero bene*), and so the fruit of the mission would be diminished."[258]

The missionaries were obliged to obey him, although "it is not contrary to obedience to offer the one directing the mission some suggestion for improving things." The clergy, brothers, and the people also were to obey the director.

The director, in addition to entrusting to each "companion of the Mission…some special responsibility for the external order," had to organize and assign the various tasks of ministry to the missionaries, adjusting the schedule so that there would not be a conflict of assignments for a Missionary.

257 Cf. Letter 504.
258 AS.

Immediately after the introduction, the director would meet with the appointed helpers or assistants (*deputati*) and would communicate their duties to them. From time to time he would instruct the brothers of the confraternity responsible for serving during the mission as well as the singers.

He directed all the functions of the mission with prudence, and after the introduction would make a courtesy visit to the local authorities to make arrangements to ensure public tranquility, which was of special concern during the mission. St. Gaspar would obtain the appropriate rescript from the Treasurer General [of the Papal States] so that the workers would be given the freedom to attend the sermons.[259]

The director also had the responsibility for establishing the works of perseverance, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

2. The Missionaries

Among the first fundamental counsels that St. Gaspar gave to Missionaries was punctuality in adhering to the schedule, which was to be posted in the sacristy of the principal church and in the lodgings of the missionaries. He writes in the *Method*: "Blessed Leonardo, in his method for the missions, held to the principle that all the missionaries should take care to be ready for community functions (*atti comuni*) by obeying the one who oversees the Prayer."

The *Method* refers to a precise time only for some functions. For example, in the case of the catechetical instruction of the children in the morning, the following is prescribed: "An hour and a half... before noon, the bell for Christian Doctrine instruction will be rung." "At precisely one hour before noon" the instruction would begin. "Around noon" the instruction would end and, after reciting the acts of faith, hope, and charity, the children were sent back home. For the functions after lunch: "Ordinarily these will end at the 23rd hour ...and if necessary that the Mission finish before the 23rd hour, one

259 Letter 3460.

should seek to be briefer in the sermons." For the beginning of the men's oratory, the hour is set at the 24th hour, which coincides with the Ave Maria. A quarter hour prior to the Ave Maria the *svegliarini* would begin. For the general Communions, "The hour to be set for all Communions could be a quarter hour before noon."

At other times in the *Method*, the schedule is approximate. For example, for the first Mass: "Early in the morning after the bell the first Mass will begin." For the conferences for particular groups: "*At a suitable time* during the morning." For the clergy: "*In the course of the day*, or even after the Ave Maria, etc."

Sometimes the *Method* sets the duration of the preaching. The morning catechism "should not be longer than a half hour." The afternoon catechism, "three quarters of an hour." The great sermon should not last more than an hour.

To give a more precise idea of the daily schedule of the mission, I refer to two models. The first is probably for spring or summer; the second, for autumn. The latter is the schedule followed during the mission preached at Teramo from November 1-16, 1822.

Long live the Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Schedule for the Holy Missions

For the morning

Rising	9 ¼ hour
First Mass of the Chaplet	10
Catechism	10 ½
Second Mass of the Rosary	11 ¼
Meditation for the Missionaries	17 ½
Lunch	18

After lunch

Ministry resumes	20
Catechism	21
Great sermon	22
End of the Oratory	1 ¾
Dinner	2

Schedule of the mission of Teramo

Rising of the Missionaries	10 ½
Mass of the Chaplet	11 ½
Catechism on way of confessing	12
Mass of the example of the Madonna	13
Catechism – precepts of the Decalogue	17
Meditation for the Missionaries	18
Christian doctrine and instruction of boys and girls for First Communion	20 ½
Great sermon	22
Procession of the Crucifix and *Svegliarino*	23 ¾
Oratory	24
Missionaries and other confessors remain in the cathedral until	3

For a translation of this schedule into our own method of keeping time, one must remember that the 24th hour would end about a half hour after sunset (or, depending on local custom, at sunset), and was marked by the evening Angelus bell. An hour after the Angelus would be the first hour, and so on. It is not possible to give a precise equivalent time in our modern system of timekeeping since the time of sunset varies throughout the seasons.

Observance of the schedule was the safeguard for the smooth running of the mission. This is why St. Gaspar often reminded the Missionaries of the need for punctuality. Punctuality extended to sermons, which were not to exceed a determined limit. To advise the preacher that time was running out, "the sign given will be two candles that are lighted on the main Altar. If the mission is conducted in the Piazza, the sign is beating unobtrusively on the platform."

Punctuality also was a safeguard for the health of the Missionaries. In a letter to Monsignor Bellisario Cristaldi, St. Gaspar

asks him to recommend to his nephew Don Antonio Muccioli great exactness in following the personal schedule of the missionaries: "*As though from you yourself*, recommend to your most worthy nephew to observe the strictest exactness in the personal schedule for the Missionaries as well as in everything else. The Missions are a sacred machine that runs like a clock."[260] Merlini explains the thought of St. Gaspar:

> ...the Servant of God had Monsignor Cristaldi remind his nephew about adhering closely to the daily schedule because that young man, endowed with a very generous heart, could not turn away those people who importuned him for confession even when it was the period for taking a siesta.
>
> The Servant of God was fully aware that, to be able to withstand the labor involved in the ministry, one had to approach it methodically. In a very practical way, I saw how concerned he was about this matter, and he always showed this same concern towards all, whoever it may have been in the group of his companions.
>
> At times, however, it may have seemed to one or the other as a bit harsh. I recall that I too was given a warning, when I was not ready on time, and he then cited an example from the life of Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice. For him, it was something exceedingly displeasing to see his companions disregard the schedule, and very quickly he would see that order was restored.[261]

Even in confessions, where moments of disorder often occurred, St. Gaspar had this to say: "It will be the rule of the Missionaries that on the occasion when there are crowds of men and women gathered for confessions, [the Missionaries] divide themselves

260 Letter 160.
261 AS.

for the benefit of the men and women, so that external order and tranquility be maintained."

It is true that St. Gaspar was concerned with the penitent who was currently confessing. He did not want his missionaries "to become upset when we were unable to hear all of the penitents who were waiting but insisted that it was enough that we employ our time in hearing confessions well." It is also true, however that he was concerned with the obvious hardship this could create for the penitents who were waiting. For this reason, he would appoint others to serve without complaint those who were waiting. If, when beginning a confession with someone, he could foresee that they would take a long time, he would ask that person to come back at a more suitable time. If there were more lengthy confessions, he would intersperse them with others, so that those who were waiting were not get tired.

The missionaries also had the task of guiding the functions, especially the more important ones, where there could more easily be confusion, such as the catechism of the children, the function that concluded the preaching of the Madonna, the penitential procession, the general Communion of the men, etc. They thus had to be informed of everything, so that the functions would be successful. To arrange everything down to the last detail, the most opportune time would be meals, after the required reading. This is how St. Gaspar conducted himself, according to Merlini: "When the reader had been dismissed, he would begin to speak about the functions, assigning the responsibilities and dealing with everything else that was indicated for the success of the Mission."[262]

3. The Ecclesiastical and Secular Helpers (*Deputati*)

As we know, there were two ecclesiastics and two or four lay persons, chosen by the ecclesiastical superior of the place of the

262 AS.

mission. These helped the Missionaries in some ministries, as indicated by the director of the mission after the introduction and as the need arose.

What were these helpers assigned to do? We find the response in the *Method*.

After the introduction, the helpers went, in the name of the Missionaries, to visit the distant religious communities of the town to ask for prayers. They accompanied the Missionaries for the confessions of the sick. In the *svegliarini,* an ecclesiastical helper set the route through the town and the place where the Missionary was to give the *fervorino*, while the others took care to see that there were enough lights for the procession. They had to provide lodging for the external confessors in the houses of the nobility. They were put in charge of collecting and registering all the gifts offered to the Madonna, as well as the prohibited books, the weapons, and the playing cards, keeping an accurate inventory, "but without naming persons." They would also make a copy for the director of the mission.

The ecclesiastical helpers had to sell the metal from the smashed weapons and from the proceeds buy wax that would be burned before the image of the Madonna most venerated in the place. One or two of them were to accompany the Missionaries for the visiting sermons. One helper would accompany the Missionary on an expedition through the bars and cafes to collect the playing cards.

Special helpers were provided – two ecclesiastics and two men and two women of the upper class – who held the title of "peacemakers" (*pacieri*) who helped the Missionaries "for the benefit of reconciliations, which are of such great benefit to individuals and for the civil society. These will also seek temporal conciliations" in cases of public enmity. The announcement of the names of the peacemakers was given at the sermon on peace.

4. The Confraternity Brothers

As already noted, a confraternity, with members vested in penitential garb, was designated by the bishop to help the missionaries in certain responsibilities, which we will define as liturgical service and ordinary service.

The brothers "who are to assist at the functions of the Mission, whether in directing the Church or the square, are to wear the hood lowered (*il cappuccio calato*) always, as has already been noted, changing when it is necessary."

Regarding the liturgical service, two or more brothers had the task of accompanying the preacher on the platform after escorting him from his lodgings, when it was time for the afternoon catechism. In the introductory sermon and in the great sermons, the brothers would accompany the preacher, going before him with the Crucifix, with the banner of St. Francis Xavier and two candles. Those who carried the Crucifix and the banner mounted the platform and remained there for the entire sermon. If the brothers were not able to stand with their hoods lowered, they could "move, but calmly, so as not to disturb the audience or then at the end they carry the Crucifix. In that case, it must be accompanied by two candles or lamps."

Toward the end of the sermon on judgment, the brothers were to carry the Crucifix into the sacristy, as a sign of the abandonment of the reprobate by God. The brothers did not accompany the Missionary with the Crucifix when he began the preaching on hell.

The brothers also had charge of accompanying the Missionary for the *svegliarini* in the evening, carrying the Crucifix and the standard of St. Francis Xavier and two lighted lamps. Other brothers with lights were stationed two by two along the procession to light up the path for the one carrying the Crucifix. The brothers could sometimes join the Missionaries in taking the discipline, but using a discipline made of cords, and in the penitential procession they carried skulls like the Missionaries.

The brothers also had charge of keeping good order among the people, in church or outside of church. They had to stand with the hoods lowered. In addition,

> ...they are to hold *sbordoni* [263] in their hands and, if necessary, maintaining silence with them, and with them, in keeping with their official duties, they will point out to the people how to divide the men from the women. They will also be responsible for carrying out what the Director of the Mission needs. This will achieve the good, but with order and exactness.

During the mission, especially in the functions after the midday meal, St. Gaspar wanted that "the men should be separated from the women, and he enjoined one of the Missionaries or brothers assigned to keep order, to watch for this."[264] Two brothers stood at the entrance of the door of the designated church and would control the entrance of the persons for whom the conferences for various categories were being held.

The brothers carried out their service with a great sense of responsibility and it bore fruit. Don Francesco Amici refers to this regarding the order maintained by the brothers in the mission of Ascoli Piceno (1821):

> These arrangements contributed a great deal to the glory of God. Far from needing the assistance of the military, even when the crowds were exceedingly numerous, a few of the members who belong to the Sacconi[265] were the only helpers needed to handle the concourse of people. There was never

263 The *sbordone* was a wooden staff painted black, about two meters in length. It was used for support and to give orders without speaking.
264 AS.
265 *Sacconi* appears to be the name given to members of various confraternities. They were called *Sacconi* because they wore sack-like garb (*Saccone* is the augmentative of *sacco*, which means sack.) Some of them were in effect burial societies, and St. Gaspar belonged to one of these, the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus or *Sacconi Bianchi*, and at one point in his life he specified that he wished them to take care of his funeral and to be buried in their church, San Teodoro.

> the least inconvenience or disturbance, which is something to be concerned about in this type of situation.

[Merlini adds]: I remark here that the Servant of God used this method in other places, as I witnessed.[266]

5. The Cantors

The cantors or singers were valuable collaborators of the Missionaries during the missions. They were chosen "from among the Ecclesiastics or Confraternity brothers." They had to be persons "suitable for singing" so that they could "support that part of the Mission with the dedication and charity that is required to promote the glory of the Lord."

The cantors were taught the simple instructional songs of the mission, contained in a book appropriately titled *The Book of Spiritual Songs of Praise (Il libro delle lodi spirituali).* In turn they had to sing these in public so that the people would also learn them.

> The general principal that guided the song was the following: The one who directs the singing should choose the sacred music to correspond as much as possible to the theme of the preaching. The exception to this is that each day before the great sermon the *Padre celeste Iddio abbiate a noi pietà 'God our heavenly Father have mercy on us.'*

The group of singers would begin to function in the morning, after the Mass of the Chaplet, while the Missionary who was to hold the catechism on the decalogue was making his thanksgiving. "When Mass has ended, the singers are to go to the platform[267] and they will sing the short refrain *Perdono mio Dio,* which is ordinarily sung on the first mornings, until the sermons which explain to the people the eternal maxims." Before the Missionary who is to give the catechism lesson had ascended the platform, the

266 *AS,* Ch. 3.
267 Rev adds: *or in another place adapted according to the locality.*

singers intone *God save you, Mary*. At the end of the second Mass, the cantors led the song: "*I ask you, O pious Mother, to bless my soul from heaven*," while the celebrant blessed the people with the relic of the Madonna.

The cantors go into action again at the function after lunch. According to the prescriptions of the *Method,* at the hour established and when "the customary signs with the bell [had been given], the cantors go to the designated place where they entertain the people with sacred song, especially those songs that praise the Divine Blood." When the Missionary who was to hold the catechism lesson arrived, they ceased singing. "When the catechism concluded, the singers will sing *God Our Heavenly Father*," and shortly after that the little procession of the confraternity brothers would enter, accompanying the Missionary who would preach the great sermon. When he arrived at the platform, the singers would intone *God save you, Mary*. At the end of the sermon and after the blessing with the Crucifix, this invocation would be sung: "*Pardon, O dear God, I want to die before sinning again.*"

In addition to what has just been mentioned, the *Method* also speaks of "brother cantors" in the context of the visiting sermons, but it is evident that everywhere that songs typical of the mission are recommended, as in the *svegliarini,* in the penitential procession, or in the procession of the dead Christ, etc., these songs were certainly sustained by a group of singers.

6. Other Collaborators

In addition to the representatives, the peacemakers, the confraternity brothers and the cantors, the missionaries engaged other persons, especially ecclesiastics, depending on local availability.

A priest or cleric would be given charge of the morning function, to lead the people's prayers, to recite the chaplet of the Precious

Blood, the Seven Offerings, the acts of faith, hope, and charity, and of the Rosary.

Some of the clergy and the *maestre pie*, if there were any, helped with the children's catechism.

The ecclesiastics were invited to carry the image of the Madonna in procession at the end of the sermon on that topic, to participate in the penitential process, to carry or accompany the coffin of the dead Christ in the function that took place at the end of the sermon on the Divine Blood, and in the evening procession through the streets of the town. The ecclesiastics carried out the function of the peace at the end of the sermon on that topic.

An ecclesiastic, vested in surplice and violet stole, was responsible for carrying the Crucifix to the platform for the blessing at the end of the sermon on judgment and on hell. A priest accompanied the Missionary for the *svegliarino* of the seed. A cleric was called on for the table reading during the main meals of the missionaries.

The mission especially needed ecclesiastics as collaborators, to the extent that sometimes St. Gaspar suggests "having a retreat for the clergy before the Mission."[268] This involvement of the clergy in the mission was for an obvious reason: they were principally responsible for the maturation and perseverance of the fruits of the mission, as we will see in the next chapter.

7. The People

The people collaborated for the success of the mission with their participation, with punctuality at the functions, and in following the orders of the director of the mission. Regarding the mission at Meldola, Merlini states: "The people were obedient to every suggestion made by the director of the mission, always maintaining the separation of the men from the women and adhering to the order of the day, and this is deserving of a particular word of praise."[269]

268 Letter 3131.
269 *AS*, Ch. 3.

The method for arranging for close collaboration with the missionaries, with the representatives, with the brothers, etc., was the ongoing communication the director had with them at the appropriate time. The primary method used to obtain the collaboration of the people was the use of notices. These were made for the most part orally from time to time.

From the beginning of the mission, after the introductory sermon, the missionary preaching "will announce the schedule that will be followed during the days allotted to spreading the divine word, the Indulgences that will be gained by those who attend the Mission, and everything else needed for the exact ordering of things."

Besides this general announcement, each day, ordinarily at the beginning of the sermons, as St. Gaspar was accustomed to do, or in a more appropriate moment, there were announcements about the "functions that were going to take place."[270]

Thus, in the *Method* one often finds expressions like: "notified already by the pastors or by the Missionary of the day," regarding the women who had to be at home for the beginning of the *svegliarini*. Or: "...the notice of what the Missionary had announced earlier in the day from the platform," regarding the pealing of the festive bells in the evening, on the occasion of the preaching on peace, which was a sign that invited the people to reconciliation. Finally: "...at the end of the day the Missionary will announce from the platform that all the bells will sound the death knell for the space of an hour" as an invitation to the faithful to pray that evening for unrepentant sinners.

Other special notices were mentioned in the *Method*. For example, regarding the penances and the discipline in the penitential procession, preference was to be given to those who would be receiving Communion on the days of general Communions, which category of persons should participate in them, in which church, and at what time, etc.

270 Ibid.

In sum, we can say that every function involving all the people, or a particular category was clearly communicated beforehand, so that those interested would know how to conduct themselves.

III. Conclusion

St. Gaspar insisted on the importance of the organization of the mission. On the one hand, this reveals his natural propensity for organization and love of order, and on the other, confirms his conviction that good order contributes to achieving the goal of the mission. He would not have spent so much energy organizing a mission if good order did not have a very important role in giving glory to God.

And what if, on occasion and in special circumstances, as when he received unexpected requests for missions, Gaspar could not arrange everything as he wanted? In those cases, truly rare, he did not want to let the benefit slip away and would say: "One needs to adapt oneself to the will of God."[271] And if, after having scrupulously arranged for commitments to take care of matters, something unexpected would occur that hindered the mission, he used to say: "Let us allow God to regulate things, without appending any conditions relating to circumstances."[272]

271 Letter 2289.
272 Letter 3507.

CHAPTER IX

THE WORKS OF PERSEVERANCE

We have already mentioned that one of the principal tasks of the director of the mission was to organize the works of perseverance. It was one of the most important obligations to be undertaken during the mission. St. Gaspar, like the other great missionaries who preceded and followed him, wanted the benefits obtained during the mission to be stable and enduring. So that the mission would not be like fire in straw, he included the rules governing the *Works of Perseverance* as an essential part of the *Method*.[273]

What were these works of perseverance that St. Gaspar left behind for the continuation of the benefit of the mission? We will describe them briefly, because one can more easily get a sense of their nature, structure, and order by reading St. Gaspar's own words, found later in this volume.

1. The Association of the Apostles[274]

The first work that he would establish was the Association of the Apostles. This would include all the ecclesiastics of the place. St. Gaspar encouraged them to live an apostolic life and to persevere in doing good in the exercises he preached to them during the mission. He writes to the clergy:

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273 The little volume was ordinarily published together with the *Method*, but sometimes was published by itself.

274 Quotations in this chapter are from the *Works of Perseverance* unless otherwise noted. These associations are called *ristretti* in Italian, because they were associations with a "restricted" membership.

> Now that the people have been nurtured by the holy Missions, we Ecclesiastics should occupy ourselves zealously to see to it that the fruit obtained be firm and permanent. The Association of Priests leads us to be true Gospel Workers, destined for our own sanctification and that of others.

The members of the association would have a meeting each month. To renew the priestly and apostolic spirit, this included spiritual reading, meditation, and community reflection on the word of God, followed by a review of the other works of perseverance. Each ecclesiastic of the association was entrusted with the care of one or more institutions: an existing association or a new foundation: monasteries, girls' schools, prisons, hospitals, the military, etc. In the monthly meeting each would speak about the status of the work he was caring for. During the meeting they would come to a decision about whether a change in assignments would be needed. This method, writes St. Gaspar, "... promotes and maintains harmony in action among the Ecclesiastics, since every Pious institution is called to the Unity of the Association. Second, this provides for a good system and for the stability of the Works." One could state, therefore, that the association of the apostles was the soul and the stable foundation for the fruit of the mission and its maturation.

2. The Evening Oratory

The second important work for encouraging the growth of the benefits of the mission was the evening oratory, open to all men. St. Gaspar held the oratory in great esteem, following the example of the famous oratory of Padre Caravita in Rome. In the *Method* he has this to say about the oratory:

> One cannot say enough about the usefulness of the Holy Oratory. This function frees [men] from so many occasions [of sin] and from useless entertainments. It offers an

> opportunity for confessions to so many men who could not confess during the day, either because they were not able or because they were embarrassed. In the quiet, in the silence, Oh, how much the holy name of our Lord God is glorified…

Directing his attention to the ecclesiastics, he has this to say: "The primary work that is to be instituted or revived in every place that a mission is given is the evening oratory for the men." The oratory was conducted daily according to the method followed during the mission.

3. The Association of the Brothers of St. Francis Xavier

The evening oratory was animated by two ecclesiastics and by the Association of the Brothers of St. Francis Xavier. This association was made up of a small number of men who wanted "to apply themselves in a special way to the nurturing of their own spiritual life and to the sanctification of their neighbor."[275] One of the primary objectives of the Association was "to promote the Evening Oratory every evening."[276] The association also had to "promote the Holy Mission frequently"[277] and other works of mercy toward the sick, the imprisoned, etc.[278] If there was no Association of the Apostles, the Association of St. Francis Xavier would often be the driving force for promoting perseverance in the benefits of the mission.

4. The Association of the Sisters of Charity of the Precious Blood[279]

"It is customary that Widows and Married Women of the upper class, and also of the second class, if judged expedient, form the Association of the Sisters of Charity." The sisters of this association,

275 Cf. SF, XII, 4/1, 3.
276 Ibid.
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.

besides caring for their own spiritual life and applying themselves "to the careful education of the Family and correct direction of the Home, are to be zealous for those works of *mercy* that are within their province." The principal works of this association were caring for poor sick persons, providing them with necessities, giving them alms, visiting the hospitals for women, and the care of orphan girls. In addition,

> ...above all where there are no Mission Houses, the Sisters will see to it that the Chaplet of the Precious Blood is promoted, as well as the [devotion of] the Month of June,[280] so that devotion to the Price of our salvation may always increase. On the first Sunday of July the Feast of the Precious Blood is celebrated, and in that case, they will see to it that it is celebrated solemnly."

Finally, they were to dedicate themselves to the reconciliation of women and to other spiritual works of mercy.

5. Congregation of the Gentlemen and Ladies

The Congregation of Gentlemen and Ladies is also called, in the revised version of the *Method* of 1835, the *Congregation of the Upper Class of Each Sex*. Besides a monthly meeting of a spiritual nature, the members of this Congregation were responsible for "visiting the hospitals of their respective sexes for public edification."

It seems, therefore, that these two congregations would have been very similar to the associations of St. Francis Xavier and of the Sisters of Charity, based on their tasks. Among the rules printed again after the revision of the *Method* of September 1835, nothing related to these two congregations is to be found. The *Rule* also does not speak of them.

6. The Association of the Immaculate Conception and of St.

280 June was at one time the month devoted to the Precious Blood, and St. Gaspar's friend, the Passionist St. Vincent Strambi, composed a devotional booklet for use during the month of June.

Aloysius Gonzaga – Association of the Daughters of Mary[281]

"In addition," writes St. Gaspar, "it is necessary, especially in our times, to have a special commitment to young people... The reform depends principally on their holy education in morality." To this end, he instituted the Association of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy and of St. Aloysius Gonzaga for the young men and boys, and the Association of the Daughters of Mary for the young women and girls. He envisioned weekly meetings for each *ristretto* that would be educational and recreational as well as opportunities for prayer.

7. The Work of Christian Doctrine

Another very important work was the Work of Christian Doctrine, which took care of catechesis of the boys and girls. This ministry was largely the responsibility of lay people.

8. The Monthly Retreat

St. Gaspar instituted the Monthly Retreat in Preparation for Death for the entire Christian community. On the last Sunday of each month there would be general Communion in the morning, with *fervorini,* and in the afternoon there would be meditations and instructions for the people. St. Gaspar exclaims: "Blessed is the one who, through the holy retreat to prepare for death, lives in such a way that he/she would like to have lived in the final agonies! *Talis vita, finis ita* 'As one lives, so one ends.'"

9. The Pious Union of the Precious Blood

Wherever St. Gaspar and his missionaries preached missions, they instituted the *Pious Union of the Precious Blood*. Although, as we have noted above, the Association of the Sisters of Charity of the Precious Blood had the task of promoting the devotion to the

281 *Praxis* to the *Rule*, 30.

Precious Blood, all members of the works that St. Gaspar established were enrolled in the devotion to the Precious Blood, so that they could receive the indulgences granted to the Archconfraternity instituted in the Basilica of San Nicola in Carcere in Rome. This is characteristic of the titles of the rules of these associations. For example, the complete title of the association of St. Francis Xavier is: *Association of the Brothers enrolled in the devotion to the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the Title of St. Francis Xavier.* The title of the Sisters of Charity is similar. The regulations of all the works of perseverance warmly recommend the practice of devotion to the Precious Blood.

10. Other Works

In addition to these works, which St. Gaspar sought to establish wherever possible, he also was committed to reviving confraternities that were already in existence.

He also recommended other works and practices of piety: daily meditation, the public recitation of the office or other devotional practice on feast days, the pious exercise of the Way of the Cross, the recitation in common of the Marian Rosary on Saturday, the elimination of blasphemy, and accompanying the bodies of the poor to burial, etc.

Carrying out these practices of piety or pious works was not to be left to individual initiative. St. Gaspar prescribed that each of these be entrusted to a confraternity or association. In this way he believed that he could better assure that the work would be accomplished and would have a permanent place in the community for the benefit of all. Wherever there were Mission Houses, the Missionaries themselves would animate these works, as St. Gaspar explicitly added to the revision of 1835 and as is prescribed in the *Rule*.

We can also add to the works of perseverance those "signs" of

the mission which in some way recalled the mission that was held, and which were meant to motivate perseverance in the benefit of the mission. One of these was the cross that was customarily " to the perpetual memory of the Mission" which would be the destination of processions on some feasts of the year. Another sign was the names of Jesus and Mary, which St. Gaspar had inscribed over the doors of the houses, etc.

CHAPTER X

CRITICISMS OF THE MISSION OF ST. GASPAR

During the twenty-three years of St. Gaspar's missionary apostolate, his missions were ordinarily in demand and were well received by the authorities, by the ecclesiastics, and by the people, who responded to the apostolic works with lively participation. There are records, nevertheless, (and they are few, to be sure), of cases in which criticisms arose, whether of the mission itself or of the method of the mission that St. Gaspar followed, and of St. Gaspar himself.

After all, St. Gaspar, in the *Method* alerts his missionaries to be forewarned of the disparagement they and their activities might face.

> Without doubt, the great ministry of collaborating in the salvation of souls is subject to great misfortunes. The Demon is not content with devoting his strength to these misfortunes, not only using the tongue of evil men, but even those of decent persons. They are seized by reckless zeal and allow the tongue or the pen to slip and discredit the work or the workers. The celebrated Padre Segneri, of distinguished memory, often repeated that 'one who does not have a generous heart, one that is ready to accept great disappointments, should not engage in this ministry.' The missionary should not expect anything but that his efforts will be considered of little value. It is a firm principle to always wish to gain the glory of God and the benefit of Souls.

Many times, as the testimonies of the *Canonical Processes* note, St. Gaspar was opposed on some point of his *Method*. Some did not want the use of the discipline, some did not want the functions,

some were opposed to the solemn entrance, etc. In this chapter we will pause to examine only two missions for which we have written critical reports: the mission of Ancona, which was held from September 8 through 30 1816, and the mission of Camerino, held June 15-29, 1819. We will conclude with a few observations.

I. The Mission in Ancona

For this mission we have a long "Report on what the Apostolic Missionaries did and how they worked"[282] written by "Camillo Albertini, Collector of Ancona news."[283] Here the author speaks of the intention of Cardinal Nicola Riganti, archbishop of Ancona, to have a mission preached in the principal city of his diocese.

> This most zealous Cardinal had reflected, that in nearly twenty years (literally, *quattro lustri*) of sad events, and of a Government inimical to good morals and Religion, that [Religion] was dead in many, lukewarm in others, and that there was a need to call the lost Sheep back to the right path, battle the pernicious principles that had been introduced, replacing them with healthy ones, and in sum, to obtain a general reform.

The author then goes on to speak of the announcement of the mission by the Cardinal in an edict of August 31, 1816. "At this announcement…the people began to murmur, saying: 'We want something besides Missions…Bread, bread.'" This was also heard by some Ecclesiastics.

The first criticism, then, was not against the *Method* of St. Gaspar and his companions nor against the mission per se, but rather against the mission proposed in a historical situation that in

282 This report, composed of forty-two manuscript pages, is found in the *Notices of the Founder*, vol. I, pages 543-625. We refer to these documents in the archive with absolute fidelity to the original. We dispense, therefore, from making note each time there is an error in spelling or some other error.
283 *Relazione della missione di Ancona,* 624. In this section, quoted material is taken from this document unless otherwise noted.

the opinion of some required giving priority to other priorities, such as food. The author does not say what those who had "murmured" did to oppose the decision of the Cardinal.

The mission began in the afternoon of September 8. We will examine the order of the sermons, the events that took place during and at the end of the mission, and the massive participation, not only of the people of Ancona, but also of the neighboring cities and towns. Finally, we describe the solemn function of the leave-taking of the missionaries, which St. Gaspar would not include in his future missions.

The mission turned out to be a genuine apotheosis. The author takes care to let the reader know that

> ...the attachment of the people of Ancona to the Sacred Ministers, witnessed on more occasions and in many ways, must not lead you to be quick to judge and characterize it as fanatic, because it came from the unprecedented eloquence of the Missionaries, from their tireless zeal, their admirable example, their burning and divine charity, but also from the interior insight that their words made in the souls of those who heard them, and through which, one need not remind you, dear Reader, miracles triumphed completely in the hearts of sinners..."

In fact, he explains that

> ...only the tongue of flame of a zealous Gospel Minister conquers every heart, batters all arrogance, defeats every haughty rebellion. Therefore, if the Apostolic Ministers mentioned triumphed over the hearts of all those who listened to them, one must only attribute this to that Divine fire, with which their tongues were burning, because the conversion of Sinners is wholly the work of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of his narrative, the author refers to four "annotations" or criticisms made of the mission, to which he responds.

The first criticism is "part of the accusation of fanaticism against the Most Reverend Missionaries." Some clergy and lay people accused the Missionaries of fanaticism, because after the farewell ceremony, when leaving the church of San Agostino, the Missionaries were surrounded and escorted by many armed soldiers. The response to this difficulty is simple: this precaution was taken "to free the Servants of the Lord from the indiscretion of the people, all the more since those who were in the church joined those who remained outside."[284] The author confirms that this precaution was appropriate, citing the example of the Dominican martyr Peter of Verona who, when he went to preach in various cities of Italy, often had to be carried "on the shoulders of persons" to be kept safe "from the frenzy of the people."

The second criticism was on the use of the "discipline employed many times by the Missionaries." The use of the discipline was "regarded by some of the clergy as a childish stunt (*una ragazzata*) that should not be used." The author of the narrative, however, expresses his great surprise that "such talk should come from the mouths of priests." He immediately adds that "to preserve the honor of the Priesthood…[one should mention that] not all were of this opinion, and that the censure made by a few should not disparage the Clergy in general." He then cites some missionaries, like St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio and Padre Stefano of Ancona, a Capuchin, who had used the discipline in their missions.

In addition to the example of such illustrious missionaries, the author states that the discipline gives greater weight to the words of the Missionary. He substantiates this with some historical facts and then, concludes by saying that the discipline is not a "childish stunt," but a "compassionate display of repentant innocence," "a strong means suited to move not only the haughty soul of the Sinner, but also to drive away some greater Power of the infernal enemy."

284 Ibid., 604.

The third criticism had to do with the "fresh flowers and fragrant herbs that the Missionaries had spread in the Church of San Domenico on September 26." In order to give some solemnity to the first Communion of the boys and girls on that day, the church was "decorated with beautiful vases of fresh flowers, and fragrant herbs arranged symmetrically, both on the balustrade of the main altar, and in the Presbytery along the Church, where they were to receive Communion, as well as the Platform of the Missionaries and even the tablecloths, and the ground was covered with flower petals. In a word, the entire Church looked like a very beautiful garden."

The author responds to those usual few ecclesiastics and lay people, reminding them that it is a common practice to adorn the altars of churches with "many kinds of fresh flowers" according to the seasons of the year. He also reminds them that on some days a greater use of flowers is made, as on Holy Thursday for the "Holy Sepulcher," and on the feast of Corpus Christi, when flowers are even strewn on the streets. "Now," the author urges, "if it is proper to strew Flowers in the streets in veneration of such a great Mystery, how much more proper would it not be when this takes place inside the Sacred Temple, in which one should accompany with solemn pomp the Marriage of Christ with those innocent Souls...who were receiving him for the first time?"

Finally, there was criticism "concerning accusation that the Missionaries were young and inexperienced." Six Missionaries participated in the mission of Ancona: Gaspar Del Bufalo (born 1786), Carlo Odescalchi (1786), Antonio Muccioli (1784), Antonio Piatti (1782), Andrea Butirroni (1786), and Pierantonio Cristianapoli. The group was made up of priests over thirty years of age. The author does not deny that they were young, he immediately goes on to say:

> The Young [Missionaries] can be compared to accomplished Masters, perfect, because the Holy Spirit

> does not need age when he wants to accomplish great things, and when he wants to lead men along the way to salvation. He does not need Preachers who are mature and white-haired. Moreover, God, for whom nothing is impossible, and who made the Mute speak and rendered them eloquent, gives a special grace to those who work in his vineyard, not for earthly and secondary ends, like money and applause, but for the one end of giving Him glory and converting Sinners. In a few hours they could do great things, not from their own strength, nor just as Men, but aided by divine grace, to which they always opened themselves with all their strength.

With these words, the author closes the narrative of the mission in Ancona.

II. The Mission of Camerino

The mission in Camerino took place from June 15-29, 1819. The following missionaries preached: Monsignor Vincenzo Maria Strambi, bishop of Macerata,[285] Monsignor Luigi Piervisani, bishop of Nocera Umbra,[286] Gaspar del Bufalo, Raffaele Brandimarte, Biagio Valentini,[287] and Adriano Tarulli.

We have a written report on this mission, titled *Giornale Ragionato* 'Annotated Journal,' the testimony of Don Biagio Valentini during the process for the cause of beatification and

285 St. Vincenzo M. Strambi, Passionist, was born in Civitavecchia on January 1, 1745. He was named bishop of Macerata on July 26, 1801, and resigned on November 11, 1823. Even as bishop he did not abandon the ministry of preaching. He died in Rome on January 1, 1824. He was canonized in 1950.
286 Monsignor Francesco Luigi Piervisani, born in Assisi on May 25, 1766, had degrees in philosophy and theology. On December 22, 1800, he was named bishop of Nocera Umbra. He died on January 15, 1848.
287 Don Biagio Valentini, Missionary of the Precious Blood, was born in Porto Recanati (Macerata) on July 22, 1792. In 1817 he assisted St. Gaspar in some missions. In 1818 he entered the Congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood. After the death of St. Gaspar, he was moderator general of the Congregation from 1838 to 1847. He died in Rome on November 23, 1847.

canonization of St. Gaspar Del Bufalo, and a brief description by Monsignor Antonio Santelli in his biography of St. Gaspar.[288]

The *Giornale Ragionato* has historical precedence among these documents. The other two refer to it and, in a certain way, seek to respond to its venomous criticisms. It is incumbent on us to begin with a knowledge of the *Giornale Ragionato*.

A. The *Giornale Ragionato*

The author of the *Giornale* is unknown. The document consists of twenty manuscript pages. The complete title is "The Annotated Journal of the Missions given by Bufolo [sic] in Camerino in the year 1819."[289]

The anonymous author begins by saying that:

> ...at first glance, an object of such little moment does not seem to be of interest for an annotated journal. A Man mounts the Platform and People listen to him; this is not novel. The more ingenious takes advantage of those who are not so astute. Someone is always lecturing and is always listened to. It is the stimulus of the word, which more than anything else has been at work in the origin of society, that has enlarged and invigorated it, and maintains it in the face of shocks. It will continue to be a means of bringing people together, guiding them, enlightening them, *deceiving* them, and without doubt broadening the sphere of their knowledge. But the circumstances of these Missions, the present state of the Men, furnishes me with enough reasons to make this journal useful. Its aim is to analyze the links of this complicated chain, which forms a complex of human actions in our time. The analysis of the Spirit in relation to the present conduct of my life commits me to reflect on the Missions of del Bufolo [sic].

288 This has been published in Italian, but not in English. Santelli was a contemporary of St. Gaspar's and a good friend.
289 Quoted material in this section comes from the *Gironale Ragionato* unless otherwise noted.

After this introduction, which indicates the purpose of the *Giornale*, the author begins to speak of the fanaticism and indifference to religion, which

> ...have always damaged society, perverted religion. The first serves to insult the Supreme Being, and to make human beings evil. The second leads to the same end with means that are totally opposite. It is therefore evident, that that we must divest ourselves of both vices, and, free of prejudice, to judge by the norm of reason.

"The victims sacrificed to these two terrible Divinities, their cries, their blood, the destruction sown on desolate People" come to his mind.

> Socrates, Galileo, Descartes, the Heroism of so many Martyrs, the glory that surrounds these fearless ones...gives [one] ample courage... because it does not fear the barbs of slander, the dagger of betrayal, the cruelty of Despotism. An evil silence, begotten of a guilty soul, does not stop the pen, and let this be the first tribute that I offer to Noble Religion. It is as pure as God, who proclaimed that he did not need the weapons of *fanaticism*, and does not fear the weapons of Irreligion..."

After this exhortation about the righteous intentions in writing the *Giornale*, the author goes on to offer a picture of the moral situation of his day: "so many revolutions in so brief a time happened in the Government, that they necessarily had to bring about rapid changes in ways of thinking. To this is added the sophistry of the Philosophers, the efforts of evil and vicious persons, and a nearly general depravity." As proof of this thesis, he gives "a brief look at the picture of morals recounting the history of the Revolution" and he then offers a diagnosis of Italy and of the Diocese of Camerino. "Here in brief detail is the state of the Province in which the Missionaries assumed their undertaking. The Morals, the Principles

are too evident not to describe them here, and I am pleased to make a sketch to make my observation more coherent."

> What is the principal agent dominating Italy? The Spirit of Egoism. The cause of its marvelous development and of its terrible progress is to be found in the revolutions that have taken place, as these have directed people to work for their own interests to the harm of their neighbor. Since everything in those [actions] was caused by the destruction of the altar and of the Throne, thus each has attempted to defend itself or to control [the other].
>
> Egoism…must give birth to its offspring or effects: fraud, envy, mutual hatred, and misery. There is no doubt that these vices have always been present, but I only assert that today they have acquired greater strength, and have become dominant…I will say nothing of widespread incontinence'…
>
> How does one think about Religion? In my opinion, people must be divided into 3 classes. In the first, which is the largest, are the Incredulous and the Enemies of religion; in the second, the Fanatics; and in the third and smallest, a few good people. It is a difficult matter to reduce the size of the first and second, just as it is easy to remove Prejudices from the third. They would not be subject to a frontal assault but can be deceived and directed from the flank.

This picture serves the author in "observing the circumstances" in which the missions were held and thus, for throwing in relief the erroneous tactics of the Missionaries: "After quickly observing the circumstances, here is our thesis. I believe that if the Missionaries had not acted with determined hatred on the one hand, and fanaticism on the other, their Ministry would be more respected and would have harvested the fruits of prudence and truth."

After this presentation from the background of his historical-moral perspective, the author begins his specific argument

regarding the mission. His criticism deals with the entire program of the mission of St. Gaspar, from pre-mission to the works of perseverance. Sometimes he also criticizes "the Superior," that is, the diocesan bishop Monsignor Nicola Mattei.

Translator's note: At this point, Conti goes on to offer extensive citations from the Giornale regarding the various aspects of the mission, beginning with the entrance to the city of Camerino to the conclusion of the mission. The author of the Giornale took a chronological approach, which is valuable for further understanding the structure of the mission and how it was carried out.

Rather than including more than a dozen pages of these criticisms, which in the end appear to be almost completely unwarranted and influenced by strong bias on the part of the anonymous author, we move on to the testimony of Don Biagio Valentini, who was one of the missionaries who preached the mission in Camerino, and of Don Antonio Santelli, a contemporary and early biographer of St. Gaspar, who relies to a certain degree on the Giornale, but who at the same time refutes many of the criticisms presented in that volume.

B. The Testimonies of Valentini and Santelli

Don Biagio Valentini, who participated as a Missionary in the Camerino mission, speaks of the mission, as Monsignor Antonio Santelli in his uncompleted biography of St. Gaspar.

1. The Testimony of Valentini

This is the testimony of Valentini regarding the mission in Camerino:

> We must not overlook what, by the just permission of God, happened here, and it was this: because of the solemnity of the entrance, a whispering campaign was aroused by the lord canons and the leaders of the town. They did not want

to show opposition to the outside bishops nor to the Servant of God, but they stuck to their attitude that this function was something due to only a diocesan archbishop or to the pope, even though the most reverend archbishop was the first one who moved with the Crucifix in hand to meet the missionaries as extraordinary ambassadors of the divine word. The reasonableness shown in the printed invitation, the suggestions offered, the prayers that were said even by the most revered Mattei were not sufficient to persuade the souls of those clergy and leaders of the town.

Add to all that the impression made by a certain person who lived in that area and was highly regarded by the archbishop himself and by the clergy, who asserted that God does not select weak instruments for his glory, but individuals of dignity and fame in order to deeply impress the people, especially in a city that was very much on its own, as it claimed. Hence, it was necessary that its missionaries for that reason should be at least bishops. It was for that reason that the bishop of Nocera and the bishop of Macerata were called with the consent of the humble Servant of God and the diocesan archbishop. So, it was too that the Venerable Monsignor Strambi, being already aged, worn-out as he used to say, could not be present for the Servant of God's entrance. People said, however, that it was due to the pride and vanity of the Servant of God alone that the most worthy Venerable Monsignor Strambi was not present there.

Furthermore, the approach to Camerino, at that time, was very steep and craggy so that the carriage would have to stop from time to time since the driver was afraid that the horses would turn back. With strength, he would forcefully whip them to move forward, without paying any attention to the confraternities that were coming to meet them at the gates of the city, including the fraternal groups in uniform. That action was looked upon as an insult to the

shame of the canons and of the archbishop even though it had not even occurred as such to the mind of the Servant of God. Furthermore, those holy shepherds had come in the company of the Canon, the Servant of God, and it was thought that the proper thing to do was to give them the most noble portion of the sacred ministry. Hence the conferences to the clergy were assigned to the Venerable Monsignor Strambi and the conferences to the workers that were assigned to Monsignor Piervisani. The Servant of God, the director of the mission, unable to easily satisfy the souls of those clergymen and the big-time operators of the city, was quite uneasy with the apostolic ministry there. The Servant of God could not be happy just to give the sermons treating the basic principles. He perceived clearly that those visions and those underhanded remarks were truly the work of the devil to prevent the achievement of great work. It is indeed most true that the two very exemplary and zealous bishops who had come to be of assistance at this mission showed honor in a special way our Servant of God by never failing to listen attentively to his sermons, but listening to them devoutly each day by setting aside everything else and saying to the people of Camerino and everyone else that through the mouth of Canon Del Bufalo, God himself was preaching to them.

So, despite all the difficulties, the mission in general was extraordinarily fruitful as attested to the most celebrated confessors in that city and the surrounding locales who were beneficiaries of his work. Those two famous conversions mentioned before took place here indicating the manner with which the Servant of God preached, that is, to a very well-educated individual, but a non-believer and a foolish peasant, a great sinner. Yet the two of them were converted by his sermon on heaven.[290]

290 Valentini, *Gaspar del Bufalo: Almost a Divine Oracle,* chapter III. This English translation is found in digital form on the "Gaspar-Merlini CD." The quotations in this section are from that work.

Valentini refers to these two "famous conversions" in the context of his response to the official question during the canonical process about the preaching of St. Gaspar, that is:

> I was asked, ex officio, to say whether it was true that the Servant of God's sermons were like a flowing river, that is to say, abundant, but that he, because of the velocity of his delivery, made them appear to be short, so that if another preacher had to give one of the Servant of God's sermons, he would have to take two hours whereas the Servant of God would have used only one hour. Also, whether it is true that all his sermons were apologetical so that even his sermons on the eternal, basic principles were treated apologetically, and, because of those two reasons just mentioned, very few people were able to understand them and very many people did not understand them at all.

Valentini, who lived with St. Gaspar for nineteen years and was his companion on many missions, gave this testimony:

> I had heard him preach both in cities and in small towns and in country parishes where he, like Father Segneri, would draw together the people from the neighboring towns. I have observed well that his apologetics, even discreetly applied to those basic principles, was used in the places that were more highly educated and at times involved more than one sermon. Vigorously was it delivered so as to confirm the believers and at the same time convinced and eventually converted the non-believers. I remember some striking examples of entire lodges that were dissipated and dissolved by the divine word alone. That happened in Meldola near Forlì, in Toscana, in Forlimpopoli, and in Rimini where the opponents were among the most obstinate: *Est Cicero pro domo sua*.[291] Finally, they surrendered to the overwhelming light of truth.

291 Literally, "It is Cicero in behalf of his house." The reference is to an oration of the famous Roman orator to seek compensation for the destruction of his house, confiscated during his exile. As a popular saying, it indicates an argument biased in favor of the speaker or writer.

The Servant of God used to say that those arguments either need not be treated publicly, or they need to be treated publicly with clarity and fullness of presentation in order to convince anyone and that truth will shine forth and will defend itself, just as is clearly enunciated in the saying: *Testimonia tua credibilia facta sunt nimis* 'Your testimonies have become very credible.' Likewise, he used to say that the proofs are to be abundant, indeed so abundant that it would be a harmful thing to truth to be fearful or to demonstrate a fear that would make them fall short. So, with prudence, where there was a mixed audience with the ordinary people more numerous than the educated, he would give his apologetical conferences to the leaders among those citizens in some small chapel or little out-of-the-way church. In the small towns, he would work hard to make his sermons understandable even to the simplest, old lady, quoting examples from the scripture that were popular, as we note, for example, that he did in Boccadero in his homilies to the people there.

In the Kingdom of Naples, precisely in the provinces of Atri and Penne, depending on the opportunities, he would send out an invitation before bringing together the educated element and then would preach to them with arguments against the modern sects. They, in turn, as leaders of the place where the sermon was delivered to them in an area set-aside for them, would keep alive and exchange among themselves the saying: 'Doesn't evident truth speak out without directly upsetting us? Have we not been truly deceived by our own errors? Behold! Here is our own vice-savior who has come to enlighten us". The people there would cry out in their customary way: "Hail to Jesus! Hail to Mary!" after hearing his fervent prayers. And, that special group of people would repeat: "Hail to the Catholic religion.'

Priests, who received the same conferences or reform talks given to them in private and in places set apart as was usually

done out of respect for particular groups, would come out saying: 'This fellow explains the whole book at one time.' They would derive such terrific profit that some bishops, as I myself know, imposed on me the obligation of giving thanks to Canon Del Bufalo who, by the grace of God, had restored the clergy to be almost completely apostolic.

For example, the archbishop of Camerino, also Monsignor [Cesare] Nembrini, later Cardinal-bishop of Ancona, likewise the Venerable Monsignor Strambi who because of the fruitful results received and the jolt that he caused by his zealous presentation called him the spiritual earthquake.' This very same Servant of God (Strambi) in the city of Camerino where he was present for the mission and participated without missing a single sermon given by Canon Del Bufalo, told me in the presence of a number of Canons from Foligno, in the Mazzagalli house: 'God is speaking through Canon Del Bufalo. I, myself, have heard him,' he said. 'He cannot limit himself to just one hour.' He, then, added: 'The two ravens of the Venerable Father Anchieta used to limit him to one hour as they kept up a raucous screeching to get him to stop.'

Furthermore, in his preaching in cities, he was very pithy and erudite and sometimes even obscure because of some intermediate ideas that remained concealed in his brain without his having had time to develop them. By divine grace, he used to produce magnificent results. In fact, I recall that in the city of Camerino, in the Marche, in addition to the universal conquest testified to by the excellent archbishop, now deceased, Monsignor [Nicola] Mattei, along with the testimonies of many from the entire city, two things, I know, happened. One dealt with a libertine and unbeliever who, on hearing the sermon on heaven, displaying his masculine eloquence, shouted out: "If there is happiness for human beings, this is the true one" and he was sincerely converted.

The other dealt with a peasant who, when that same sermon ended, approached a confessor in tears, crying out for mercy as he felt his heart breaking. The confessor, who was a certain famous person in that city, a Father Fedeli, teacher of moral theology and a tireless worker, asked the penitent what it was that aroused his compunction and what words of the sermon had moved him. The man replied: 'He talked Latin and I, an ignorant man, did not understand him. I heard only the word paradise and that one word, along with his gesture and voice, struck my heart so that I really felt that I was in heaven. I, a great sinner, am unworthy, but I do want to make my confession and save my soul.'

In another city, likewise in the Marche, in the diocese of Fermo, the Servant of God felt inspired to deliver apologetical sermons and talks on religion. An unbeliever, whom he did not know, was in attendance out of curiosity and a desire to make fun of the mission, as a result stayed on moved by his curiosity to hear him afterwards. Once those talks were completed, to his surprise the man felt persuaded and deeply affected. Still it seemed to him impossible to be so thoroughly cleared in his mind of his countless doubts and difficulties, especially since he had formerly read the most famous apologists and had questioned very learned people in these same materials and never was fully convinced.

Finally, he presented himself to the Servant of God and offered him two insuperable objections as he himself had judged them to be. With other learned priests he had brought up many, many objections, but here he had gotten a reply with such promptness to his first and second objection that he no longer had reason to rebut, even losing belief in himself. Next, he asked to make his confession and when he was told that he had to make reparation for the scandal given, especially to young people in the whole province by promoting his errors, he immediately resolved

to make reparation. Mounted on horseback, he made every effort possible to contact the young people he had deceived, publicly declaring first that he was wrong in the false principles that he had adopted and that he had been straightened out by the few words of the missionary in his previous sermons. Then, returning to the feet of the Servant of God who was yet to conclude the mission, he made his general confession and to the edification of the public, he knelt to receive holy Communion in the general service. So, it is most true that the Servant of God's preaching was clearly understood and, with the help of divine grace, was most fruitful. I noted this in that very same act of conversion.

Regarding his fluency and the velocity of his speech, he himself admitted that so much material presented itself to his mind and so many ideas to be developed, that he was scarcely able to give them verbal expression. Indeed, at times, it felt like a torrent rushing down from his head to his jaws, so many things coming at the same time that they had to be broken down in a hurry. Then, too, it happened that even some intermediate thoughts, as might be described, remained, and consequently that produced some obscurity. It seems to me, if I am permitted to make a comparison, the same thing that occurred to St. Ambrose, not only in his preaching but also in his writing. Nevertheless, the experience demonstrated that this did not prejudice in any way at all the substantial knowledge contained in his sermons, nor the practicality found in his sermons.

Valentini concludes his deposition on the mission of Camerino with this note, which we are well aware of: "Here again, besides various public satirical comments, there was ignorant and irresponsible invented criticism of each sermon and function that the Servant of God carried out."

2. The Testimony of Santelli

We will refer to the unfinished biography of St. Gaspar written by Antonio Santelli which sheds light on the facts of the mission in Camerino. Santelli depends both on the *Gironale Ragionato* and on the reports of the missionaries who participated in the mission.[292]

He states that the mission began on June 15 at about the 23rd hour, and that St. Gaspar was coming from Castelraimondo, "where he stayed for about a day and a half engaged in preaching to the people there, and he invited them to follow him to the mission in Camerino." After presenting the missionaries who were to give the mission, Santelli tells us of the usual meeting at the entrance of the city: "At the gate of the Rocca, the Clergy, the Archbishop, together with the Confraternities who lined the street, went down to meet him. The Canon, according to the proper custom of the missions, when at a distance would see the Confraternity brothers, would immediately get off the coach and, in procession with his companions and singing songs of praise, would meet with the Confraternities, and then with the Bishop. Prostrate, he would receive the Crucifix and the faculties from him.

> In this circumstance, whether because of the winding ascent or because of the position of the Confraternities, or because he overlooked it, he did not see in time that it was not practical [to get down from the coach] because of the road. When he saw the Confraternity brothers, he then shouted to the coachman to stop, but he, finding himself on the steepest part of the road, could not do this without risking a serious accident, needed to reach the level part of the road. There the Canon got off the coach and went humbly to the feet of the Archbishop, and received the blessing from him there, and invited everyone to go to the piazza set up for the introduction.

292 Antonio Santelli, *Vita del Canonico Don Gaspare Del Bufalo, Missionario Apostolico*. Quoted material in this section is taken from that volume.

This involuntary incident, not getting off the coach in time, was judged harshly by those who the year before succeeded in finding a way to keep other Missionaries from coming to Camerino. Despite the efforts of those opponents, every class of persons received the Bishops and the Canon and the other companions with devotion; this event, however, was judged to be very rude by some, not just carelessness, and an insult to the respectable Associations. For this reason, the Servant of God tried to tell the truth of the matter by printing the reasons for the solemn entrance, demonstrating the functions practiced by the more famous missionaries, but this was in vain.

Santelli continues his account by reporting the accusations lodged against St. Gaspar:

> [They were] mocking the surname of Bufalo, speaking against him as much as they could, accusing him of unbelievable presumption and pride, and his zeal was called fanaticism. The platform in the public square was called theater, and the Missionaries actors; the brothers in their habits who accompanied the Crucifix were masqueraders, and the discipline was bewildering to the simple minded.

Santelli lets it be known that "these scoundrels spreading such rumors condemning the mission and the Servant of God were few," whereas

> crowds of the good people of Camerino attended all the functions with devotion, preceded by the nobility and by the Clergy, and they discredited the rumors and calumnies circulated by the enemies of religion. With sobs, they detested their past faults, and then they gave an outstanding example of penitence. Because of this, the cities and towns near and far desired greatly to hear the Servant of God. A large crowd was there, willingly enduring the inconvenience of traveling...many incontestable conversions were seen, even of those who tried to hinder the mission. Others remained in their miserable obstinacy.

Santelli refers here to other information that can be found in the *Giornale*: the observation that if St. Gaspar had used "another more moderate method suitable for the times and the education [of the people], with which he was not acquainted, greater benefit would not have been impeded, and no one would have made fun of him." The *Giornale* also refers to the fortitude (*Fortezza*) of the Saint, the merciless criticism of the great sermons and the synthesis of some of them, to which the anonymous author gives some praise.

Regarding the preaching "on the existence and divinity of revelation," in which Gaspar distinguished himself, Santelli comments:

> If Del Bufalo knew how to distinguish himself by his discourse in the more difficult sermons, convincingly demonstrating the truths of faith, even by the author's own admission, how can he state insultingly: 'this is a vulgar man, who exalts himself in the opinion of people, who are amazed by his use of the discipline rather than by his words?'

Santelli was aware that the author of the *Giornale* had sincere praise only for Strambi, so he cites some comments of Bishop Strambi related to St. Gaspar, which other missionaries who were present in Camerino reported to him.

> It is most useful here to know the historical truth of what was said, to report the sentiments of the Holy Bishop of Macerata, companion in ministry, eyewitness, and from long experience an impartial judge…He was told that the preaching should not exceed an hour in length in order not to tire the listeners, but for Del Bufalo he added: one must not limit the time, for God himself speaks in him. [The bishop] liked to set aside other business, even confessions, when the Canon was preaching, so much did he value listening to him. And to a few who asked why he needed to listen to the preaching, he immediately replied

that in this priest God himself is speaking. Looking over the activity and zeal of the Canon, through which he provided spiritual benefit to every class of person, to the establishment of the associations (*ristretti*), the evening oratory and other pious works, his ongoing work of preaching and hearing confessions, he was pleased to call him a spiritual earthquake...

When dining, he refreshed the disheartened souls of his companions with delightful and instructive conversation. Del Bufalo's forceful reasoning for his established method of mortification from necessary food, refusing, without regard for human opinion, to accept sweets or unaccustomed foods, was to say that to reach Paradise every saint had his system. He also responded to someone who mocked his zeal as fanaticism: Canon Del Bufalo is in a hurry to lead souls to heaven, but I, as an old man, want to go along slowly, and in a coach.

Sometimes when Monsignor Strambi would consider the evil soul of the enemies of religion, who persecuted the Canon to the point of boredom and annoyance, and who contradicted and mocked him to the point where patience ran out. Gaspar, however, continued to stand firm against evil with all his power, and brought wayward souls back to the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd. Moreover, with constancy and admirable good sense he would anticipate every difficulty so that he could overcome it. He did not complain, even though he suffered. He went forward in the work of divine glory, bringing abundant fruit to souls, and he used to say that without extraordinary help of divine grace he would not be able to endure, nor could he conquer the opposition and bring the work to a happy conclusion. During the sacred functions, when questioned frequently by those who disapproved, he would respond that he respected the functions highly, because they were used by the good Canon Del Bufalo. This was the esteem for Gaspar and his works in the opinion of the exemplary Bishop of Macerata.

After the testimony of Strambi, Santelli refers again to the opinion of the archbishop of Camerino, Monsignor Nicola Mattei, recorded often by the author of the *Giornale* with a certain affection.

> The diocesan Archbishop Monsignor Nicola Mattei would also give the heavenly Father of mercies similar and even greater thanks, because he had sent a tireless worker into that harvest: [Gaspar], who led seven missions in his diocese without a break or rest, all the while maintaining his burning zeal. He also affirmed that a gift of divine grace had clearly been given him. [The bishop also said] that it was his pleasure to attend each of the missions and to spend time at them; he praised God and commended his Servant for having comforted souls with the spirit of religion after the events of the French invasion. He saw that the Clergy were burning with new fervor and were giving themselves diligently to the ecclesiastical ministry, with the edification of the people. Many lay Confraternities, which had barely functioned previously, returned to their original splendor, and others were founded anew; he was very satisfied and happy with this. He spoke of the great things of incalculable benefit done by the Servant of God in his diocese. He was amazed by the courage with which he dealt with calumnies, and of his good reputation. He left his name engraved in the hearts of all good people. Evil people cursed him, for the wounds which their [secret] societies had received in abundance from him. He was full of joy and wept with affection for them.

Santelli concludes his narration with the account of the ceremony of closing the mission, stating that this "succeeded to the great glory of God and to the benefit of souls, and to the shame of all the diabolical arts," even though, as we have heard from Valentini, St. Gaspar had not been able to fully capture the sympathy of the clergy and noble classes.

III. Conclusion

At the end of the exposition of the criticism of the missions of Ancona and of Camerino it is only right to offer a few considerations, especially about the mission of Camerino. In fact, we should be grateful to the anonymous author of the *Giornale Ragionato* for his criticism of the mission, because it gives us direct knowledge of his opinion rather than relying on other parties, as in the case of the mission of Ancona.

We regret that the author is not known by his full name and profession, even more because in the *Giornale* he protests that the noble examples of the past give him "give him enough courage..." We would like to know something of his life and his activity, especially since he seems to present himself as one who supports the genuine moral reform of the people. Unfortunately, the author remains unknown; we hope that later research in the archives of the Curia of the Archdiocese of Camerino will shed a little light on him. For now, we must be content only with what we find in the *Giornale Ragionato*. Is what he says in it reliable? Why did he write the *Giornale*? Are his criticisms of the missionary method of St. Gaspar and even of St. Gaspar valid?

The author seems to have reproduced faithfully the chronology of the mission, even with a certain literary delight. He indicates precisely the days, the hour of various meetings, the persons who participated in them, and often even their number. It was of use to Santelli in writing his life of St. Gaspar. He was, therefore, a well-informed person. Quite probably he was a member of the clergy. He speaks with great precision of the conferences given by Monsignor Strambi to the clergy and seems to be greatly interested in the problems of priests.

Even if what he says about how the mission was carried out is reliable, there is some doubt about his objectivity when he relates his judgments on the sermons and the oratory of St. Gaspar. It is

true that sometimes he offers a positive judgment of St. Gaspar, but for the most part it is negative. We are aware of the response that Santelli makes to those criticisms: if the author of the *Giornale* acknowledges that St. Gaspar knew how to treat so masterfully the preaching on the existence and divinity of revelation, which is among the more difficult topics, it hardly seems credible that he would characterize other sermons as being very mediocre. The anonymous author seems to prefer "classical oratory," because he denigrates the oratory of St. Gaspar, which had the qualities of missionary preaching, like simplicity and clarity. There are very favorable judgments about St. Gaspar's oratory from competent persons like Merlini and Valentini, and from professors of sacred eloquence.[293] St. Gaspar was a missionary orator who was close to his audience in his speech. Monsignor Strambi, as we have already noted, did not want to limit St. Gaspar's sermons to an hour!

The criticism of the functions also seems to us to be prejudiced. Camerino was neither the first nor the only city in which Gaspar had preached missions according to his method. Although there were some reservations in other places about the functions prior to the missions, once their effect had been noted, even the bitterest critics had second thoughts. This also happened in Camerino, as Santelli said. Our author, on the other hand, clung to his prejudices, not attempting to understand the goals that St. Gaspar intended to reach with the functions.

In the end, it is a matter of the tastes of the anonymous author: to him the taking of the discipline and the other functions seemed farcical. St. Gaspar certainly would not have forced him to participate in the mission. In fact, if a superior did not like the functions, which only took place in the missions, St. Gaspar was equally content to preach retreats to the people, where there was

293 Reference is made to two accounts, one of the mission in Teramo and the other in Ascoli, found in the General Archives of the Congregation in Rome.

no place for the functions.[294] If, based on the testimony of our author, St. Gaspar was staunchly opposed to those who slandered the mission as it was taking place, telling them that whoever spoke against his system was opposed to "wisdom," he was saying this because the functions of his missions were based on the practice and the teachings of holy missionaries.

We absolutely reject the author's continual negative judgments about St. Gaspar's person and his intentions in his work. He never uses his correct surname, but constantly refers to him as "Bufolo." He accuses him of being a fanatic and of being proud. He interprets as expressions of pride or incivility certain of Gaspar's normal ways of doing things. He humiliates him, citing his modest family origins, etc.

Surely one who treats a Missionary legitimately authorized to preach a mission in this way, regardless of whether he likes or dislikes his methods, certainly cannot be animated by a noble spirit and cannot truly desire the reform of the people and the clergy. A man who speaks this way and who knows many facts about St. Gaspar, betrays by what he writes that he knows nothing of the witness that St. Gaspar had given and continued to give within the Church. This is especially true given the Saint's commitment to the spiritual renewal of the people of his day, especially to the renewal of the secular clergy, which led to his founding a Congregation only a few years previously. It seems to us, therefore, that the judgment written in an anonymous hand on the first page of the text is very appropriate: "The method of his writing reveals that the unknown author is biased. It arouses pity and is manifestly slanderous."

294 *AS*, ch. 3.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this study we have sought to present the various elements, or at least the principal elements, of the *Method of the Missions* that St. Gaspar created for himself and for his Congregation to meet the spiritual and social needs of the people of his times.

The popular mission presented St. Gaspar with the most suitable method for realizing that aim in the Christian community, and he sought to make the most of that time of grace that is the mission. He sought to proclaim the word in the most effective ways and used various apostolic initiatives to elicit a sincere response of conversion in his listeners. Ordinarily this response was positive, if one considers the ongoing requests for missions that zealous pastors made for the spiritual benefit of their flocks. One must also consider the official mandate conferred on him by Pius VII, to go and bring peace to human hearts in the wake of the revolutionary movements that occurred in the Marches in 1818, and in 1821, to go to the Province of Marittima and Campagna to stamp out brigandage.

The fruit that was cultivated and harvested during the mission had to be brought to maturity after the mission. Thus, the *Method* of St. Gaspar provided a very detailed organization of works and initiatives for persevering in the benefits of the mission. These were entrusted to the diocesan clergy and to the most committed laity in a place.

Gaspar did not introduce new elements to the conduct of his missions, and he embraced all those practices that had already been used by other missionaries who had preceded him in this ministry, including the works of perseverance.[295] Even St. Gaspar was aware of this. He writes in the Preface of the *Method*: "It is not enough

295 Cf. C. Conti Guglia, *Il Vangelo agli Ultimi: Metodi problemi proposte delle missioni popolari,* Ed. Dehoniane, Roma, 1990.

just to do good, but it is also necessary that it be accomplished with methodical regulation and direction. For this reason, in the present Little Work the system of the Holy Missions is to be found. We must adopt it, *according to the principles established by the most illustrious workers.*" The words in italics are from the corrections of September 1835. On the other hand, his *Method* does not simply reproduce the method of a specific Missionary, but contains elements chosen from various methods, considered to be valid for that time. It contains a number of elements derived from Jesuit missionaries. Besides, this is the norm that St. Gaspar gives in the revision of the *Method* in 1835, at the end of the paragraph on the functions: "Lastly, everything is to be adapted to the times, places, and circumstances, for prudence carefully dictates what is beneficial for promoting good fruit." What he writes regarding the functions can be extended to all the other elements of the mission, if they contribute to reaching the goal of the mission, which is conversion and maturation of the faithful in the Christian life.

Devotion to the Precious Blood is characteristic of the *Method* of St. Gaspar. He says this himself in explicit terms in a letter to Don Gaetano Bonanni on March 1, 1815, already cited with reference to the end of the mission.[296] We have seen how deep his devotion to the Precious Blood was in an earlier section.[297] His contemporaries frequently testify that St. Gaspar spread devotion to the Precious Blood in a very special way in the areas in which he worked.

St. Gaspar recognized the merits of taking up the ministry of popular missions again, at least in the Papal States. When the Church was able to regain full liberty after the fall of Napoleon, St. Gaspar gave missions, not as one activity among many, as secular priests were accustomed to do, but as his exclusive activity, and he was zealous for other priests to dedicate themselves exclusively to

296 Letter 105

this ministry in the same way.[298] As noted already, while "very few" religious institutes could apply themselves to the ministry because of the lack of members–this was an observation made in 1826–he founded the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1815 with the sole aim of committing its members to preaching popular missions and, for those who did not have this vocation, to foreign missions.[299]

It is true that St. Gaspar was not a great innovator in the method of the popular mission but was rather an astute organizer of the various elements derived from the methods of other missionaries who had preceded him. It is also true that he deserves credit for the missions he and his Missionaries carried out. We can undoubtedly place him among the greatest missionaries in the history of popular missions.

Translator's note:

The following translation of St. Gaspar's *Method of the Missions* provides the text of the edition published in 1819 along with the revisions found in a version that he annotated in 1835. The differences in the text are noted in footnotes. Text that is deleted, changed, or added, is indicated using the vertical bar symbol (|). The revisions are found in a text of the 1819 edition that belonged to the mission house in Albano. There were several editions of the *Method*, all bearing the date of 1819, but with some differences in the pagination and the text. The copy with the autograph corrections of St. Gaspar is in the C.PP.S. General Archives in Rome.

Conti's transcription of the 1819 text is faithful in reproducing its peculiarities and inconsistencies in capitalization, and this translation attempts to remain faithful to that transcription.

298 Cf. Valentini, etc.
299 Cf. *Rule*, art 10.

METHOD
OF THE HOLY MISSIONS

PUBLISHED BY
THE VENERABLE ARCHCONFRATERNITY
OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
FOR THE USE OF ITS MISSIONARIES
AND OF ALL THOSE WHO WISH
TO MAKE USE OF IT

ATTACHED ARE
THE BRIEF RULES OF THE PIOUS WORKS
THAT ARE CUSTOMARILY ESTABLISHED
AT THE TIME OF THE MISSION[300]

ROMA 1819
BY LINO CONTEDINI

With permission

300 In the revision of 1835, the title reads: METHOD OF THE HOLY MISSIONS FOR THE USE OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Hereafter revisions made in 1835 are cited thus: Rev:

PREFACE

Directed to the Missionaries[301] of the Archconfraternity[302]
Of the Most Precious Blood

There is no work more deserving of our Apostolic zeal than the care of souls in the Holy Missions. This has always been the delightful object of the Holy Gospel Workers (*SS. Evangelici Operaj*). Even if not all have been able, by divine disposition, to fulfill their heart's desire in carrying out this work, all have sought to collaborate in the ministry of the missions to the best of their ability.

The evils of the times in which it has pleased God for us to live make the Holy Missions even more necessary! Moral laxity (*la perversione delle massime*), the corruption of the heart, the self-styled philosophy – Oh, what a gloomy image they present to us! Holy mother Church weeps inconsolably at these, and raising her voice to Heaven, she is tirelessly concerned with calling souls to penitence and to a sincere change of heart. Because the Mysteries of Redemption and the love of Jesus, who has redeemed us at the price of Blood, have been so forgotten, [the Church] seeks to inspire in all affection for the Crucified Lord. God, who in the treasures of his infinite mercy does not cease to stir up his holy Love in souls, willed and arranged that the Roman Pontiff Pope PIUS VII |would institute an Archconfraternity under the glorious Title|[303] of the MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD, whose special task would be to spread the glories of our holy Redemption. The systematic evil of our time would like to convince us that we should no longer care about the Crucified [Lord] or, therefore, the one who gives him glory. Let the untiring zeal of the just,

301 The revision of 1835 (hereafter: Rev) adds *under the title.*
302 Rev deletes *of the Archconfraternity*
303 Rev substitutes the phrase between the bars with the following: *would promote the Institute under the glorious title.*

animated by a burning desire to humiliate the Devil, oppose the insults of sinners.

How could this be accomplished any more effectively than by the Apostolic Ministry of the Missions? Ah, my venerable confreres (it is one of your companions who shares the sentiments of his heart with you), you are called by God to such an important work. Oh, how dear to the Divine Heart are the labors you sustain for the conversion of sinners. How great is the joy that you show in cleansing the penitent souls in the Blood of the innocent Lamb *slain from the beginning of the world* (cf. Rev 13:8)! Let us together bless God, who *has called us by his holy calling* (2 Tim 1:9), and let our life be entirely occupied in obtaining his greater Divine Glory.

It is not enough just to do good: it must be accomplished with methodical supervision and direction. For this reason, the system for giving the Holy Missions is to be found in the present Little Work. We must adopt it, according to the principles established[304]|by the one who directs and governs the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in which We Missionaries have been chosen|.[305] In following such a system we are disciples of the famous Father Segneri the elder and of [Father] Segneri the younger,[306] of Father Pinamonti,[307] of Father Baldinucci,[308] and, to say nothing of so many others, of Blessed Leonard of Porto Maurizio,[309]

304 Rev adds *by the most illustrious workers*.
305 Rev deletes the phrase between the bars.
306 Paolo Segneri the elder (1624- 1694) was a noted Jesuit preacher and moral theologian. His nephew Paolo Segneri the younger (1673-1713) was also a Jesuit, and like his uncle, dedicated himself to the ministry of missions and retreats.
307 Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti (1632-1703), Jesuit, was involved in the ministry of missions along with the elder Segneri. The latter wrote about Pinamonti's missionary activity in a volume published in 1687.
308 Bl. Antonio Baldinucci, Jesuit, was roughly a contemporary of the aforementioned Jesuits (1665-1717). He was also active in the ministry of missions, especially in and around Frascati in Lazio.
309 St. Leonard of Port Maurice, OFM, (1676-1751) was a renowned preacher, whom St. Alphonsus Liguori called "the great missionary of the 18th century." He was known for spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart and promoting the Stations of the Cross. He died in Rome and is buried in the church of St. Bonaventure on the Palatine Hill and was canonized in 1867.

and of Blessed Alphonsus Maria Liguori.[310] It is pleasant, I repeat, to follow again in the footsteps left by such great Workers, whose memories offer us the most glorious history of the holy Missions. Let us review the present method with pleasure, my brothers, and let us pray for one another to the Giver of all good, the Father of mercy, and the God of all consolation. May he instill in us that spirit of fervor that we need, and by which we can arrive at that Homeland that is the goal of our desires.

ADVICE FOR THE MISSIONARIES

1. Whoever wishes to dedicate himself to the Apostolic life of the Missions must first come to know the will of the Most High in prayer. Therefore, he should reflect carefully, in holy recollection, that there are three gifts required in a Gospel Worker: holiness, knowledge, and health. As De Sales would say, everyone needs a guide so that he does not err in knowing the Divine good pleasure. Thus, one must discuss this at length with a spiritual director, since all the Saints follow this principle. We Ecclesiastics especially need a learned and fervent director who can be trusted with the inner governance of our heart, which animates and sanctifies external activities. In addition, there must be an ongoing desire to grow in holiness each day, along with an uninterrupted study of clerical perfection. In this way, we will become what God calls us to be.
2. Without doubt, the great ministry of working together for the salvation of souls is subject to great misfortunes. The Devil is not content with devoting his strength to these misfortunes and uses the tongues of both evil and even, at times, of good people. They are seized by reckless zeal and allow the tongue or the pen to slip and discredit the work or the workers. The celebrated

310 St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787) is probably best known as the founder of the Redemptorists. He was one of the great missionaries of the eighteenth century and is also famous for his treatises on moral theology. He was canonized in 1839 and later declared a Doctor of the Church.

Padre Segneri, of distinguished memory, often repeated that one who does not have a generous heart, one that is ready to accept great disappointments should not engage in this ministry.[311] The Missionary should not expect anything but that his efforts will be considered of little value. A firm principle is always to desire to gain the glory of God and the benefit of Souls. If he sees that he is honored from time to time, let him give those honors to God, repeating with the Psalmist: *Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory* (Ps 115).

3. As has been shown, what is needed is the conscientious exercise of profound and sincere humility. Without this virtue, it is vain to hope to become a suitable instrument for giving glory to God. To such humility should be joined a gentle and discreet spirit of mortification, *so that Jesus should be made manifest in us* (cf. 2 Cor 4:10). Whoever engages in the Missions must keep in mind that he may suffer to gain souls for Jesus Christ. He will exercise mortification by abstaining from viewing those things that pique his curiosity in those places in which he exercises his ministry. He will show only the most ardent sensitivity of Religion in visiting the Sanctuaries that he encounters, imploring in them an abundance of Divine blessings. Let everyone refrain from taking walks for diversion outside the house, as well as from standing next to the windows or loggias of the house in which he is living. Withdrawal and recollection are proper to the Missionary! He is to be modest in his glance and in his speech: every act, every action of ours should be ordered to the Excellence of ministry.

Finally, one should join to the other virtues obedience, which is the daughter of humility. Should one be chosen Director of the Mission, let the others practice submission and docility. It is not contrary to obedience to offer the [Director] some observation

311 Gaspar inserts a reference to a work of St. Alphonsus, *Selva di materie predicabili ed instruitive 'A collection of materials for preaching and instruction.'*

for improving things. In this way let each Missionary give good example to others with the practice of virtues and let them be of one heart and one will in God.

4. Above all, one should keep one's own perfection in sight (as St. Francis Xavier used to write to Father Gaspare Barzeo). During a mission one should not fail to fulfill faithfully what is owed to God and to one's own conscience. In this way we become capable of rendering service to our neighbor and producing abundant fruit in souls.

To this end, the Missionaries will gather together to replenish their spiritual forces in a half hour of mental prayer. After completing the prayer | the Text of the Divine Scriptures is read,|[312] and with such means [the Missionary] cultivates his spiritual well-being. Spiritual reading will contribute greatly to this end and should be carried out by a Cleric for the Missionaries during the midday meal.[313]

Lastly, [the Missionary] will bring to perfection the great work of his own sanctification to which he must apply himself by an examination of conscience, which is made in common every evening after supper. He gives thanks to God for the benefits received during the day. He will implore God's Divine assistance for the night with the recitation of the litanies of the Most Holy Madonna, and an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be in honor of St. Francis Xavier, the special Protector |of our Archconfraternity, and|[314] of the Holy Missions. Let it be noted in passing that Blessed Leonardo, in his method for the missions, held to the principle that all missionaries should take care to be ready for community functions (*atti comuni*) by obeying whoever would be in charge of the Prayer.

312 Rev replaces the text between the bars with: *seven Glory Bes will be recited*.
313 Rev: adds: *at least for half the meal*.
314 Rev: deletes the phrase between the bars and inserts *of the Holy Missionaries*.

5. The missionaries should hold in esteem the holy Clergy, whether Religious or Secular. They are not to be involved in collecting the alms that are ordered by the Superiors. An Ecclesiastic chosen by the Bishop or his Vicar should be sent to do this, and he should be given all requests that are made by those in need, so that he will seek to provide for them in the best way possible. Also contributing to the greater glory of God is celebrating the Holy Mass for the Souls in Purgatory for the benefit of the Holy Missions without receiving a stipend, as noted by Blessed Leonard. During the Introduction one should tell the People that the Holy Mass is being offered for the good of the Mission, and that in the Blood of the Innocent Lamb, who offers himself on the Altar, abides all our hope.[315] [The Missionary] is not to leave the house at the midday meal even though Prelates or Important Persons make the request. [The Missionary] is not to receive any [compensation], except the minimum necessary for food or for some other necessary expense. In this way, he can say with the Apostle: *I have not coveted any man's silver or gold* (Acts 20:33).[316]
6. The Missionaries are not to eat or sleep separately in different houses [Gaspar gives a reference to Segneri as quoted by St. Alphonsus], and let them eat sparingly.[317] Women are not permitted to enter their rooms. If it is necessary to speak with them, this is to take place in a suitable place that is not secluded. The conversation should be concluded as quickly as possible. In addition, they are not to go to someone's house to receive useless compliments. (Those visits that are to be made to places destined

315 Rev: adds: *If the Mass cannot be applied as stated above: the rule is that alms are not be received from anyone. If the Bishops or other Ecclesiastics are willing, they are to direct these to the nearest House of the Institute, according to the norm of the rules.*

316 Rev: adds: *not even in the form of a sacred object*

317 Rev adds: *excluding sweets and liqueurs. They are to content themselves with the food that is served in the Houses of the Institute through the year. They are not to accept fine foods or the like, but only those simple foods that would be necessary for sustenance in those days, if this would be the practice of the place, and then only what is sufficient. On the last day there will be a third dish but never a sweet.*

for the missions will be treated shortly.) When they go to hear the confessions of the sick or for other urgent matters for the Glory of God, they are never to go alone. The local Superior, therefore, will appoint some helpers (*deputati*), that is, two Ecclesiastics and four seculars, who will go with them to preserve good order. A group of men, wearing the penitential habit (*sacco di penitenza*), will be appointed,[318] if possible, and the Superior of the mission will give them their respective tasks. The Missionaries should not attempt to receive the restitutions of penitents on their own. In case it is necessary to do this, they are to require a receipt[319] from those who receive the restitutions, so that they can show these to those same penitents.

Lastly, it will be their responsibility to seek every opportune means for repairing public scandals. Regarding public[320] discords: they are to persuade both parties to make peace as the holy Gospel enjoins.[321] To achieve this goal, two Ecclesiastics and two Men and two Women are to be chosen. They will have the title of Peacemakers (*Pacieri e Paciere*), so that they can work together to achieve reconciliations, which will be of great advantage to the individuals as well as to civil society.[322]

7. Therefore it is desirable that at the beginning of the mission or at the introduction, that there be a procession of Clerics and of the people, to meet the Gospel Ministers. When leaving the mission, the Missionaries should depart from the place of the mission in secret, if possible, to avoid any applause. It is a principle of the holy Missionaries, which should be followed exactly, to leave the places where they have conducted the mission very quickly, refusing all invitations to refresh themselves or to rest. If during

318 Rev adds: *by the Bishop or his representative.*
319 Rev adds: *with the method noted for such cases*
320 Rev has *public* underlined.
321 Rev adds: *without the Missionaries involving themselves in temporal decisions.*
322 Rev modifies: society; *and they are to seek secular* (temporali) *reconciliations.*

the missions a little rest is needed, they are to choose some Religious house apart from populated places, and there take time for quiet and repose in God.[323]

INFORMATION REGARDING TRAVELING

Even when on a journey, the method of cultivating a proper spirit, indicated above, is not to be interrupted. One should always travel in the habit of the Missionary, which is distinguished primarily by the Crucifix that is worn hanging from the neck, and the recommended cincture. The good example of this garb will be of great influence on the public, as well as being a comfort to the evangelical Workers. If it is necessary to admit someone to their company in the coach, this should be an honest person, and never of the opposite sex. In the hostels in which they find themselves by necessity, they should choose to retire and take whatever food is necessary in their own rooms, always demonstrating the greatest spiritual recollection.

These are the principal admonitions (*avvisi*) that must be kept in mind in order to fulfill our holy ministry correctly. In observing them we will come to know the great benefit that they produce.

METHOD

To be observed in conducting the Missions, extracted from the book entitled Practice of the Holy Missions *of Fr. Paolo Segneri, from the work of Fr. Fulvio Fontana of the Society of Jesus, and from the Lives of St. Vincent Ferrer, of the younger Segneri, of Fr. Pinamonti, of Fr. Baldinucci, of Blessed Leonardo, of Blessed di Girolamo,*[324] *and of Blessed Liguori.*

323 Rev modifies: God, *using some proportionate care.*
324 St. Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419) was a famous Dominican missionary. Fulvio Fontana, SJ (1648-1723) was active in the ministry of missions in northern Italy. St. Francis di Girolamo (1642-1716) was a Jesuit whose ministry embraced giving missions in southern Italy. He was canonized in 1839.

ENTRANCE TO THE MISSION

Everyone knows that the mission is an extraordinary means of God's providence. Through the mission, our most compassionate father seeks to call people to penance and to a sincere change in their lives. Thus, it is called *an acceptable time* (2 Cor 6:2), in which the Divine Lord abundantly sows his heavenly gifts on souls. How happy are those people who are animated by such principles and know the value of the missions. On the other hand, the Devil, ever the enemy of the good, never ceases to present this holy ministry in a terrible and repugnant light. From the accounts of the missions it is easy to see how great his efforts are. To escape the diabolic devices, one must properly organize the entrance of the mission, so that the people may know that their hearts should be filled with joy since the mercies of the great God are being revealed. Inner joy is, however, the fruit of religion and of faith; how can we not express it in the most glorious and moving manner?

For these reasons, at the hour previously established, the Bishop or his Vicar, accompanied by the Clergy, and by the Confraternities vested in habit, will be at the gate of the City. It is customary also that the Magistrate be present at this function so that the people may be encouraged to acquaint themselves with the nature of a Mission. With the solemn sound of pealing bells, they meet the Gospel ministers. The latter prostrate themselves immediately at the feet of the Bishop or his representative, and at this time they are given charge of the souls of the place by receiving the Crucifix of the mission. The Missionaries ask the blessing and intone the Litany, and then go to the principal church to adore the Blessed Sacrament. There, after a brief prayer, they invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit and sing the *Veni Creator*. When the Director of the mission has said the prayer, *Deus qui corda Fidelium,*[325] they visit the relic of the Holy Madonna that is to be exposed at that time, to commend the

325 The closing prayer of the *Veni Creator.*

Apostolic Ministry to the maternal heart of our dear Mother. After this, they go to the Platform.

When all the Missionaries have ascended the platform, they humbly kiss it. Then the Angelic salutation is sung, *Dio ti Salvi Maria* 'God save you, Mary,' etc. After the Hail Mary is said, the Missionaries kiss the platform again, and the Director of the mission remains with the brothers who are assisting[326] (one of whom carries the Crucifix). He[327] then makes the introduction. Here one should be aware that the brothers are to wear the hood lowered (*il Cappuccio calato*). The Missionary who directs the mission is responsible for communicating in advance whatever involves the smooth running of the ministry. He is responsible for the entrance to the Mission. He is to orient those Helpers (*Deputati*) chosen for such a great work, after having made the introduction.[328] In addition, the same person[329] will take care of explaining the Mission to the people, the dispositions needed to participate in it, and the fruit that God expects from the Mission. He will announce the Schedule that will be observed during the days set aside for spreading the Divine word, the Indulgences that will be gained by those who participate in the Mission, and all the rest that is needed for the exact organization of matters. When the introduction is finished, he will give the Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, and then people will return to their own houses, reciting the Holy Rosary.

This system is used uniformly every day; at the end of the Mission, and in the summer when it is necessary to preach in the public square, the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is given

326 This, and other mentions of *brothers* in the text, refers to members of one or the other confraternity. Brothers of the Congregation are referred to as *brothers in service* or *lay brothers.*

327 Rev adds: *or another Companion.*

328 Rev adds: *If the brothers did not have to stand there with the lowered hood, they could also change but calmly so as not to disturb the Audience, or sometimes they can in the end carry the Crucifix but, in that case, accompanied by 2 Candles or Lamps*.

329 Rev: *the same* is replaced by *the one who gives the introduction.*

at the main door of the Church for the convenience of the people. If this is not possible, because of differences in locations, then it is given in the Church closest to the square where the preaching takes place. The Blessed Sacrament is taken outside with the customary pomp, and the blessing takes place at a decent Altar appropriately erected. [330] This marks the end of the function.

After the introduction, the Missionaries take a short break and then go immediately to visit the Bishop, Governor, and the local officials, to fulfill the obligations of courtesy. The visit will also serve for them to seek that these officials, in their respective roles, may organize everything to assure that public tranquility be observed in these days, and that all else will be for the glory of the Most High. The visit to the principal Priests of the Clergy and the Superiors of religious communities should not be omitted, and they should be asked for the spiritual assistance of Prayers. If the religious communities are at a distance from the place, then two seculars chosen for the Mission fulfill this Office in the name of the Missionaries. In monasteries of Nuns and in the girls' schools (*Conservatori*), particular prayers for the benefit of souls are to be placed before the Throne of the Most High by means of notices from the Ordinary.

Each morning, the litany of the Most Holy Madonna is to be added in the public choirs, and at Mass, the Collect *pro petitione lacrymarum* 'to request tears' or *pro remissione peccatorum* 'for the remission of sins' is said, except on those days when a more solemn rite is to be observed, that is, on doubles of the first class.[331] A copy of the Schedule established is to be posted in the principal Church[332] of the place where a Mission takes place, and in the

330 Rev adds: *or from the same platform.*

331 This is a term that was used for the more important liturgical feasts in the calendar. This ranking of feasts was simplified under Pope John XXIII and further simplified under Paul VI to the current system for the ranking of liturgical days. A double of the first class was the highest-ranking feast day.

332 Rev adds: *in the Sacristy of* the principal Church.

residence of the Missionaries, also placing the name of each[333] on the rooms of their dwelling.

It is necessary that everything be carried out adequately and at the hour that has been previously indicated, and that progress will be noted. Each companion of the Mission will have a particular responsibility for the external order assigned by the Director, and in this way, with the Divine blessing, our holy ministry, which has multiple relationships and goals related to the sanctification of the people, will be carried out.

People who can sing should be selected, from among the clergy or from our own members. They are to support the mission with the commitment and charity required to promote the glory of the Lord. The one who directs the singing should choose the sacred music to correspond as much as possible to the theme of the preaching. The exception to this is that each day before the great sermon the *Padre celeste Iddio abbiate a noi pietà* 'God our heavenly Father have mercy on us' is sung.

The Missionaries are to follow this rule: that when there are crowds of men and women gathered for confessions, [the Missionaries] are divided to hear the confessions of either the men or of the women, so that external order and tranquility be maintained.

Finally, the brothers who are to assist at the functions of the Mission, whether in directing the Church or the square, are always to wear the hood lowered, as has already been noted, changing when it is necessary. They will carry the *sbordoni,*[334] with which they will maintain silence, and in keeping with their official duties, they will indicate to the people how the men and women are to be separated. They will also be responsible for carrying out whatever the Director of the Mission indicates. This will achieve the good, but exactly and with order.

333 Rev adds: *of the Missionaries.*
334 The *sbordone* was a wooden staff painted black, about two meters in length. It was used for support and to give orders without speaking.

1. Functions of the Mission in the Morning

Early in the morning, after the bell sounds, the first Mass will take place. It will usually be celebrated by the Missionary who is to give the instruction. At that time, a Cleric or Priest will come onto the platform vested in surplice, and will orient the people to direct their affections and actions to God, reciting the offering |composed by Blessed Leonardo for this purpose, *Eterno mio Dio*|.[335] The chaplet of the Most Precious Blood will be recited during the Mass, thus inspiring the people to hope for every benefit from the Eternal Divine Father, by the inestimable price of our Redemption which is offered on the Altar in the bloodless Sacrifice.[336] If there is time, the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be will be recited in honor of St. Francis Xavier, Protector of the Holy Missions.

When Mass has ended, the singers are to go to the platform[337] and they will sing the short refrain *Perdono mio Dio,* which is ordinarily sung on the first mornings, prior to the sermons which explain to the people the eternal truths (*le massime eterne*). Meanwhile, the Missionary who celebrated the Holy Mass makes his thanksgiving. Then, with two brothers accompanying him, he ascends the platform, which he humbly kisses (all Missionaries do this on every occasion), and the Singers immediately intone the Angelic Greeting. The *Ave Maria* is sung, and the Missionaries and the people venerate the Most Holy Names of Jesus and Mary with the customary words: *Sia Lodato Gesù e Maria* 'Praised be Jesus and Mary.' The Missionary then says the following ejaculation with the people: "*Eterno Padre, io vi offro il Sangue di Gesù Cristo, in isconto de' miei peccati, e per i bisogni della S. Chiesa*" 'Eternal Father, I offer you the Blood of Jesus Christ, in atonement for my sins, and for the needs of Holy Church.' The Catechist does the same after the midday meal.

335 Rev: replaces the phrase between the bars with: *which is printed in the book of the Chaplet of the Divine Blood.*
336 Rev adds: *and finally, the seven Offerings.*
337 Rev adds: *or in another place adapted to the locality.*

He will begin by explaining the precepts of the Decalogue, the subject for instruction in the morning. The Catechism instruction should not last more than a half hour, taking into consideration the poor, who must hurry off to attend to their work, and the same is true for the Catechism after the midday meal. After the Catechism, the next Mass begins, and it is celebrated by a Missionary, who is responsible for giving some example from the life of Mary. The Relic of the Blessed Virgin is exposed, and at that time, a Cleric or Priest recites the acts of faith, hope, and charity with the people, in such a way that the recitation is usually completed at the time the Priest reads the Gospel. |If possible, sometimes the seven Offerings to the Precious Blood of Jesus are recited. This will serve to stir the fervor of the people for this loving devotion even more.|[338]

After the Gospel, the Missionary who celebrates the Mass will speak to the congregation, and he will encourage them to trust in the protection of Mary Most Holy, through whose prayers the Most High grants us every grace. He will do this by offering them some example followed by a short practical moral instruction (*una breve moralità*). Mass continues, and again a Cleric or a Priest ascends the platform and recites the Holy Rosary, which will conclude with the end of the Mass. At the end of Mass, the Celebrant blesses the people with the Relic of the Most Holy Madonna,[339] and this concludes the early morning Function.

Here it should be noted that the seven offerings already spoken about are recited *ad libitum*, in either the first or the second Mass, where there is a place for them. In addition, the Litanies after the Rosary are recited or are omitted according to circumstances.[340]

338 The words between the bars are omitted in the revision because the Seven Offerings had been recited during the first Mass.
339 Rev adds: *with the designated person singing "I ask you, O pious Mother, to bless my soul from Heaven."*
340 Rev omits this entire paragraph, because the seven Offerings were recited during the first Mass.

After the morning function comes the ministry of confession, and if one of the Missionaries has certain responsibilities, he is dispensed from these as noted here in the method. An hour and a half before midday, the time for Christian Doctrine is announced.[341] Meanwhile, there is a procession with the Cross, as is customary, while singing the Litanies, aimed at inviting the children to the Doctrine lesson. Two churches are to be assigned, one[342] for the men and the other for the women. In each one, a Missionary will preside, and, with consultation of the Pastors, he will divide the Classes according to those who have made their first Communion, those who are to receive Communion during the mission, and those boys or girls who are to make their first confession. One must not neglect those preparing for Confirmation, and if need be, the Doctrine [lesson] will be repeated after lunch before Catechism.

Exactly one hour before midday, the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Creed are to be recited aloud, and then the instruction begins. About noon, the Missionary gives the signal with the bell, and the acts of faith, hope, and charity are recited. In the respective churches he urges the fathers and mothers, who are usually present for the classes, to listen to the explanation of Doctrine, so that at home they insist on the repetition [of the lessons] needed in order better to impress on the minds of their children what has been explained. A Cleric will help with this great work, which is very useful for adults as well, since they may have either forgotten or were ignorant of the catechetical material, and they now may acquire the necessary knowledge in the classes. In those places where there are the Pious Schools for girls, which are so influential for Christian education, these schools can assist for the benefit of those girls, especially those who are to make their first Communion.

341 Rev adds: *even if this does not happen after lunch.*
342 Rev adds: *or even more according to the need.*

2. Functions after Lunch

The functions after lunch ordinarily should end an hour before sunset,[343] so that the people can return to their homes in due time, and if the mission must end prior to that time, it will be necessary for the preaching to be briefer. Having given the customary signals with the bell, the singers|will ascend the platform|[344] in order to entertain (*trattenere*) the people with the singing of sacred songs.[345] Meanwhile, |some|[346] brothers of the Company appointed to assist at the mission,|while holding high the Crucifix, go from the principal Church to meet the missionaries. As soon as the Missionaries hear the singing of the Litanies, they follow the Crucifix and make a short procession, and then return to the Church. They make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, while the singers continue to sing the sacred songs|.[347] After visiting the Blessed Sacrament, |the Crucifix is placed in the Sacristy, and|[348] the Catechist, accompanied by two Brothers, ascends the platform, where he speaks about the topic covered in the morning.

The subject of catechetical instruction will be the Sacrament of penance, and in the final instruction, the subject should be the dispositions necessary for receiving Communion worthily. The Catechism ordinarily lasts about three quarters of an hour, and for the sake of good order, the sign given will be two candles that are lighted on the main Altar. If the mission is conducted in the Piazza, the sign is beating discreetly on the platform.

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343 Literally, "at the 23rd hour." Gaspar was still using so-called "Italian time," in which the first hour started with the Angelus bell at sunset or sometimes a half hour later, depending on local custom. Thus the 23rd hour would occur an hour before sunset, and this would vary, of course, by the time of the year. It is helpful to remember that the hour of sunset would be the 24th hour, after which the 1st hour would begin.

344 Rev: for the phrase between the bars substitutes: *they will go to the appointed place.*

345 Rev adds: *and especially those praising the Divine Blood.*

346 Rev substitutes: *at least two.*

347 Rev substitutes the words between the bars with *they go to get the missionary Catechist.*

348 In the Rev, the words between the bars are deleted.

After the Catechism, the singers will intone *Padre Celeste Iddio*, and shortly thereafter the Missionary who will give the great sermon comes to the platform, preceded by two brothers with the Crucifix, which is accompanied to the platform with two candles.[349] Upon reaching the platform, the Missionary kisses the feet of the Crucifix[350] and the singers intone the Hail Mary. Then he says with the people:

> Life is short and death is sure; the hour of death remains obscure.
> A soul you have, and only one; if that be lost all hope is gone.
> Waste not your time, while time shall last; for after death 'tis ever past.
> The all-seeing God your Judge will be, and Heaven or Hell your destiny.
> All earthly things will fleet away; Eternity will ever stay.[351]

As much as possible, the sermons should draw on topics from the golden book of spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. One should never omit, beyond preaching on the eternal truths, preaching on the Passion[352] and on the Most Holy Madonna.[353] The preaching should seek to be adapted to the time and circumstances,[354] and should always conclude with the act of contrition and the blessing with the Crucifix, after which is sung: *Perdono o caro Dio, Prima di più peccare, Morir vogl'io* 'Pardon, O dear God. Before sinning again, I wish to die.'

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed as noted above. Having given the blessing and returned the Sacrament to the Tabernacle, Psalm

349 Rev adds: *and with the banner of St. Francis Xavier*
350 Rev adds: *after having kissed the platform*.
351 This is not a completely literal translation of the poem in the text, but rather is an English version that was contained in earlier editions of the C.PP.S.manual of prayers of the American Province. In C.PP.S.communities in the United States, this was often recited after Mass in the morning.
352 Rev adds: *and the Most Precious Blood of Our Savior Jesus Christ*.
353 Rev adds: *and St. Francis Xavier*
354 Rev adds: *not forgetting the sermon on peace*.

116 will be sung (*Laudate Dominum omnes gentes, etc.*) before the tabernacle is closed and the people are dismissed. This marks the close of the Holy Mission for the day. Note that the Preaching is not to go beyond the hour, using the signal already noted.

3. Functions for the Oratory of the Men in the Evening[355]

A quarter of an hour before the Ave Maria [hour],[356] the brothers will take the image of the Holy Crucifix, accompanied by two torches. Before setting out, the *Venite adoremus* 'Come, let us adore,' etc. is said, along with an Our Father to St. Francis Xavier. Then they go singing *svegliarini* that are related to the theme of the preaching.[357] At this function, only the men will participate. They go in procession through the streets. The women are advised by the Pastors and by the Missionary of the day to retire to their houses, and, if they should accidentally encounter the procession, to prudently go inside. One of the Ecclesiastic Assistants (*Deputati Ecclesiastici*) determines a short route to follow, so that on the different evenings the processions wind through the entire city in which the mission is taking place.

The people are to stop at a point suitable for hearing the divine word, established by the Ecclesiastic Assistant. There a Missionary, drawing on the sentiment of the final strophe of the hymn, will offer a short exhortation to participate in the Oratory, in keeping with the practice of the evening Oratories in Rome. After this brief exhortation, there will be a second, and then they return to the principal Church in which the mission is being held. The oratory takes place there, with the church sufficiently illuminated. The Ecclesiastic Assistants see to it that in these holy processions there are two brothers with torches for the convenience of those who

355 Literally: *at the 24th hour* (sunset in the Italian timekeeping method used by Gaspar).
356 A reference to the Angelus, customarily recited at sunset. The practice of saying three Hail Marys in the evening was widespread in Europe for centuries.
357 Gaspar here refers to a booklet containing some forty poetic prayers.

follow the Crucifix, and in this way, the affairs of God are carried out with the exactness that is required.

It is not enough to give sinners notice that the mission has begun, nor is the sounding of bells enough; they must be moved by preaching, giving them warning of the divine punishments that are reserved for the unrepentant. Experience teaches that in this way many needy souls turn to penance. One should also read the life of Bl. di Girolamo, in which are found wonderful Lessons similar to those indicated concisely in the course of this present collection.[358]

When the men have met in the Oratory, one of the Missionaries, holding the Crucifix on the platform, offers a summary of the preaching of the day. This will reinforce the Divine instruction related to the theme treated, and at the same time will give those who were not able to attend the preaching after lunch some understanding of the topic. This brief discourse ends with the act of contrition, and when they have received the blessing with the Crucifix, the men return to their own homes, reciting the Holy Rosary. Those who wish to confess stay in the Church.

One cannot say enough about the usefulness of the Holy Oratory. This function frees [men] from so many occasions [of sin] and from useless entertainments. It offers an opportunity for confessions to very many men who could not confess during the day, either because they were not able to or because they were embarrassed. In the quiet, in the silence–Oh, how much the holy name of our Lord God is glorified, and for the honor of God, the Gospel Ministers must be tireless in their charity.

4. Conferences

To promote the greater glory of God and for the conversion of souls, nothing should be neglected in the implementation of the

358 Rev adds: *They are useful also for the poor sick persons who are not able to enter the place of the Mission, and they are a compensation for the public profanations of the Lord that take place.*

Missions. Besides the public preaching already outlined, there are to be special conferences in the form of spiritual exercises for the various classes that are adapted for them. Such conferences help people become acquainted in more detail with the respective obligations incumbent on them, and by the divine mercy, they derive wonderful fruit from them. Because of the time available, it is not necessary for these to be lengthy to be done well. Sometimes three days are enough, and with smaller populations, a single day for each group will suffice. Bl. Liguori highly recommends this method, which ensures that each soul that is tempted not to benefit from the mission may obtain the desired result through this means. A Church will be designated to be available in the morning at a convenient hour for the group invited. When the time has been set, the Missionary approaches the door of the Church, |and a brother assists|[359] nearby for the sake of good order.

First, there is a brief spiritual lesson on some book, adapted to the audience. Then the Missionary delivers the instruction, after which |the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* is sung. Then there is a brief meditation that concludes with a fervent act of contrition and blessing with the Crucifix|.[360]

Whoever gives these conferences is to speak to the men and women separately. One can give these conferences one after the other, or two Missionaries can speak in two separate Churches at the same time. Many times, when dealing with the men, it is advantageous to have them meet at the Ave Maria [hour], and while the Oratory is being conducted for all the others, as has been said, the men on those evenings of the conference receive the nourishment (*pascolo*) of the Divine word separately.

Such conferences are to be conducted in the first days of the Mission when everything is working together toward a goal, that

359 Rev replaces the phrase between the bars with: *and two brothers assist*.
360 Rev replaces the phrase between the bars with: *the Agimus concludes the Conference.*

is, to see the people stirred to benefit from the Divine Mercies. The Director of the mission is to exempt two Missionaries from this duty; they will be responsible for the [teaching of] doctrine. He can also schedule the time in such a way that one event does not conflict with the other. It is also good, by way of an appropriate digression here, to note that whoever engages in the ministry of the missions several times a day should administer the Divine word according to his own strengths.

In this regard, in reading the life of the Famous Padre Baldinucci, one sees how God always accompanies the minister with the special assistance of his mercy. For that reason (with the agreement of the Bishop), whoever directs the mission will have as many confessors from outside to be present for the benefit of the population. The helpers mentioned above will procure lodging that is available in the houses of the local upper class (*de' Signori*), who, according to the system, agree to cooperate in this way for the good of souls.

The conferences are directed to the Upper Class (*Signori*), the Merchants, etc. The Missionaries will decide on this arrangement according to the needs of the People. One should not neglect speaking to the nuns and at girls' schools (*Conservatori*), with at least one conference appropriate for reawakening or strengthening the commitment to observe the Rules. Exercises for the Clerics should not be omitted; these are ordinarily taken care of by the Director of the Mission. At an hour convenient for the Ecclesiastics during the day, or even after the Ave Maria [hour], they are to meet in some Oratory or Church to learn the discipline (*scienza*) of the saints with serious meditation on the obligations of the Ecclesiastical state. They are to meditate on how many good things have been given us as a special crown of glory, and which bring peace and health to souls.

These Spiritual Exercises will begin[361] immediately at the time of the introduction and will last for as many days as are available

361 Rev adds: *ordinarily*.

according to circumstances. However, while attending to the good of all with untiring activity, one should not neglect visits to the Hospitals and prisons, so that everyone profits from the holy time of the Mission. The fervor of Sacramental confession will increase where this is a preparation for receiving the Blessed Sacrament. The reverend Pastors will impress this upon the sick of their parish, and the special external confessors will be those who with generous zeal agree to assist with these matters.[362]

5. Functions that Customarily Take Place at the End of the Great Sermon

Two or three times[363] during the mission, the one who preaches the great sermon will take the Discipline after the act of contrition. Segneri the younger calls it the holy sword given him by God, as Arms were given to Joshua to make war on sin. The discipline can be taken during the preaching about universal judgment and during the sermon on dishonesty. The Missionary, moved by the spirit of the Lord, will choose the preaching that will end with the discipline.

In the sermon on death, a skull will be displayed at the end, so that the people will be disillusioned with earthly vanity. In the sermon on judgment, all the Missionaries together can take the discipline, as mentioned above, because the Lord says in the scriptures that we Priests must weep between the porch and the altar for the sins of the people (cf. Joel 2:17). After having humbly implored the Divine mercies for ourselves, we will implore those mercies for the souls who are so interested in Jesus Christ.

This function is to be conducted in the following manner. At the end of the sermon, while recalling the blessing which the just will receive immediately on that day, the Missionary turns toward the unrepentant (*ostinati*) and will speak to them. He will tell them

362 Rev adds: *also, the soldiers should be taken into consideration in the allotment of ministers.*
363 Rev adds: *ordinarily*

that on that day they will hear the voice of an implacable judge who condemns them to a deserved punishment. To rouse them further, using those aids the minister knows how to propose, according to the principles of the Saints and the practice of the missions. He will show them the abandonment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (cf. Joel 3:2, 12) that awaits sinners by having the Crucifix leave the platform. He gives it to the brothers, who after a short time take it and place it respectfully in the Sacristy.

Meanwhile he goes to the people, explaining what is said in the scriptures: that God, according to our way of understanding, will turn his back on sinners. Already one can see the emotional response of the audience. Ah, my people, says the Missionary, may the Tribunal of Justice become the Tribunal of Mercy, and may a reprobate never be found among you. Let us give ourselves to penance, etc. Here the Missionaries wear the rope around the neck. As St. Charles Borromeo would do during his penitential functions, they ascend the platform and humbly kiss it, saying *Parce Domine, parce populo tuo 'Spare, O Lord, Spare your people.'* If they choose, they can use the melody used by the Capuchins. The Preacher will repeat these words three times, and in between there should be *fervorini* exhorting to penitence. In the end, the penitential actions are joined to the prayers, and the discipline is taken for the duration of a *De profundis* (Psalm 130) along with the prayer.

The present function, which awakens or confirms penitence in the heart, generally concludes with the blessing with the Crucifix, which is brought back to the platform, accompanied by lighted candles and by an Ecclesiastic in surplice and purple stole. United in charity, all implore the most benevolent God to be merciful, and with tears they receive his paternal blessing.

The sermon on hell on the topic of justice is directed at those who are still hardened of heart and aims at reasoning with them. Therefore, the Missionary mounts the platform without having

brought along the Crucifix[364] as is customary. He will tell the people that this is why they see him so distressed and suffering. The crucified [Christ] is the triumph of God's goodness, but today we are speaking of his retribution (*vendette*), etc. At the end of the sermon he will seek to bring the repentant, with sentiments of Religion, to desire the vision of the crucifix, our treasure (*bene*), and then, to console the souls who are wounded with shafts of love, he has the crucifix brought to the platform, just as above.

At the end of the sermon on the Madonna, which the Missionaries call the sermon of victory, the Holy Image of the Most Holy Madonna of the Missions will be presented unexpectedly, solemnly accompanied by the Clergy. Oh, here it would be appropriate to spend a long time expounding the wonders that have taken place with the sudden appearance of the Image of Holy Mary as we are describing it! This Holy Image remains on the platform[365] until the end of the mission. Out of love of Mary, there is a search for prohibited weapons, and these are arranged around the Image. Playing cards and prohibited books are also sought. There is a plea for improvement in women's dress, for scandalous pictures to be removed, and for whatever else will lead to obtain a complete change in the people. In order that the very sensitive ministry we exercise be justified, the weapons must be broken up in the square during the sermon of reminders, and then sold by the appointed Ecclesiastics |for the benefit of the poor|.[366] The cards and the books given by penitents to the Confessors are then handed on to the Missionaries, and these will be burned during the final sermon.[367]

If valuable gifts are brought during the Mission, they will be placed around the Picture of the Most Holy Virgin being

364 Rev adds: *of the Mission.*
365 Rev adds: *exposed.*
366 Rev substitutes for the words between the bars: *in order to provide Wax to burn more brightly before the Image of the Most Holy Madonna in the place.*
367 Rev adds: *Be aware of a book that should be deposited with the Ordinary for the public good of the Church.*

venerated. At the end, they will be left by the Missionaries with the Image most highly venerated in the place where the Mission is held. The candles carried during the mission will all be burned to the glory of Mary. If some are left over, the Missionaries will likewise offer them along with the gifts to be kept on that sacred Altar, where they will receive the necessary protection, along with the inscription that these objects were all given to Mary for perpetual memory, as was mentioned above. These gifts will always remind the people that they have dedicated themselves as children of Mary and that they have consecrated their hearts to a loving Mother. Oh, how all that has been mentioned so far produces so much good in the present method. The Helpers for the Mission[368] see to it that they are always near the platform, ready to receive the offerings that will be made to Mary. They will create a register of the items[369] that will serve as a reminder and at the same time be a good example for others.[370] The wax that the faithful customarily bring adds to the crown of glory to the Virgin. One need not fear that this will be lacking, because it is the practice that during the days dedicated to venerating the Image of the Holy Missions, rather than that candles be lacking, it is always better to increase them.[371]

In the sermon |on the Passion|,[372] the coffin of the dead Christ is venerated. Similarly, one can venerate the mobile device (*machina*) that portrays |the deposition|[373] from the Cross.[374] The Priests, vested in red tunics, carry the coffin, and others, with matching stoles,

368 Rev adds: *or other brothers selected, but always dressed in habit.*
369 Rev adds: *without noting individual persons.*
370 Rev adds: *They will give a copy of this to the Director of the Mission.*
371 Rev adds: *One of the Missionaries will regulate this and will preside at that function.*
372 Rev substitutes: *on the divine Blood.*
373 Rev substitutes: *Jesus taken down.*
374 Rev adds: *along with the Image of the Sorrowful Mother.*

precede and accompany it.[375] Where there are few Ecclesiastics, the brothers can participate.

Such a painful (*tenera*) function, also stirred by the sight of the Sorrowful Mother, arouses the people to kiss in spirit those sacred wounds, the sources and springs of eternal life, and to hold in affectionate memory the sorrows of Mary. In such noble and delightful themes they will always find peace and health.

Note that such devices are brought through the main door of the Church, and when preaching in the square, these functions are modified a little.

During the sermon on Mercy, the people are to hear the sermon that urges them to make peace with whomever they have a disagreement. *Be merciful as your Father is merciful* (Lk 6:36). |To accomplish this|,[376] the names of the Peacemakers chosen are read. The people should be forcefully reminded that they will receive blessings from God in reconciling with Fathers, Husbands, Wives, etc.

In the sermon on dishonesty, the Missionary will take the discipline. Much is to be said for instilling the devotion to the Madonna and for being enrolled in the Scapular of her Immaculate Conception in order to free oneself from this sin.

P. Baldinucci was flexible in varying some functions when missions were close to one another, substituting others that were used by Missionaries of distinguished memory. Thus, the discipline that has been discussed is to be used in the sermon on sin, and in the sermon on hell, for two reasons: First, people will be moved more, by the high order of providence, by that which happens suddenly. Second, even in sacred functions, variety produces a great good in souls. Religion always stirs spiritual persons, but when dealing

375 Rev adds: *The coffin is covered with red damask, and beautifully adorned with flowers, so that in this function one comprehends the reason for what is practiced on May 3* [formerly the Finding of the Holy Cross] *and on September 14, and one says to the people: behold how far the love of Jesus Christ reaches. If none of this is possible, one can carry the Relic of the Holy Cross.*
376 Rev cancels the words between the bars.

with those who must be led by the hand to the good, one should not think that this is the case. One must follow the teachings left to us by the most illustrious workers. The director of the Mission, following these principles, must take note not to communicate in advance the functions that are going to take place, except to those who need the information.

Now I will mention here the functions that can be substituted. Segneri the younger, for example, sometimes showed the people an image of one of the damned. Liguori also uses this in the sermon on Hell and says that in the Missions it happens that one who had been hardened during all the other sermons is moved to conversion at the sight of this image. The human being is not pure spirit, and what comes through the senses makes a deep impression on the spirit.

It is one thing to think about death, and another to meditate on a cadaver. How many are the conversions we read about following such practices. Jesus Christ himself, says the Angelic Doctor [St. Thomas Aquinas], wanted to institute the Sacraments by means of sensible signs, because in this way it is easier for a person to become aware of what is invisible. We see that the Church strips the Altars in the final days of Holy week and uses so many other rites and ceremonies at different times in order to help her children to perceive the more important realities to which these point.

Moreover, we have a debt to the learned and also to the ignorant. The Mission amounts to fishing for souls, and it therefore follows that some are converted by the sermons, others at the sight of the Image of Mary. Let the same be said for the rest, and let all take to heart the maxim of the famous P. Pinamonti who, as he lay dying, said to his companions with a deep expression of affection, that the Holy Missions should continue in the format practiced by P. Segneri. He had been Segneri's close friend and knew by his experience of thirty-eight years the great benefit that resulted from the missions.

Turning to Segneri the Younger: he would sometimes show an Image of the Holy face of our Divine Redeemer, in order to stir up compassion through seeing how the Divine face *on which Angels gaze* (cf. 1 Pt 1:12), is so reduced out of love for humanity. In places where there might be a sacred object of special veneration, like the holy Thorn, the holy Wood of the Cross, etc., these can be presented at the end of some sermon.

In the end, prudence and the careful study of the lives of the Missionaries will make the Director of the Mission wise in managing these things systematically and exactly. Thus, many times when the Missionary is taking the discipline on the platform, the Brothers, always wearing the hood, join with him and beat themselves with cords. To strengthen compunction, it is sometimes useful to present a skull during the sermon on impurity, or at the end of the preaching to have a statue of the Sorrowful Mother brought in, pointing out to the people that the sword that pierces the purest heart of Mary is especially the shameful vice of incontinence. In some Missions at the end of the preaching on hell or on judgment, the Image of Mary Most Holy of the Missions is brought in, and then on another day the sermon on Mary is given, speaking of the peace [obtained] through the love of the Virgin.

The one who oversees this ministry should make great use of prayer, and he will see how God accompanies him with the sweet abundance of his mercies.[377]

6. Functions of the Oratory

Keeping in mind the principles mentioned above, and following the system used in the Oratories of the Oratorian Fathers and of the famous Padre Caravita in Rome, the discipline will be used on some evenings. For the functions of the Mission, the hymn *Miserere* (Ps

377 Rev adds: *Lastly, everything is to be adapted to the times, places, and circumstances, while prudence carefully dictates what is beneficial for promoting good fruit.*

51) is also used, interrupted by a *fervorino*, and this is said on one of the evenings of the sermon on judgment, or on another topic if one chooses. What takes place during the day should guide the functions of the evening.

When the peace (*le paci*) is announced from the platform, the men will embrace the crucifix, singing some verses of a hymn to Mary. The topic should be limited to public discords at this time; secret matters are to be kept secret. On the evening of the peace in the Oratory, all the festive bells are sounded for the space of a good hour as a reminder of what the Missionary had announced earlier in the day from the platform. At this sign, the obligation to be reconciled should be fulfilled in the homes. If this is not possible at the sound of the bells, then there should be a firm intention to repair, on the following morning, the scandal caused so often by discord. In the Oratory, meanwhile, what is indicated above takes place.

On an evening established by the Director of the Mission, the men will be directed to kiss the ground several times to free them from the vice of blasphemy. They are to understand that whoever has sinned by the tongue now intends to offer compensation to God. Those who are not guilty of blasphemy will also make this act of humility to implore pardon of God for whatever sins they have committed by word. Such mortification, says Blessed Liguori, is of great advantage to the penitents.

Blessed Leonardo used to sound the bell for unrepentant sinners on several evenings. We will be content to use this on at least one evening. For example, in the sermon on death, the Missionary will announce from the platform that all the bells will sound the death knell for the space of an hour at the end of the day. He is to tell the people to pray for all unrepentant sinners. The sound of the bells, accompanied by the inner voice of Divine grace, preaches to whoever is avoiding the mission. This function can also be reserved for another topic if deemed to be more

suitable. Oh, how the sound of the Bell refocuses the awareness of the brevity of our life!

As we treat the functions of the evening, one should note that the Skull is used in the *svegliarini* given when preaching on death. Sometimes the discipline is used in the *svegliarini*; sometimes the banner of the Sorrowful Mother is carried in. This variety is conducive to the conversion of souls desired. Other items are to be found in the practice of the Missions of Segneri the Younger.

On two evenings of the mission, the *svegliarini* follow the order of procession. One should always speak with the men alone; the women already know that they are to participate in the retreat. On at least one evening, the penitential procession of the Clergy follows, and that of the organizations (*compagnie*), etc. One should take care that the penitents are not performing penances that are disproportionate or ridiculous. We also note that one is always to use all necessary decorum, so that external demeanor signifies internal compunction.

Everyone should reflect on how the Lord rewards the good desires of those who wish to mortify themselves more. In the procession, in which anyone from the Clergy or the people participates spontaneously, as noted, the mysteries of the passion are carried (where it is possible to do this). |For example, some carry crosses of moderate size, others the crown of thorns in their hands, so that they might meditate on the pain that these gave to Jesus, etc.|[378]

The Clergy wear a cord hanging from the neck, and all are furnished with the usual discipline of cords. From time to time there will be *svegliarini* that conclude with the Discipline. On the street, the various choirs will walk and sing the *Miserere nostri Domine,* etc., *Padre Celeste Iddio,* etc., *Perdono mio Dio*, etc., and from time to time there are to be some blows with the discipline. The

378 In the Rev, the words between the bars are replaced with: *as are used in some places on Good Friday.*

Missionaries are to be in various places of the procession, and the people will continue, as noted earlier, so that when the Missionaries beat themselves, the people will also follow their example, and when they cease, everyone should cease.

If the City is large, then the procession will be divided into two sections, so that they can proceed more easily, and at the end everyone will come together in the Oratory.[379] There they receive the blessing of the Crucifix. In these processions, it will be good to carry the statue or banner of the Sorrowful Mother at the end. The Missionaries and also some of the brothers will carry some Skulls at various points in the procession; |between one Confraternity and another there will be some who process without wearing the habit, to go forward with the light of the torches that the Confraternities are to furnish.|[380] If someone wants to participate barefoot in the procession,[381] he will always have a separate spot, and if convenient, the Missionaries will kiss their feet out of humility when they reach the Church at the end of the function. One cannot express how beneficial the penitential processions are; St. Charles Borromeo also praises them highly. We know that to the people of the old covenant God showed his prophets in chains, and everyone should be told of the Church's ancient discipline of public penance. The cord alludes to the reining in of the passions (*il freno delle passioni*), and the discipline signifies |that the lower appetite must be tamed by the realm of Religion and Faith|.[382]

On another evening and precisely at the time specified above, the coffin of the dead Christ arrives at the end of the sermon after lunch. The procession with the coffin stirs the people to Divine love. The intention of this procession is to offer compensation for injustices and public scandals which have profaned Jesus, |his

379 Rev adds: *ordinarily*.
380 The words between the bars are deleted in the Rev.
381 Rev adds: *but dressed in habit and covered with the hood*.
382 In the Rev, the words between the bars are replaced with: *exterior penance, etc.*

Blood,|[383] etc., on the public streets. The coffin is to be adorned with flowers that indicate the virtues by which a soul arrives at the garden of the Lord's delights. The Clergy will be vested in solemn garb with red stoles, and the choirs will sing *Viva, viva Gesù*. If the sinner sought to revile Jesus with his malice and impiety, now, with grateful ceremony, the fruit of the love for the Divine Lord, Jesus is glorified and blessed.

All the Confraternities participate in this, and one should seek to have the Procession equipped with lights. As a sign of respect from individuals, lights are placed in their windows, and with the solemn sound of the bells, the people are called to bless the Blood of Jesus, by which we have been saved. At the end of every *svegliarino* there will be a song. *Te ergo quaesumus tuis famulis, etc.* 'We beseech you, therefore, help your servants' [whom you have redeemed by your Precious Blood]. This function will lead the soul to the illuminative or unitive way, after the soul has passed through the purgative way, according to its particular need. It serves, moreover, to promote the loving devotion to the Blood of Jesus Christ, whom we bless a hundred and a thousand times. Through these Religious acts, [Jesus] is compensated for the insults he receives from the wicked.

Finally, regarding the functions of the evening, it should be noted that during the Mission, or at least before the departure of the Missionaries, it is customary from time to time to use the *svegliarino* of the seed. This is how it takes place: in private, the Missionaries are divided among various areas of the City with only a Priest accompanying them. Then a sign is given with the principal bell (which is repeated after a half quarter hour [sic] for the conclusion), and at this point all are preaching, stirring sinners to conversion, warning them that the mercies of God are not to be held in low esteem. Bl. Liguori called such sentiments the

383 In the Rev, the words between the bars are replaced with: *who has redeemed us with His Blood*.

sentiments of the seed, because they are a sudden stimulus that can result in the harvest of many souls.

7. The Visiting Sermons[384]

On the initial mornings of the Mission, Fr. Segneri was accustomed to target those places that were near the central point of that Mission, and to draw people to the center he would go about urging people in the Districts (*Cure*) to take advantage of the Mission. Many would come to these sermons because they had been informed by the public notices of the Bishop, whom the Director of the Mission would have previously informed. Such great fervor is born from such sermons, which remove all obstacles and reluctance in the people. Instructed and animated by the Divine word, one sees how they go in procession with their Pastors to the Holy Mission.

They are met at the door by one of the Confraternities assigned and by a Missionary. They go to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and then the men and women are separated and assigned to separate places as well as can be arranged. If possible, one goes to preach in such places in procession, departing from the central point of the Mission, after the Missionary has given the notices related to this holy procession. The Ecclesiastics or brother singers will sing the psalms, such as *In Exitu Israel de Egypto* (Psalm 112), etc. On returning, the Missionary will thank the people and bless them with the Crucifix. They are accustomed to make these processions after the morning function. If it is not feasible to have the procession because the places are too distant, the Missionary will visit them along with one or two persons assigned for this. There follows the meeting with the Pastor and people where the preaching is to be carried out. At this point, the Missionary kisses the wounds of the Crucifix and immediately goes to visit the Blessed Sacrament,

384 Rev adds: *and other pious practices.*

singing the hymns of the Holy Missions. The sermon comes next, and at the end there is the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament. Finally, when convenient, there is a conversation with the Pastor regarding the welfare of his flock. Then they return to the central place of the Mission.[385]

8. General Communions

General Communions take place on the last three days of the Mission: the first for the girls, the second for the widows and Wives, and the third for the Men. This does not mean that someone cannot receive Communion on other days or in another church, but this paragraph deals only with the persons who are to participate in the public function [of general Communion] and the way that this is carried out.

The girls come from their districts (*cure*) in procession, accompanied by the Pastors, as all recite the holy Rosary together. They are to carry the Crucifix in their hands, and the crown, and on their head a mantle or white handkerchief, which alludes to their pure conscience. Over this they are to place a crown of thorns, indicating penance. Meanwhile, at a certain hour, the Church should be available for the persons taking Communion, and others should not be present, in order to ensure good order and the exact organization of these rites. According to the principles of Segneri, the crown of thorns is used with the girls because vanities are a characteristic of their age. The Missionary[386] is free to remind them

385 Rev adds: *Where this takes place, one will see to it that the Veneration of the Image of Most Holy Mary is promoted in the various inhabited places. He will exhort the residents also to keep lamps lighted in the evening. According to circumstances, he will see to it that over the doors a relief or painted image of the Names of Jesus and Mary, or at least some little Crosses are placed, in order to maintain the fruit of the Holy Mission with these mementos. When the sermons of Visit come to an end, he can, if he wishes, bless and erect the great Cross in memory of the Mission.*

386 Given the many corrections to the first part of this paragraph, the following is a transcription of this section as corrected by St. Gaspar: *General Communions take place on the final two days of the Mission; the first for the women, the second for the Men. This does not mean that someone cannot receive Communion on other days or in another church, but this paragraph only deals with the persons who are to participate in the public function and the way that this is carried out. In the*

that we are members of a head who was crowned with thorns, and that one should have a special memory of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

For this reason, the Ecclesiastics also use the clerical crown or tonsure, accord to the practice of the Church. The one who consents to worldly thoughts, insofar as this is due to human malice, weaves a new crown of thorns for the Divine Lord. It will be noted that sin has its origin in the will, but the will must be immovable in the will of the Most High. In addition, let it be said that if they love the lily of purity, it needs to be guarded by the thorns of mortification. At least[387] let them see that in the future they will not contract the stain of sin that constitutes the thorns in our heart. They will be urged to keep the crowns, and when the enemy tempts them to offend against God, they will take those crowns of thorns in their hands so that they have a more vivid memory of the Mission, etc.

|For the other women there is no special procession; but they have the great lesson regarding the vanities from the example of the girls.|[388] This method of Segneri removes the scandal of immodest dress that one sometimes sees even during the time of the Mission. |The girls who return in procession to their Parishes where they have already placed the crown of thorns are to take them when they return to their houses.|[389]

At the communion of the men, all the Confraternities participate in habit, and they have a special place in the benches which run from the main Altar to the door of the Church. The time to be established for all the communions can be a quarter hour before noon. The

communion of the women, each will carry a Crucifix in their hands, or the crown of Most Holy Mary, and on their head a mantle or white handkerchief, or a black veil or another decent handkerchief. Over this they will place a crown of thorns, indicating penance, but in church and at the notice of the Mission Director. Meanwhile, the Church at a certain hour should be free for the persons taking Communion, and no one else can be there, in order to ensure good order and the exact order of these rites. According to the principles of Segneri, the crown of thorns is used in order to renew the renunciation of the vanities, and here the missionary has a free hand.

387 Rev deletes *at least*.

388 Rev deletes the words between the bars.

389 Rev deletes the words between the bars.

Mass of communion will be accompanied by the Organ and song, and *fervorini.* Confessors will be alerted to have a special preference for the reconciliation of those who will be receiving communion on those days.[390]

9. The Sermon of Reminders

On the last day of the missions two divisions are made (in addition to distinct places for the Clergy and the Magistrate), |one for all of the girls, who come in procession crowned with thorns as for Communion and who will be in the area allotted to|[391]the women; and the other is the area of the men for |the Confraternity|[392] in habit.[393] An anvil is to be prepared for the destruction of weapons, and a bonfire for burning books and playing cards. In anticipation, a Missionary with an Ecclesiastic Assistant will make the rounds of the bars and cafes to collect the playing cards.

During the destruction of weapons and burning of the cards, the praises of Mary are sung. Then the sermon of reminders begins, and the banner of the Madonna of the Missions[394] is placed on the platform in addition to the Crucifix. Before asking the blessing, sometimes all the other Missionaries mount the platform, and kiss it together. Second, the one who is preaching will say that he intends to kiss that ground made holy by the Missions, |and will declare, moreover, that with that act he intends to kiss the feet of the Bishop and of the Clergy as a way of venerating the august dignity of the Priesthood.|[395] The Director of the Mission[396], vested in surplice and stole, invokes the assistance[397] of Mary, blesses the people with

390 Rev adds: *and this is announced from the platform. The men can also have either the Crucifix or the Crown of Mary Most Holy in their hands.*
391 Rev deletes the words between the bars.
392 Rev has: *the Confraternities.*
393 Rev adds: *followed by the men who do not wear the habit.*
394 Rev adds: *and of St. Francis Xavier*
395 Rev deletes the words between the bars.
396 Rev adds: *or whoever is to give the sermon*.
397 Rev adds: *of St. Francis Xavier and*

|her holy Image|[398] and gives the blessing with the Crucifix. When the holy Image is raised, all the festive bells will sound, |and at the same time|[399] the Blessed Sacrament will be carried, the *Te Deum* and *Tantum ergo* will be sung with solemnity, and benediction follows. If this function is to be held in the Church, then outside the door the weapons are destroyed, and the books are burned. The rest is as above.

With regard to the external order of the conclusion of the Mission, it is customary to remain for another two days in the places where ministry has taken place.[400] In the morning of the first day time is set aside for Communions for the sick, etc., and considering the population at such time as a whole, all the Pastors will come vested in stole, forming a crown at the Baldacchino [the canopy over the main altar], and the Bishop or his Vicar carries the Blessed Sacrament. At least one of the Missionaries offers a brief *fervorino* to the sick, giving them helpful guidance. They pray the *Confiteor* prior to receiving Communion. When the procession returns to the Church, he will offer the people all the appropriate information related to the devotion that is to be given to such a Divine Mystery. He will especially instruct people of means (*i possidenti*) and others who are able, to consider it an obligation to accompany the Blessed Sacrament with a torch or candle in a public triumphal act of Religion whenever they hear the bell announcing this. If the place of the Mission is too large, then the city can be divided, and there can be two processions to two different Churches for the gathering of the people.[401]

After the midday meal there is a solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament, "with the paraphernalia (*apparato*) used for Corpus Christi." Outside of one gate there is a blessing of all the land

398 Rev changes the words between bars: *the holy Images.*
399 Rev changes the words between the bars: *next, the praise of the Divine Blood is sung and at that time*
400 Rev adds: *but always engaged in ministry.*
401 Rev adds: *Sometimes the same Missionaries will carry out the function, and before communion they will make a place for a brief fervorino as above.*

of the place where the Mission was held, preceded by a *fervorino*. During the processions, a blessing is given to the sick at the doors of the Hospitals. This is also done at the porter's office in the girls' schools, etc., and at the jails, encouraging all with devout discourses to venerate Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

On the second morning, the first Communion of the girls and boys takes place, after they have had a day of retreat in preparation. In that retreat, they acquire as much recollection of the Spirit as possible as well as more loving fervor. The girls and boys will come into the Church in procession separately, leaving from whatever Oratory or whatever Church had been assigned for the meeting. The boys will wear the holy scapular (*abitino*) of the Madonna around the neck and visible above their clothing. This will symbolize the inner habit (*abito*) of justice which should adorn their souls. The girls will wear a crown of flowers over the white mantle, as is the custom at the institute of the baby Jesus. The flowers will remind them of the collection of virtues that must form the mystical crown of the soul.

When the procession reaches the Church, the boys and girls will walk around the benches that have already been carefully prepared. The Church will be prepared with solemn splendor, because this is the day of the solemn wedding of the soul with Jesus Christ, alluded to by the crown of flowers worn by the girls. When the Mass is over, each of the first communicants is given some devotional object, and then the *Te Deum* is solemnly intoned in thanksgiving to the Lord for the benefit given to those who just received communion. At this time, the boys come two by two to kiss the Crucifix; at the same time two Missionaries kiss their feet, which symbolizes the humble gesture performed by Jesus Christ when he washed the feet of the Apostles. It also indicates that these boys are made holy in a special way. Then the Crucifix is taken by the Missionaries and is carried in procession to the girls, who are

not to move from their place. When they have kissed the wounds of the Savior, the function concludes with the prayer, *Deus cujus misericordiae,* 'God, whose mercies' etc., and with the blessing with the Crucifix. They return in procession to the churches from which they came, and then go to their own houses.

After the midday meal, there will be a solemn procession of the Madonna, with the best equipment available in the respective places of the Mission. Along the way, there will be some *fervorini* to stir the people to devotion to Mary. Offerings will be made as noted above, and finally, the people are led to the place that has already been designated for the installation of the Cross, which is customarily erected to the perpetual memory of the mission. Here one conducts the ceremony of the Cross according to the usual rules, and because Mary at the foot of the cross received us as her children, the Missionary, in a *fervorino* appropriate to the function, will say that as we embrace the Cross, we will live forever united in the heart of Mary. The procession returns to the Church, and having received the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament, the procession ends. The Director of the Mission gives notice that these functions can take place before the sermon of reminders if the missionaries need to leave immediately. In this case, the consignment of the gifts to the Bishop or Vicar takes place during the sermon of reminders, and the Cross is erected when it is believed to be best according to the circumstances.

This is the method of the holy Missions in condensed form. May God bless them with favorable progress.

METHOD FOR THE WORKS OF PERSEVERANCE OF 1819

THE WORKS
THAT ARE CUSTOMARILY ESTABLISHED
BY THE MISSIONARIES
OF THE ARCHCONFRATERNITY[402]
OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD
OF JESUS CHRIST
ON THE OCCASION OF THE HOLY MISSIONS
WHICH THEY CONDUCT
IN DIVERSE LOCATIONS
WHERE THEY ARE CALLED
BY LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

402 In the revision of 1835 this title has not been corrected, probably because St. Gaspar included this work as part of *The Method of the Missions*. It is reasonable that the title would have to have been corrected to delete *Archconfraternity* and replace it with *Institute*. In fact, St. Gaspar had some paper labels printed which read *of the Institute* that were to be pasted over this line.

The Association[403] of Priests

Now that the people have been educated by the holy Missions, we Ecclesiastics should be enthusiastically engaged in ensuring that the fruit obtained be firm and permanent. Therefore, we have been called by God to the highest mysteries, in order to obtain the good of souls with tireless zeal. In our heavenly career, we must meditate continuously on those divine words: *I have chosen you that you should go, and that your fruit should remain* (cf. Jn 15:16). Oh, woe to the one who will be found by the Divine Judge to be a lazy servant, the steward who squanders the mysterious patrimony, an unfaithful minister, who must exclaim all too late: *I did not care for the Lord's vineyard* (cf. Song 1:5). Venerable Ecclesiastics, let our lives be saintly and sanctifying, so that we are unmistakable Ministers of the divine presence. And see, the Association of Priests leads us by the hand to be true Gospel Workers, destined for our own sanctification and that of others. We cannot discuss anything else until we take the time to describe the practical way with which we must carry out our holy ministries.

Once a month the Ecclesiastics meet for some sort of Oratory. The last Thursday of each Month |at the twentieth hour| could be chosen.[404] In this meeting there will be spiritual reading about the life of a servant of God who was also an ecclesiastic. When the reading is finished, there will be holy meditation for a quarter hour following the usual rules found in those ascetical books that deal with our obligations, for example, *Jesus at the Heart of the Priest* by Fr. Bartolomeo del Monte.[405] After the meditation there will be a discussion of the pious works instituted for the benefit of souls, taking

403 The Italian term is *ristretto*, which can mean *restricted* or *limited*. This refers to the fact that these associations have a restricted or limited membership. Perhaps another possible English translation would be *sodality*. In the 1835 revision this title is changed to: *Rules for the Association of Priests called the association of the Apostles.*
404 Rev substitutes *at an opportune hour.*
405 Bartolomeo Dal Monte (1726-1778) was a Bolognese priest and missionary, famous for his work *Gesù al cuore del Sacerdote: considerazioni ecclesiastiche per ciascun giorno del mese* (Rome and Bologna, 1775) which appeared in several editions in other languages. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1997.

note of what is going well and whatever else necessary. Finally, there is a reading of the Sacred Text for a short time, using, for example, Tirino[406] or Calmet,[407] with the concise interpretation that is to be found in the works of those Authors. There is to be no discussion of moral cases here, because this has already been foreseen by the Roman Council and is to be promoted frequently in all the Dioceses.

Here is a more detailed description of the method of the Association. There will be an Ecclesiastic who will have the title of Secretary. Each Month he is to send out a notice of the meeting of the Association. At the top of the notice should be the Scripture verse: *I have chosen you to go,* etc., (Jn 15:16) and then the time and place set for the meeting. This will always proceed with the agreement of the Bishop or his Vicar, as is proper. There is also to be a book in which the erection of all the Pious Institutions is to be recorded, and there will be another for noting all that is decided in each meeting and recording all those Ecclesiastics who participate, and what tasks they have taken on for the good of souls.

The Association should meet with the Bishop or his Vicar[408] present, so that it can be animated by one who has special enlightenment from God for the guidance of souls. The Secretary will also have the responsibility for taking care that everything is ready in the place established for the meetings. To promote good order, he will make written notes for each Ecclesiastic stating whatever has been assigned to him, and how this is to be carried out in practice.

These are the advantages that come from the Association: first, it promotes and maintains harmony in action among the Ecclesiastics, since every Pious institution is encouraged by the

406 Jacobus Tirino (1580-1636), was a Flemish Jesuit and theologian. He wrote *Commentarius in Vetus et Novum Testamentum* (Anversa, 1632) which appeared in many editions.

407 Augustin Calmet (1672-1757), Benedictine, was one of the most famous commentators on the Bible. Between 1707 and 1716 he published in Paris 23 volumes of *La Sainte Bible en latin et en français.* The work was republished often and was translated into Latin.

408 Rev adds: *or someone else designated*.

Unity of the Association. Second, this provides not only for a good system but also for the stability of the Works. Oh, how much good is produced from the monthly review of all that pertains to the glory of the Lord, which is so much advanced by the zeal of the spirit of the Ecclesiastics! Moreover, each month the Pious works should be managed and adjusted by adding Workers or prudently changing the offices, if needed. With the Divine blessing the benefit will never cease. Finally, the Association advances the study of Ecclesiastical perfection in the Cleric himself and the study of Sacred Scripture, which in moral cases furnishes the mind with the knowledge necessary for carrying out our holy ministries. Regarding the Scripture text, it will be good if all the Ecclesiastics can read it ahead of time, so that the sharing of ideas is more fruitful and the study [of the Scriptures] more pleasant. The same is to be said of moral cases: each of us should call to mind that to competently fulfill the obligations our vocation to the Priesthood, it is necessary to be light of the world and salt of the earth (Cf. Mt 5:13-14).

Each Ecclesiastic will be assigned to some Pious work according to his gifts, which each in our [clerical] state should pledge to use in his ministry. There is a series of Pious institutions which are to be promoted and animated during the time of the Mission. They motivate Ecclesiastics to exercise their sacred Ministry. No more will be said here, however, other than to give an idea of the institutions whose spirit and importance should be recognized by the Clergy. The concise rules of these institutions will be found noted more conveniently in separate material. On the other hand, before speaking of these it is good to note that in the Association one should not lose sight of the good organization of the Confraternities, and of other Holy institutes that are found in different Dioceses.

Be vigilant in observing the statutes; promote the public [Divine] Office or some other devout practice on the feasts, and especially promote holy Meditation and the recitation of the Seven

Offerings of the precious Blood. In those places where is no special institute for the eradication of blasphemy, |the Congregation of the Most Precious Blood|[409] is to assume responsibility for instituting one during the Missions. The same should be said for accompanying the bodies of the poor to be buried. The piety of the faithful is distinguished in these acts of charity, so highly praised in the Scriptures in the book of Tobit. Finally, the spread of the pious exercise of the Way of the Cross should not be omitted, nor the public recitation of the Rosary on Saturday, and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. All these matters, insofar as is possible, should be entrusted to the Confraternities. It will be very beneficial for the Bishop to designate an Ecclesiastic to accompany them, and he will manage the implementation of what is spiritually beneficial.

Never cease praying that the Most High God grant an abundance of his graces. Never cease to seek the intercession of our sweetest Mother and Protector of all our Pious institutions |and of the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood|[410] and of the glorious Apostle of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier.

The primary Work to be instituted or revived in every place the Mission takes place is the evening Oratory for the men. Words fail to convey its value. We will content ourselves with saying only that this formed the principal object of the Apostolate of St. Philip Neri, Founder of the Congregation of the Fathers of the Oratory. Blessed Leonardo, the celebrated missionary, always found consolation in God by being a brother of the Oratory in Rome called Caravita. Oh, how many proximate occasions of sin are removed by means of the Oratory. Those who did not frequent the Sacraments now frequent them, and there is also the moral example which encourages others to do good. Let the zeal in promoting the evening Oratory for the men be untiring.

In addition, it is especially necessary in our days to have a special responsibility to young people, and, in the spirit of St. Philip Neri,

409 Rev substitutes the words between bars with: *the Association of St. Francis Xavier.*
410 Rev deletes the words between the bars.

on the obligatory feast days[411] one should nurture their minds. The reform depends heavily on their holy education in morality. The Association of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy and of St. Aloysius Gonzaga for young men should be the delight of the Clergy in the Divine order, given that this is the nursery (*piantinaro*) for the Oratory.

The education of girls should not be neglected. Their Association, under the title of daughters of Mary, will meet at least monthly on the first Sunday of the month. In this special way the devotion to the immaculate Heart [of Mary] will be spread. Where there are schools of the *Maestre Pie*, they are to be enlisted to help with such a great work. Pious and modest women who can meet in the morning can also be chosen. As has been said, every first Sunday they will observe whatever is prescribed in the rules. A Church or some Girls' School, Monastery or other convenient place should be obtained for this purpose, according to the judgment of the Bishop or his Vicar.

The last Sunday of each month will be for the retreat in preparation for death for the benefit of the entire population. The Holy Spirit says: *in all your works remember your last end, and you will never sin* (Sir 7:40). This practice of our Religion is highly recommended by the Saints and we should carry it out with enthusiastic attention. One sees the fruit produced by the Pious works when one sees the general Communion, which is described in the method to be followed. How tender and moving is this practice, which nurtures sentiments of love toward God. All from every order and social class are to participate in the Retreat in preparation for death. |Separate places will be assigned to the Youth of the Association of St. Aloysius and for the daughters of Mary, observing|[412] good order, since this has such a great influence on inner recollection.

411 Rev adds: *and during vacations.*
412 Rev deletes the words between the bars, so that the entire sentence now reads: *Good order is to be observed since it has such a great influence on inner recollection.*

There will also be some Ecclesiastics who will help the Pastors with Catechism classes. This should be discussed when the Association meets. For this work, the Catechism of Bellarmine is used. The boys and girls are divided into classes as needed, and each class is assigned a part of the Catechism. One cannot progress from one class to another before thoroughly knowing the material in a class. The boys and girls are to be encouraged with prizes, if possible, and every means for maintaining attendance should be employed.

|On all the obligatory holidays, the Chaplet of the Precious Blood will be recited for the benefit of the public at various hours in additional Churches; it is a devotion which has such a great effect in calling souls to the love of the Crucified. |[413] For this reason, an Association (literally, *Congregazione*)[414] under this most noble Title of most precious Blood will be established.[415]

Finally, some Priests are to be assigned to the Sacred Ministry of the Prisons at suitable hours on ferial days. Here they exercise charity in catechetical instruction or in inspiring to penance with the administration of the Sacrament of Penance, or in whatever can be obtained for the divine glory for the benefit of our brothers. In those places the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Creed are recited in a loud voice, along with the acts of the faith, hope, and charity. All should be encouraged to be patient, and some beneficial memento, especially of the presence of God, should be left with them.

So that our zeal will stand out among the general works of pastoral care for the needs of all, there should be a Conference in the Monasteries or academies for girls on the last Friday of the month.[416] Let this conference aid them to grow in holiness by intensifying their enthusiasm for perfection.

413 In the Rev the words between bars are replaced by: *There will be untiring care to promote the devotion to the Divine Blood, and the public recitation of the Chaplet*.
414 In the Rev, *Association* is replaced by *pious Union.*
415 In the Rev, the following is added: *from which are extended the Indulgences to the various pious works, when individuals are enrolled in it.*
416 Rev adds: *ordinarily.*

Let Ecclesiastics take to heart the establishment of monthly instructions for the Clerics, after which there should be an explanation of the Ceremonies and everything else that they need to grow in faithfulness to their obligations and in the practice of the virtues.

Where there are men and women of the upper class, there should be separate meetings for them each month in some Church or Oratory where devout exercises take place, as indicated in the rules of the institution.

In some places, lastly, be sure to concentrate on instructions to the Soldiers so that in the turmoil of external concerns they do not lose their fervor.

Happy are we, o venerable Ecclesiastics, if in this way we will apply ourselves to the needed cultivation of the Field of the Gospel. Oh, that in sweetness of spirit we can repeat often: *But thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Cor 15:57). Let us not regret suffering for the good of souls, and let the words of the Apostle be dear to us: *I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation* (2 Cor 7:4) … *I wished myself to be an anathema [from Christ] for my brethren* (Rom 9:3). Let our entire life be spent for the love of that God, who loves us so much that he even became our Redeemer and a victim of charity for us: *he loved us and washed us in his blood* (Rev 1:5). Behold how truly we will apply this saving balm of the Blood of the Savior both to ourselves and to Souls, repeating with the Apostle: *I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ* (Col 1:24). Let us always withdraw in spirit within the Holy Wounds of Jesus Christ Our Lord, and let us find our rest and peace there. *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with all of you, brothers. Amen* (cf. Gal 6:18).[417]

417 Rev adds: *Notice. Where there are Houses of the Institute, the President of the House will oversee the Association of the Apostles, and the assignment of the Ecclesiastics is found in the rules of the Institute. This does not, however, change the Apostolate and the spirit of the Work, keeping in mind the great needs of Souls, to whom one must hasten with an eager spirit.*

RULES

FOR THE CONGREGATION |OF GENTLEMEN AND LADIES,|[418] WHICH IS TO MEET AT LEAST ONCE EACH MONTH OF THE YEAR, UNDER THE TITLE OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD.

Separately, and on two different days, ordinarily[419] the first and fourth Friday of each Month, persons of the upper or noble class are to meet in some Oratory or Church, during which time others are not allowed. In holy recollection of spirit, they will apply themselves to acquiring the knowledge of the Crucified. As the Apostle exclaims: *I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ* (Phil 3:8).

First, there will be a brief spiritual lesson, then an exhortation aimed at awakening devotion in all so that they can faithfully fulfill the divine will. Finally, an act of Contrition will be made at the foot of the Crucifix, and after that Mass will begin. During the Mass the Chaplet of the Precious Blood will be recited. When Mass is ended, there will be Benediction with the Pyx, and this concludes the meeting of the Congregation. This is customarily done on the days indicated at two hours before midday. For the men, however, their meeting could take place in the evening if this is more convenient. In that case, they maintain the practices mentioned above, only it should be noted that in this case the Chaplet is recited before the Blessed Sacrament, with the Ciborium uncovered for that purpose.[420]

The Director of the Congregation for the Nobility will strongly promote visiting hospitals for the separate sexes to edify the public and to conform to the spirit of St. Philip Neri. One will need to

418 In the Rev, the words between the bars are replaced with: *of the upper Class of both sexes.*
419 *Ordinarily* is found in the Rev.
420 Rev adds: *or at the foot of the Crucifix.*

select from the noble Class whoever is considered suitable, so that he can call souls to a moral life and promote the glory of the Lord in every way. Therefore, he will have some persons to help him with the following tasks, and he will hold a special Conference with these persons in each Congregation, after the others have left. The tasks that are noted are to be carried out in both the Congregation for men as well as in the Congregation for women.

1. There will be a President who will be the head of the Congregation. He will have two assistants to promote it will their zealous activity.
2. There will be a Secretary who will keep an account of those enrolled, and who will take care of the Archives, which will contain the records of the Congregation. It is his special duty to obtain a collection of the Lives of the Saints, so that in the name of the Confraternity he can lend them to whoever requests them.
3. Two Sacristans will be chosen who will look after the good order of the functions, keeping in mind that all should be according to the rule on the days of the Congregation. These [sacristans] will thus strongly promote the Worship that is to be given to the Most High.
4. Two Brothers will visit the sick brothers. They will take care of remembering them to God, and, in the case of a death, of promoting the *suffragia*.[421]

Finally, all members of the Congregation will seek to promote devotion to the Most Precious Blood, so that souls may know the great price by which they have been redeemed. As they animate the rest of the people, by their example they will lead the Faithful to apply the merits of the savior for their spiritual benefit. Amen.[422]

421 The *suffragia* are the prayers prescribed for the dead. These are often defined in rules for religious congregations.

422 Rev adds a second article: *Once a year there will be holy Exercises given for the women. The meeting is to take place one time at an hour to be established and will follow the usual method.* In addition, the following is added: *Notice. Where there are Houses of the Institute, that missionary who will be appointed in the [house] Congressus will moderate the Congregation, and in order better to assist the Congregation will also enlist someone who is known to have a particular gift from the Lord.*

RULES FOR THE EVENING ORATORY[423]

1. Every evening the prayers printed in the open sheet (*foglio aperto*) are recited.
2. In order that this instruction be made easier in practice, here is a selection of pious exercises to be carried out on individual evenings of the Oratory after the prayers, which are never to be omitted.

   On Sunday, there will be a moral lesson lasting about a quarter of an hour.

   On Monday, the exercise will be a short Way of the Cross.

   On Tuesday, the Meditation should be from the Eternal Maxims of Blessed Liguori.

   On Wednesday, the Chaplet of the sorrows of Mary.

   On Thursday, the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament of Blessed Liguori.

   On Friday, the Chaplet of the Most Precious Blood.

   On Saturday, an example from the life of Mary will be presented.

3. Every evening the men are called to the Oratory by means of a procession with the Crucifix in the various places where People gather, changing the route as often as possible. Meanwhile, the Litanies will be sung. Note, however, that one should go out with the Crucifix around sundown. On obligatory feasts, an Ecclesiastic following the Crucifix will give a brief *svegliarino* to persuade [men] to attend the Oratory.

Every evening after the Oratory the men will return, reciting the Holy Rosary, which will conclude either before some Image of Mary that has been placed in a street for veneration, or before the door

423 In the Rev, St. Gaspar added the following annotation: *There is a separate rule.* For this reason, he did not make corrections to this text. Other rules for the Evening Oratory, for example at Santa Maria in Vincis, also exist.

of some Church, or even at their own houses. These bands of men, saying the Rosary as they walk, will form more than a single group, so that they are conveniently located near where the participants live. The Church will be sufficiently illuminated, and the Crucifix in the Oratory will always be outside the Sanctuary and placed in the middle [of the church] so that it is convenient for the brothers to kiss it. At a quarter hour past sunset, the Oratory must begin, and it ends in an hour. If desired, one can also hold the spiritual lesson in Church for those who are gathering there, beginning with the Ave Maria, at the beginning of the Oratory. The Ecclesiastics who are Confessors will divide the evenings of the Week among themselves so that there always be some Confessor in the Sacred Tribunal of Penance available to whoever wants to apply the Blood of Jesus Christ to himself through this great Sacrament.

4. There will be two Ecclesiastics, one of whom will be the Director and the other the sub-director of the Oratory. They are to spend time reading the Life of St. Philip Neri to become more zealous for such a holy institution and for promoting it by the best means possible. In addition, they will have twelve laymen who will form the Association of St. Francis Xavier. These zealous Brothers will be like the Pillars of this mystical edifice. They will meet once a month and they will discuss the successful progress[424] of affairs, with each giving an account of his office. The seculars of this Association can use the black habits with the mozzetta or rochet[425], both black, and a ribbon with the insignia of St. Francis Xavier. They will also carry a mace (*sbordone*). The holy processions will thus be more dignified for the *svegliarini* and other events that take place. This Association

424 Besides the offices described, the office of President should be added. In a letter to Don Giuseppe Zampetti in 1820, St. Gaspar writes: *The office of President of the Association [of St. Francis Xavier], an office which was omitted in the printing by mistake and will be included in a future edition. [He] will serve to help the Directors of the Oratory (who are two Ecclesiastics to whom everyone is subject), so that all the other offices will be carried out with zeal.*

425 The mozzetta is a short cape, and the rochet is similar to a surplice.

remains in charge of arranging matters in such a way that everything takes place with the greatest punctuality to the greater glory of God, as is fitting.

One member will be the Chamberlain, and he will make an account of the alms, and he will see to the necessary expenses. Another will be the Secretary, who will register the Brothers who join the Oratory. Two members will have the responsibility of the pastoral care of the sick for the benefit of the sick Brothers, and they will promote the *suffragia* in the event of a member's death. Two will be Promoters (*Zelatori*), who will be responsible for encouraging attendance at the Oratory, keeping harmony and peace among all, and especially seeking the conversion of the Wayward and sinners. The other members of the association will take special care for the procession with the Crucifix, and for the matters regarding the Church or Divine worship by acting as Sacristans. They will collect alms at the door and will care for everything else necessary for good order.

The Director will constantly seek to commend the method of the Christian life, receiving the Sacraments, and visiting the men's hospitals and prisons. He will urge the men to engage in those salutary Works of eternal life, by which we are assured of Paradise, and especially to devotion to the Most Precious Blood, in which all will be enrolled.

Therefore, let everyone be dedicated to promoting the Oratory, from which comes so much good for the benefit of souls, remembering that*: For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap, and he who sows in blessings, shall also reap blessings.*[426] *Amen.*

426 This is a combination of quotations from Gal 6:8 and 2 Cor 9:6.

RULES

FOR THE ASSOCIATION OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF HOLY MARY, AND OF ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

1. On all obligatory feasts in an Oratory or Church where women are not meeting, the young men will gather to praise the Most Holy name of God and of Mary. The hour can be set for mornings during the year at a quarter of an hour before midday. The spiritual lesson comes first, and then a nocturn is sung, along with the Morning Prayer (*Laudi*) of the Blessed Virgin. At the end of the office there will be a brief discourse based on the Gospel of the current Sunday, and whenever the divine word is not proclaimed aloud, Holy meditation will be offered according to the usual practice. After the preaching, Mass will begin, and after the elevation of the Chalice at the Consecration, the seven offerings of the most precious Blood will be recited. At the end of Mass, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin will be sung. This concludes the meeting for the morning.

2. After the midday meal, the young men will gather for the Oratory at a certain hour, about the 22nd hour. As usual, this begins with the spiritual lesson, and after this has been given by the Director, there is a brief reminder about wholesome entertainment. To end the day, the young men will be led to the Visit of the Blessed Sacrament and of Holy Mary. Those who are able to come to the evening Oratory will see to it that they attend this, so that they can make this holy practice habitual; the rest will return immediately to their houses.

3. The Director of the Association will see to it that there will always be Confessors during the morning gathering, to promote frequent reception of the Sacraments among the youth. As he does this, the other assistants will seek to impress on the minds of the young men the Christian way of life. On some feast days it would be good for

the director to send them to visit the men's hospitals in the spirit of St. Philip Neri, thus training them in the practice of the Christian virtues. Finally, the Ecclesiastic Helpers are to safeguard the good conduct of all in the Association. The zeal of the workers stands out especially in this area.

4. The Association will be divided into three Classes. The first will be under the title |of St. Francis Xavier, the second under the Title[427] |of St. Stanislaus Kostka, the| third|[428] under the title of St. Aloysius Gonzaga.[429] In the St. |Francis Xavier|[430] group will be the Beginners (*Novizi*), in the second, the intermediates, and in the third, the older ones. In the Oratory it should be noted that there will be separate locations for the different classes to maintain external order.

Each class will have two assistants. The first assistant should be a Priest if possible, the sub-assistant can be a *Minorista*.[431] One should look to the Class of the older young men in making this choice. Every year, on the feast of St. Aloysius, promotion from one class to another will take place. At the same time, the offices which we will describe will be changed or confirmed, and there will be an awards ceremony for everyone, with different awards for the young men commensurate with the accomplishments for attendance and other categories. The Director will meet often with the Assistants, especially regarding the ceremony and change of responsibilities. Sometimes he will also meet with the young men who are in charge during the year, in order to encourage them to carefully carry out their offices.

5. The responsibilities will be the following.

> Director of the [Divine] Office, who oversees intoning the psalmody.

427 Rev deletes the words between the bars.
428 Rev deletes the words between the bars and substitutes *second.*
429 Rev adds: *the third under the title of St. [Francis] Xavier.*
430 Rev deletes the words between the bars and substitutes: *Stanislaus*.
431 The meaning of this word is unclear.

Two assistants for the repetition of the Antiphons.

Two Sacristans whenever divine worship takes place.

Four or more Cantors for the direction of the Singing.

Two lectors to read the spiritual lesson as is noted.

Two Secretaries for every feast who help one another, and who will record attendance. In addition, they will oversee the archive, where the [registration] Cards of the Congregation will be stored, and the reminders which serve to offer good example to others.

Two Promoters (*Zelatori*) according to the maxims of Bl. Leonardo who, for the present institution, promote attendance, harmony and whatever else tends to obtain the greater glory of God.

Two ministers to the sick (*infermieri*), who with the Director or his assistants visit the sick brothers, for whom all are to pray. On the occasion of death, the Office of the Dead will be said on the first Sunday.

Finally, the Director is to gather a collection of the Lives of the Saints that can be loaned to the young men to read. He should see to it that this collection is enlarged through the charity of persons who can donate those ascetical books which St. Philip Neri used to recommend. On the solemnities of the year, at the general Communion, there will be *fervorini* to enliven love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the young men. They should also be taught the devotion to the Most Precious Blood and to the Immaculate Conception. Nothing that is of benefit to them should be neglected. The young men should avoid public entertainments, and they should imitate St. Philip by entertaining them with comparable amusements (*con trattenerli con altri sollievi proporzionati*). The grace of Jesus Christ be with all of us. Amen.[432]

432 Rev adds the following: *Notice. Where there are Houses of the Institute, this Work will be entrusted to the Missionaries according to our Rules to be discussed in a Congressus (house meeting) with the present rule, and in a manner that is not to alter the established order. Especially in larger cities, there may be more than one of these Works that are under diverse administrations, this is always characteristic of a healthy institution.*

RULES

FOR THE ASSOCIATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY

1. On the first Sunday[433] of each month, the girls are gathered at a time to be established and in a Church |free and convenient for them|[434] to listen to a spiritual lesson of a quarter hour. Meanwhile, there will be some Confessors available for the benefit of whoever needs to be reconciled. When the lesson is finished, the Chaplet of the Precious Blood is recited, and then there will be a quarter hour of Meditation, or the Ecclesiastic Director will explain the divine word to them. Then Mass begins, during which those who are to receive Communion will receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with devotion. At the end [of Mass] the Litany of Mary will be sung, and the reminders usually offered during the Missions are read by the Director:

   Life is short and death is sure. The hour of death remains obscure. A soul you have and only one; if that be lost all hope is gone. The all-seeing God your judge will be and heaven or hell your destiny. All earthly things will pass away; eternity will ever stay.[435] And this is how the [meeting of] the Association concludes.

2. The Responsibilities will be the following: The Prioress (*Priora*) should be either a *Maestra Pia* or a Woman who is wise and mature in her thinking, who will see to the good order [of the association]. There will also be a sub-Prioress. There will be two Promoters (*Zelatrici*) who will support the Association. These can

433 Rev adds: *ordinarily.*
434 Rev substitutes the words between bars with: *adapted.*
435 As noted earlier, in an older edition of the *Manual of Prayers* of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in the United States, this free English translation of this prayer in verse form was recited daily as the "Universal Prayer."

be chosen from among the girls. Two girls will have the pastoral care of the sick: they will perform acts of charity for the sisters who are sick, seeing to it that prayers are offered for them and seeking the spiritual benefit of the deceased by means of the *suffragia*. In addition, there will be a Secretary who will keep the register of members, and who will continually seek new members.

Once a month the Prioress will meet in a Conference with all the girls in her charge to discuss the progress of the Association. The Prioress and sub-Prioress, who, as noted, ought to be a *Maestre Pie* or prudent Women, will promote devotion in all the girls, the method of Christian life, of receiving the Sacraments, modesty in dress, and all else pertaining to the spiritual welfare of souls. They will seek to build a collection of ascetical books so that they can make good use of their time and grow in holiness. These are chosen with the counsel of a wise Director assigned by the Association of Ecclesiastics who will be familiar with books appropriate to the age of the young people.

3. Finally, after the midday meal on obligatory Feasts and after the classes in Doctrine, they can take turns visiting the women's Hospital[436] and other poor sick women, performing acts of charity, which have always been the delight of the Saints.[437] Amen.[438]

436 In a letter of 1826, Gaspar writes that this was in error: *This was, however, an error, because the intention was to speak of the Widows and Married Women who frequent the women's Hospital.*

437 Rev adds: *In these Visits, however, there is need for care and great prudence in knowing how to choose the places and times, with the Director evaluating the circumstances. It is understood that a member never goes alone but with her own mother, or someone provided by the usual rules of charity and prudence. This holds for everything written in this rule.*

438 Rev adds: *Notice. Where there are Houses of the Institute, the administration of this Association is entrusted to the Missionaries, who in a house meeting will decide, if not everything, at least what can be arranged, but there should be at least one monthly Conference.*

METHOD

FOR THE DAY OF RETREAT IN PREPARATION FOR DEATH

1. On the last Sunday of every Month, at an hour to be established, there will be a day of retreat in preparation for death. In the morning, four hours before midday, the Mass of the general Communion will take place, and many Confessors are to be provided for this. Usually the long benches will be used for the great convenience of the people, |and one section will be assigned to the men, the other to the women. For the sake of good order, the Brothers of the Association of St. Francis Xavier, who are described in the rules of the evening Oratory, will assist|.[439] In the course of the Mass, to encourage the People to receive Jesus Christ in the form of Viaticum, the admonitions for a good death will be read; these are found printed in another volume. These begin with: When my eyes grow dim and dull, etc. After these admonitions, Communion is next, and a *fervorino* adapted to promote repentance in the heart and to fill them with holy divine love is given. During Communion, two Ciboria can be used for the sake of brevity, one by the celebrant and the other by another Priest, |with the celebrant taking the right side and the other Ecclesiastic the left|.[440] The Organ will play [during Communion] and when the people have all gone to communion, some *fervorino* is given by way of thanksgiving, and finally the seven offerings of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ are recited, in order to ask for a happy death (*la morte dei giusti*).

439 Rev deletes the words between bars and substitutes: *if necessary, maintaining the separation of the men from the women as much as possible, for example, with the men going to communion first followed by the women.*
440 Rev deletes the words between the bars.

At a convenient time after the midday meal there will be a short spiritual lesson while the People gather, then a brief call for reform (*una breve riforma*). After this the virtue to be practiced until the next retreat is presented, and the Holy Protector of the Month will be assigned. After this, the *Veni, Creator Spiritus* is said, and the Holy Meditation takes place, which concludes with the act of Contrition and blessing with the Crucifix. The Blessed Sacrament is then exposed, and meanwhile the following is said aloud three times: *moriatur anima mea, morte justorum* 'let my soul die the death of the just,' with the entire people responding by repeating the words three times with devotion. This concludes the function. Blessed is the one who by the holy retreat in preparation for death lives in such a way as if he were living during his final agonies! *Talis vita, finis ita* 'as life is lived, so it ends.'

|The Holy Protector of the month is to assign them appropriate and relevant virtues, either by taking [them] from the [lives of the] Saints of the respective month, or from those chosen by the Director, according to his prudent discretion and [in the light of] the devotion of the people. This must be preserved to follow the spirit of grace, which inspires what is most pleasing, and which honors all the saints, and yet leaves out what else to add.|.[441]

441 Rev deletes the words between bars and adds: *Notice. This useful directory is used both where there are Churches of the Institute and for those places where one wishes to promote such a benefit. Where the Institute is located, it is noted that the spiritual lesson after the midday meal is omitted only in Houses of formation or probation. In these the singing of Vespers takes place. In other houses, the spiritual lesson is given. Where the day of retreat is held, the general Communions of the pious Works is to be facilitated with all invited to their great benefit.*

BRIEF RULES

FOR THE TEACHING OF CATECHISM WHICH IS CUSTOMARILY LEFT TO THE REVEREND PASTORS

1. In each District (*Cura*), it would be good, if possible, to divide the men and women between two Churches, or else to make use of tents or booths that are customarily used for the teaching of Catechism. The boys and girls will be divided into Classes, and each Class will be assigned a part of the Catechism. They should not move from one Class to another until they have thoroughly learned the material assigned to the preceding Class. The graduation from one class to another ordinarily takes place on the feast of |St. Aloysius Gonzaga|.[442] On that day, if possible, there will be a general awards ceremony in which the prizes awarded are commensurate with the achievements of those attending Catechism. Moreover, in this circumstance it is customary to have a public examination (*disputa*) of the one who has just passed all the Classes.[443]

For this Work to accomplish good growth, some persons are to be chosen to hold the following Offices. Note that what is said of the positions held by the men is true of those held by the women.

The first position will be that of President, and this person ordinarily should be one of the nobility (*Signori*) of the Parish, or some Ecclesiastic. In his distinguished position he sees to the exact conduct of the Oratory, and with his presence and edifying conduct animates all the others to fulfill their own offices. The President is to have two Assistants, who will zealously seek to promote

442 Rev deletes the words between bars and adds: *Mary Most Holy and Immaculate for the women and St. Aloysius for the men.*
443 Rev adds: *speaking here of the children.*

attendance at the Catechism classes, also among the adults, who are accustomed to stand around outside while the Catechism is being explained in the Classes. This is of great use for their souls. When the Catechism Classes have ended, there is Instruction for all given by the Pastor. With this Method there is a great cultivation of the spirit in acquiring the science of the Saints.

Regarding the women, the President is always a noble woman (*Signora*) or distinguished person of the parish. While one is seeking laywomen to be engaged in these positions to work together to carry out the Catechism, it is worthwhile to recall that experience teaches that where Catechism classes are so structured, they are very effective.

In addition, there will also be a Secretary who will keep a record of those present on feast days, so that there is a record of attendance for the annual awards ceremony. It would be good if one could evaluate the zeal of those who hold the different offices. Two "Silencers" (*Silenzieri*) will be chosen, who will see that there is silence and good order. It will also be their responsibility to make sure that the Cross is carried in procession prior to the Catechism, in order better to notify the people and commit them to attend the classes.

The Teachers of the Men are to be Ecclesiastics, and for the women it would be good to have *Maestre Pie* or other pious women to collaborate wholeheartedly in carrying out the work.

Finally, let the Pastors be alerted to meet from time to time with all those who hold an office, and in this manner the glory of God in the good of souls will be advanced. Amen.[444]

Praise and thanksgiving be evermore to Jesus,
who with his Blood has saved us.

444 The last section of this work contains 31 couplets meant to promote the virtue of humility. In English translation, these were contained in an earlier version of the C.PP.S. *Manual of Prayers.*
The text concludes:

METHOD OF THE MISSIONS
REVISED BY RIZZOLI IN 1883[445]

METHOD OF THE HOLY MISSIONS

FOR THE USE OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD

ROMA

TIPOGRAFIA FRATELLI PALLOTTA
1883

445 This is the *Method* of St. Gaspar as revised by Moderator General Enrico Rizzoli in 1883. The notes are from the original printed document.

TO OUR VENERABLE BROTHER MISSIONARIES

Led by the learned and pious Monsignor Francis Albertini, later Bishop of Terracina, those excellent ecclesiastics established the Archconfraternity of the Precious Blood at San Nicola in Carcere. Our Congregation arose from that association and was dedicated to the holy missions, through the efforts of Venerable Gaspar del Bufalo and with the encouragement of Pius VII of blessed memory. They established a method to be used in giving Missions, derived from the method practiced by the most distinguished men in that ministry, like the two Frs. Segneri, Saint Leonard of Porto Maurizio, and others of the previous century.

When the first edition of this work had already been out of print for a considerable length of time, the Servant of God, John Merlini, of blessed memory, determined to provide a new edition, and he incorporated certain instructions that our Blessed Founder had committed to writing. He added other instructions to these to clarify their meaning and adapt them to the changing circumstances and requirements of the times.

This, then, venerable brothers, is the method which has been modeled upon the older one. It was prepared with the counsel of the General Administration, who presents it to you.

We should indeed preserve, as far as possible, these precious traditions, which will work wonders for the salvation of souls, and when better times permit, let us prudently restore the holy practices in their entirety.

You are asked to follow this observance, which is not only indispensable for preserving the unity of spirit and of discipline, but is also an act of obedience, which will be of no little assistance in calling down greater heavenly blessings upon our arduous endeavors. May our Lord Jesus Christ keep all of you, Venerable Brothers, under the shadow of his Most Precious Blood.

Rome, at Santa Maria in Trivio, on the feast dedicated to the Precious Blood:

July 1, 1883.

Enrico Rizzoli
Director General

CHAPTER I

THE HOLY MISSIONS AND THEIR USEFULNESS

Missions conducted for Catholics are an extraordinary work of the ministry. They are intended to rejuvenate Christian faith and piety by means of the divine word. This aim is achieved in the course of several days of spiritual recollection, primarily by recalling to the minds of the faithful the instructions they have already received regarding the truths of their holy religion, the observance of the divine law, and the duties proper to them. In addition, by directing them to reflect on the eternal truths and by self-examination, they will be led to awareness of their sins and repent of them, so that they can be reconciled with God. Finally, it provides them with helpful admonitions that serve to maintain them in a virtuous life, modeled on that of true disciples of the Gospel.

Everyone knows that, except for converting idolaters or leading heretics to the Church, there is not, nor can there be, any work more pleasing to the Lord and more meritorious in his sight.[446] Moreover, there is no better means for Bishops and Pastors of souls to provide for those who are committed to their care, than by ordering these missions every five years (*un lustro*) as a means so effective for their spiritual advancement.

God in His mercy was the first to institute Missions for the purpose of calling men to amend their lives and thus avoid the penalties of His justice. Everyone knows about the mission of Jonah and the salvation of Nineveh he accomplished in that mission. The same is reported of other prophets of the Old Testament, who were

446 St. Francis Xavier wrote to Fr. Gaspare Barzeo in one of his letters, which is the first among the moral or didactic principles of the Saint: *Preach to the people, as frequently as you can…There can be no other means to hope for more abundant fruit for the service of God and for the good of souls.* These letters of the Saint are called moral, to distinguish them from historical. They contain very wise precepts and are most useful to the Missionaries.

true missionaries, who arose from time to time to convert Israel from its waywardness. Finally, the last of these, St. John the Baptist, was charged with preparing the hearts of the people of God to receive the Messiah and his Gospel through his Mission.

In the new covenant, we see the same the same thing. When the people began to waver in the faith or lapse into immorality, God raised up Holy Ministers, who renewed their spirit with their preaching, leading them back to true doctrine or to the sanctity of life. Two great Missionaries were St. Athanasius and St. Hilary, who were indefatigable in fighting Arianism, and in their extended travels they led cities and provinces back to the purity of the Catholic faith.

To recall other great Missionaries, there was St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Bernard, St. John Capistrano, and many others who lived more recently who have been declared to be saints: St. Lawrence of Brindisi, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Paul of the Cross, and the already mentioned St. Leonard. All these should be called angels of peace and of the divine mercies and not merely men. The Lord has linked to this apostolate most abundant and noteworthy graces. There is not a missionary who cannot recount extraordinary incidents of the conversions of great sinners, or a very special assistance in the dangers and difficulties of ministry. These gifts are proper to the vocation; the holy Workers must not for any reason attribute them to their own merits.

We also understand how pleasing to the Most High is the work of the holy Missions, as we see that while there are many Monks and secular Priests of holy life, in our day those who have been raised to the honors of the heavens, or about to be raised shortly, were for the most part Missionaries. Among these, along with our Founder, we have the Venerable Bishop Strambi, who was often his companion in those holy undertakings; the Venerable Clement Hofbauer of the Redemptorists, the Venerable Baldinucci of the Jesuits, the Venerable Leopold da Gaiche of the Capuchins, and various others.

This should be a great comfort for those who labor in this holy work or for those who aspire to it, since they know that such a vocation is a very certain sign of predilection on the part of God, and one could say of predestination.

Fr. Scaramelli says: "The holy Doctors teach us that charity which is practiced for the spiritual welfare of souls makes us divine, that is, makes us like God, who labored so much for our souls, and thus there is nothing that is more pleasing to his eyes than this."[447] It is sufficient to add what Pope Gregory says in his commentary on Ezekiel: "No sacrifice offered to almighty God is as great as that of zeal for souls."

447 *Direttorio ascetico*, tratt. 4, art. 5.

CHAPTER II

OBJECTIONS BROUGHT AGAINST THE WORK OF THE MISSIONS

The enemy of our salvation, accustomed to disguise himself as an angel, often spoke to perverse or deceived persons, sadly even to ecclesiastics, using fallacious arguments to impede the Missions, causing so much harm to those efforts. They say that the Missions are like one of those torrential rains that fall from on high during the summer, but are of little use, because the water runs off as rapidly as it arrived, and the fields remain as dry as before. They also say that a sudden change of life and of habits does not conform to the human spirit, but rather that change happens only by degrees. They also say that absolution is too readily available on those occasions, an attractive enticement to bad Christians to return to their faults, supported by the prospect of a generous pardon in the future. Finally, they assert that the Missionaries, within such a narrow period, do not have the necessary tranquility (*calma*) to meet the needs of the penitents, nor to have certain proof of amendment.

Saint Alphonsus Liguori has responded quite well to these difficulties in his letter, *On the Usefulness of the Missions*. It will be beneficial to repeat some of the observations, to eliminate these relics of the Jansenism that caused such harm in the past, even in Italy.

We will readily concede that if the Missionaries are not animated by a genuine spirit nor have been sufficiently instructed, especially regarding confession, there can be genuine deficiencies. It is also quite correct that the number of Confessors must be adequate to meet the needs of the people. Who, moreover, is not aware that the work of conversion of souls is the work of grace? God gives this grace at his pleasure, and sometimes so abundantly, that it sometimes

brings souls to the highest levels of perfection quite suddenly, as St. Thomas notes: "*quandoque tanta commotione convertit cor hominis ut subito perfecte consequatur sanitatem spiritualem*." '[God] sometimes turns the human heart with such power, that it immediately receives perfect spiritual health.'[448] St. Mary Magdalen and St. Paul are proofs of this, and many others who came after them. It is also a teaching of the Scriptures, as the holy Doctors say, that there are special moments in which God's mercy abounds more than ever. St. Paul calls these moments *the acceptable time, the day of salvation* (2 Cor 6:2). Those days that were prefigured in ancient times as the jubilee are truly those of the Missions. One cannot count the persons whom the Lord has touched on those occasions, and who have begun to live a new life.

To see what spirit of repentance takes possession of the heart, it is enough to be present at only one of these sacred functions. What edifying acts one sees there! Scandals are repaired, as is damage to honor and material goods. Enemies are reconciled; family ties are renewed; everyone, in short, rises with the energy of holy enthusiasm to begin anew the life of Christian piety. Without citing other examples, it is enough to refer to the many incidents that have happened during the Missions conducted by our Venerable Founder, by the servant of God Father Merlini, and by others of our Community. But whoever maintains that all who convert during the Mission must remain sinless afterward does not understand human nature. Our Lord Who knew human weakness better than any other person, in virtue of that knowledge said to St. Peter: *I do not say to you [to forgive] seven times, but seventy times seven times* (Mt 18:22).

A saintly and learned theologian has said that even if those poor sinners stray because of new sins, nevertheless they will not have to suffer for repented sins. Moreover, in their distress they will

448 *Summa* III, 86, 5. The quotation in the text appears to be corrupt. The correct text is reproduced here.

acknowledge him who frees them from the greater burden of pain and torments.

In order that the Lord may forgive, the present disposition of the penitent suffices, if he is truly sorry. This is the common opinion of the theologians. The long probation to which certain penitents are at times subjected only serves to lead them away from the reception of the Sacraments. Their relapses are due largely to the lack of that increase of strength and power which would have come to them had they drawn from the fountains of grace. These are the languishing and the weak who stand in great need of the physician, as Jesus Christ teaches.

St. Alphonsus, in his letter cited, said that a Mission would be abundantly fruitful if only to correct unworthy confessions, especially those motivated by the shame of revealing their faults to their own Priests. It sometimes happens that the sins withheld are only venial but because of an erroneous conscience are considered mortal by the penitent. These unworthy confessions occur perhaps even more frequently in those places where there are pious and venerable Father Confessors because the very respect that these inspire increases the sense of shame. Unfortunately, it happens that not a few of these timid souls die without knowing how to overcome this mistaken modesty. Just as the Church prescribes extraordinary ministers of confession to the most observant monasteries, so this protection is necessary even for those people who have received more instruction and are more religious. The shepherd of souls who does not arrange a Mission from time to time runs the certain risk of sending many of his lambs to eternal ruin. All the missionaries, even those who have only recently entered this ministry, can give ample testimony of this.

If there is any pastor of souls who is averse to this work of the Missions, he is either guilty of inexcusable ignorance or he fears, sad to say, that his lack of zeal for imparting instruction, his bad example, or even more serious faults might be revealed.

CHAPTER III

INCONTROVERTIBLE TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF THE BENEFIT PRODUCED BY THE SACRED MISSIONS

In addition to the holy Missionaries who spoke and wrote so much on this topic, as we know from the lives of Padre Paolo Segneri, Padre Pinamonti, St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio, St. Francis di Girolamo, and St. Paul of the Cross, there is also the approval that Pontiffs have given to these holy undertakings, and the encouragement of those who dedicated themselves to them. The Holy See has approved, with special praise, the Congregation of the Mission, founded by St. Vincent de Paul; likewise, those congregations founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori and by St. Paul of the Cross. In the Bulls of Canonization of these very renowned saints, the labors they endured in the Missions for the welfare of the faithful are referred to as works of extraordinary merit. Pius VII added our own Congregation to this list, and not without enlightenment from above, so that these holy exercises may be multiplied in the cities and in the villages, better to serve the ever increasing needs of the world, which, as has been aptly said, is growing worse as it grows older. Pope Benedict XIV desired that Missions be preached in Rome and he himself came to attend them, and so did Pope Clement XIII.

In our own day, Pius IX and the present reigning Pontiff, Leo XIII, issued the same directive. Of all the Popes, Leo XII was the most zealous promoter of the Missions. He foresaw the misfortunes that were threatening, for he had at his disposal the means of knowing the secret machinations of the factions that were conspiring against religion and Rulers. Therefore, he wisely wrote to the Catholic Sovereigns, exhorting them to promote Christian life and morals

among the people, especially by means of Missions, in which he saw a powerful and practically the only means of converting the wicked, and the most effective means of preserving good people from contamination. He also wrote to all the bishops concerning this matter and published forceful Apostolic Letters on March 13 and July 6, 1836. Many prelates, mostly in Italy and France, responded to them, and the preaching of Missions became very frequent. These were crowned with success beyond all expectation. God Himself, by a singular event, showed His pleasure at the work. At Migné, a large French village, a Mission was being preached, and during the sermon, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, a shining cross nearly twenty-four meters long appeared in front of the church. At the end of the discourse the cross disappeared. About three thousand persons witnessed this. All the papers made mention of it, and everywhere it created a very vivid impression.

Such great triumphs, however, inflamed the anger of those evil sects, since they saw their ranks disintegrating, and they stirred up their members to oppose the Missions and those who promoted them. At Rouen, for example, the missionaries and the people were assailed in a ferocious assault with stones and clubs. In this way the devout audience was disbanded and put to flight at the hands of wicked men. It is said that the revolution that was shortly to break forth in France was delayed until 1830 through the reawakening of faith, as Louis Blanc himself, one of the leaders of the sect, laments in his history of those ten years. In Italy, however, where these apostolic expeditions were most effective and extended, the repercussion of that French Revolution was a pitiable, paltry affair, and more ridiculous than dangerous. The godless always sensed that the Missions were a deathblow to their schemes. Voltaire wrote to his friends on the occasion of a Mission which was given at Paris about the year 1770: "One more Mission and we are finished."

The missions are more necessary now than ever before. "The conducting of Missions is the only means I know," an illustrious Archbishop was accustomed to say, "of reviving the faith and of leading the faithful back to a better life." For this reason, he sought that even the smallest town in his vast diocese would reap the benefit of the sacred ministry of preaching. He knew full well the value of the Missions, for he had often and with the utmost zeal been engaged in preaching them. The saying of St. Alphonsus has been proved true: "He who is not acquainted with the Mission field cannot comprehend the great good which the Mission produces."

CHAPTER IV

THE QUALITIES NEEDED BY THE MISSIONARY AND THE SPIRIT THAT SHOULD ANIMATE HIM

Three gifts are necessary for one who devotes himself to the apostolic ministry, as noted in the instructions to our first missionaries of the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood: *holiness, knowledge*, and *health*, to which we may well add a fourth, namely, *love of work and sacrifice*. Since it is the duty of every priest to be virtuous and strive for perfection, how much more indispensable is that same obligation for one who assumes the ministry of teaching the people? *Get upon the high mountain, you that bring good tidings to Sion*, says the Lord through Isaiah (Is 40:9). Everyone easily understands that this was not said in a literal but in a moral sense. A Missionary who does not cultivate sanctity is in danger of hearing the terrifying question at the moment of judgment which we find in the Psalm: *But to the wicked God says: 'What right have you to recite my statutes, or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you'* (Ps 50: 16-17).

It is true indeed that God can also make use of unworthy instruments for His grand works, but this in no way serves to justify the unworthy, but rather adds to their downfall. Of these unhappy mortals St. Matthew speaks in the very words of the divine Teacher: *Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and cast out devils in your name, and done many miracles in your name? And then I will say to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity* (Mt 7:22-23). Every fiber of the apostolic preacher should, therefore, proclaim piety, mortification, modesty, and detachment from the world. The dress, the conduct, and bearing of the person must show him to be an

apostle of Jesus Christ. Hence his demeanor must be such as St. Paul recommends to the Corinthians: *... that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies* (2 Cor 4:11)

The virtues which are highly necessary for the Missionary are humility and obedience. Without these he cannot be a fit minister for the salvation of souls. Woe to him if he cannot, with sincerity and perfect simplicity, repeat with David: *Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory* (Ps 113:9). If he seeks to shine through depth of knowledge, through merit of style, through delicacy of art, he is unmindful of what St. Paul, the model for the heralds of the divine word, says of himself: *I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power* (1 Cor 2:1-4). The devil would laugh at him, as he did at those presumptuous young men of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles, who, imitating Saint Paul, attempted to drive the devil out of one possessed in the name of Jesus. The evil spirit, however, answered them: *Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?* (Acts 19:15), and he struck them, threw them to the ground and covered them with mud.

Obedience, therefore, to the Superior and to the Director of Missions is a safe means of victory according to the Wise Man in Proverbs (Cf. Prv 21:28). God assured Abraham that as a reward for his ready obedience to immolate his son, all the nations of the world would be blessed through him: *Because you have obeyed* (Gn 22:18). Thus will it also be with any obedient Missionary. God will accompany his words with grace, which bears fruit like the seed in the Gospel. Even the shadow of disobedience or of discord would be able to wither the most wonderful hope, and to cause scandal instead of edification. Jesus Christ our Lord came to instruct us in

this virtue: *I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him* (Jn 8:28-29).

The spirit of the Lord is always with the obedient.

In the second place, the Missionary needs a knowledge of the Scriptures and of dogmatic and moral Theology. All other sciences may be useful, and the study of them is to be recommended to those able to pursue them, as St. Charles says to the clergy during one of his synods. Without being well-versed in sacred knowledge no one should undertake this ministry. All the preaching of the Missionary must be supported by the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers who are the interpreters of the Scriptures. Our Venerable [Founder] used to say that we must preach only the word of Jesus Christ, that which he places on the lips of his disciples, as St. Paul informs us: *[Christ] has placed in us the word of reconciliation. For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us. For Christ, we beseech you, be reconciled to God* (2 Cor 5:19-20). He then adds that this is the doctrine which makes the preacher incapable of confusion, who knows how he is to treat the truth of religion, as the holy Apostle demands of his Timothy (Cf. 2 Tim 2:15). This is the two-edged sword that penetrates to the heart, and there works the miracle of conversion, a greater miracle than raising the dead. The full and clear knowledge of Catholic teaching is also an indispensable requirement to avoid the danger of teaching errors or of offering only opinions instead of genuine doctrine, which Missionaries must guard against with scrupulous diligence.[449]

The Council of Trent and the Roman Catechism must be the norm of their instructions. Similarly, in questions of Moral Theology, that holy Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus Liguori, should be our guide. His maxims must form our principal fund of knowledge for the exercise of our ministry. The Missionary must

449 This is what Xavier prescribed for his companions. See the first moral letter to Fr. Barzeo.

devote himself to studying these disciplines during his entire life. For this reason, frequent conferences are prescribed in our institute.

Health and bodily strength are qualities which also are demanded in one who desires to dedicate himself to the ministry of the Missions. The labors are great and often extraordinary, and hence those who are sickly and of a weak constitution are not able to bear them. There are, however, some ministries that are not so strenuous, such as spiritual retreats to the Clergy, to Monasteries, and houses of study. These do not demand either strong lungs (*robustezza di petto*) or great physical strength, but, on the other hand, greater learning, Scriptural as well as ascetical.

Lastly, as we indicated, he who would be a Missionary must love hard work and know how to bear the difficulties of long days of continual labor, the hardships of traveling, of lodging, the cold, the heat, inclement weather, the lack of food, of sleep and rest, and the many other inconveniences that one encounters in this vocation. He must be able to bear all these without anxiety and without complaint. Such work is not for those persons who love tranquility, independence, a methodic life, hours of rest, and who wish to have everything to conform to their demands, to their true or imagined needs. Upon God's command, Gideon ordered that the cowards, who were unfit for fighting the battles of God, should return home. Our Blessed Founder chose St. Francis Xavier as Patron of the Congregation precisely in order that those who aspire to the same vocation may understand the spirit that is required if one wants to join it.

CHAPTER V

THE METHOD NECESSARY FOR CONDUCTING THE HOLY MISSIONS WELL

We should not only seek to do good, but to do the good in the best possible manner, so that the fruits flowing from our labors may also be greater. Thus, a standard (*norma*) is necessary, or if you will, a method, culled from the practice of the holy missionaries of the Church, especially of our own predecessors whose work in behalf of souls God has blessed. These standards or norms are not to be taken as unchangeable, but rather as a set of directives to be observed whenever weightier reasons do not suggest that they be altered.

The local towns, their customs, and the circumstances of the times must be taken into consideration in order not to offend the sensitivity of those with whom we are dealing and to avoid giving our enemies occasion to attack or revile the sacred ministry. During periods of great fervor, the external functions and penitential practices, which are calculated to stimulate a holy fear, can and even should be used as means well suited to lead sinners to repentance and emendation.

For example, it was customary whenever the sermon dealt with death to bring a skull to the platform. The Missionary would point to it, inviting the hearers to ask themselves to consider that day when death will claim them as it did the dead skull before them. What do the luxury, the vanities, the pleasures of the palate and of the senses avail? In the sermon on hell they would use a painting to demonstrate the miserable condition of one condemned to the flames and pains of hell. This was done to arouse in sinners the desire to choose and prefer any mortification to their sinful desires while they were alive to avoid those infinite and eternal torments.

However, our Blessed Founder did not introduce this custom among us, because these things were being ridiculed and condemned by certain modern sages, but they are persons who judge by modern standards. They could not bring themselves to consider an age, a culture, and a state of civilization that was inferior to our era in some matters. They do not consider that most people are more visual than intellectual (*sono più occhi che intelligenza*), and that perceptions provided by the senses can be more clear and more effective than those of the intellect. Often these well-meaning persons, in obstructing these practices (by no means disgraceful) and eventually doing away with them, were surprised that in eliminating them, the people were less affected by the Missions, and it was thus easier to backslide.

Again, it was a practice of the missionaries, especially in southern Italy (and one that continues even today), to strike themselves with a discipline during the sermon on dishonesty, so that the faithful would be horrified at this vice. To free oneself from it, the Gospel mentions that, if appropriate, one should resort to the whip and to fasting. It is rare that people who are moved by this sight do not promise, with tears of repentance, to commit themselves to avoid this sin and to persevere in the opposite virtue. What moving spectacles are the penitential processions, in which Bishops, Missionaries, and Clergy carry a rope around their necks, humbly dressed and with heads bowed, go through the streets mournfully singing the penitential psalms. The men follow them (women are not permitted to join in the procession after nightfall). Moved by the same spirit and with similar signs of compunction, they either scourge themselves with twisted cords, walk barefoot, or carry very heavy crosses. In public places, the processions would stop, and a Missionary would ascend a makeshift platform and say a few stirring words to arouse the hearts of the people to contrition. Then the people, filled with faith, always break into sobs. Voices will

be heard asking pardon for the scandals given, and enemies will call on one another to grant mutual pardon for the love of Jesus Christ. There is no one present who fails to hear people bursting into tears. Tears are dear to God. He reproved Jonah, who began to lament because Nineveh did not perish. How could God rage against a people in tears?

At the end of the sermon on the Passion of our Lord, to move hearts to gratitude to Jesus Christ and to bring an end to sinning out of love for Jesus, some Priests vested in violet Dalmatics would bring in a bier covered with paraments covering the image of the lifeless body of the Redeemer. They would be surrounded by Ecclesiastics or Brothers of some associations bearing candles. The Missionary then invites the listeners, with urgent questions and forceful appeals, to consider what their sins have done. Everyone who tramples on the divine law, as St. Paul says, crucifies the Savior again (Cf. Heb 6:6), and [the Missionary] asks the people to promise to sin no more. All express their promise aloud and confirm it by their weeping. One needs to have been present at these moving functions, hearing the laments and those promises, to be convinced that they truly come from the heart. Many thousands, of all ages and conditions, among whom were a great number of the most dissolute, were changed from ferocious wolves into submissive lambs, as was St. Paul.

Now the people would come, and beside the holy image or at the foot of the picture of Mary (to be mentioned later), would place as holocaust offerings many daggers and forbidden weapons of every description, criminal books, even precious gifts, tokens (*pegni*) of unworthy love affairs, and everything else that could remind them of sin or incite them to sin. More than a few times it was the sisters and the wives of criminals who brought many of those weapons, which were the occasions of great and horrible crimes which corrupted the hearts of good people and dishonored human society. On such occasions, some of the police officials were often heard asking with

amazement: “But what is this? A single Missionary accomplishes more in an hour with his words than many of us are able to do in a year throughout the entire State!”

CHAPTER VI

Continued

We hope that the time will come again when the Church, having regained her freedom everywhere, may once again be able to return to whatever can reasonably aid in the salvation of souls. Meanwhile, the Missionaries, in conducting the holy Missions, must be very diligent to adopt these methods to the extent possible in order to accomplish the purpose for which they are aimed: the religious instruction of the people and returning them to a good life, reconciled with God.

A proper Mission embraces a broad range of goals, and for this reason having enough individuals suitable for this ministry is indispensable. The various elements of the Mission should be divided among them. The principal elements are these: the instruction on the Decalogue, on the Holy Sacraments of penance and of the eucharist, the conferences for the various categories of persons, the great sermon, and the evening oratory. Regarding confessions, all should attend to them during their free hours, so that the penitents can choose the one with whom they feel inclined to open their hearts.

These tasks are determined beforehand by the Superior of the Institute or of the province, who knows the abilities of the holy Workers, the needs of the places, and the desires of the respective Prelates. For the Director of the Mission he chooses an experienced person of a certain age, to whom the Confreres will be virtuously subordinate. He must, however, listen to the opinions of his Confreres in establishing the order of the functions as well as the questions and difficulties that might arise during this pious enterprise. After praying for divine guidance, he then chooses the solution that seems most appropriate.

It also falls to the Director of the Mission (when the Superior has not done so) to make suitable arrangements for travel, for the time of arrival, and for all details of the Mission. In agreement with the Prelate or ecclesiastical Superior of the city or country where the Mission will take place, he also establishes a schedule that is convenient for the people so that they can participate frequently. The same holds for setting times suitable for the conferences for various groups. A Brother-in-Service also comes along and is very helpful, especially if there are many Missionaries. It is the duty of the Director to give him orders so that he can see to the needs of the Missionaries.

The Missionaries will always seek to live together in the same house, and women are not permitted to enter that house. They are not to accept invitations [to dine], except from the Bishop. All of them should sit at the common table, and they are not to leave the house without the company of a Brother-in-Service or an Ecclesiastic or Cleric assigned to assist them, and then only for reasons of ministry. If it is necessary for reasons of health for someone to walk outdoors, he is to go with a Companion outside the dwelling. When outside the house, one should always proceed with composure and edifying modesty, because not only one's word but one's trivial movements are carefully watched by others. This is necessary so that the Catholic people are persuaded to see in the Missionaries men of a holy life.

It is also the responsibility of the Director to furnish himself and his Companions with all the necessary spiritual faculties, and to be informed with great prudence of the special needs of the place, such as particular customs and where they will encounter the more difficult dialects, of the customary expressions to indicate certain grave sins, and to advise all the Missionaries of these so that they avoid making mistakes in the confessional. On the first day of the Mission he and one or two of his confreres will make the usual courtesy visits to the Bishop, or local Superior, and to the Chapter

[of canons], when the latter are entering or leaving the choir. If the circumstances permit, they also visit the Head of the Municipality and other important persons when this would be useful.

He must not omit visiting all the houses of Religious, to ask their assistance and their prayers for the benefit of the Mission. He will also ask, if suitable, that the Very Reverend Ordinary prescribe, for the days of the Mission, the collect of the Mass *To ask for tears* or *For the remission of sins*.[450] He will also see to it that some of the Confraternities are available to give their assistance during the Mission and to accompany the Missionaries to the platform. The [Confraternities] will also see to maintaining, with great gentleness and charity, a quiet atmosphere during the sermons and sacred functions. They also will collect the alms that the Bishop has required, but only after the preaching is over.

The Missionaries are not to assume privately the responsibility for requesting contributions or other favors. Should [a Missionary] receive something of this nature, he should immediately hand it over to the Bishop or the Vicar Forane[451] or the Pastor of the parish. They are not to engage in other forms of activity, other than those strictly pertaining to the ministry they are engaged in. They are not to receive gifts of compensation of any sort, nor stipends from the holy Masses, lest there be any pretext for accusing them of having earthly interests. Let them remember that while they cannot be excused from making restitution for penitents when this is requested, they must ask for a receipt and then give it to the one who entrusted it to them. If it is just a matter of small amounts, let them have a person with them who can testify that this has been fulfilled. They cannot take sides in the jealousies or factions that often divide towns, nor are they to allude to anything that might

450 The collect is another name for the opening prayer of the Mass. In the past, sometimes additional collects would be said for special intentions.
451 This is an older term for a priest appointed to promote pastoral activity in a region of a diocese. The more common term today is *dean*.

harm someone, even if this would be the one who was in the wrong. One should seek nothing but the divine glory and the salvation of souls, in peace with God and with all persons.

CHAPTER VII

ON THE ENTRANCE OF THE HOLY MISSION

When the Missionaries leave their house, they receive a blessing from the Superior, and having said the *Procedamus in pace* 'let us go forth in peace,' begin their journey reciting either the *Itinerarium* [prayer for a journey], which the Church gives us in the Breviary, or the Litany of the Blessed Virgin with the *Salve Regina* and respective prayers, an Our Father to Saint Francis, our protector, and several recitations of the psalm *De profundis* for the souls in purgatory. Our Venerable Founder used to repeat this pious intercessory prayer many times during his life, because he had great confidence in the intercession of those blessed souls. Prayer is the most effective means to make these holy enterprises fruitful, and as soon as the pious Missionaries know where they will be going for some ministry, they should immediately begin to pray for those souls, for whose benefit the Lord is sending them.

Likewise, the practice of a triduum preceding the arrival of the Missionaries in a town is very profitable. This would include the exposition of the blessed Sacrament and the singing of the Psalm *Miserere* (Psalm 51). In this way the souls are well disposed, and prayer moves the heart of God to open the treasures of his mercy.

If the journey is long, the Missionaries should take care to make their private meditation, each one by himself, and to recite the Rosary together, if possible, and maintain an hour of Silence and recollection.

When they arrive at the end of the journey, the entrance takes place. Our original method [of the missions] gives great importance to this opening and recommends that it be as solemn as possible. It was customary until recently that the Missionaries leave the coach, and putting on their insignia, make their way toward

the gate, pilgrim staffs in hand. At the same time, the Bishop or his representative arrives there to meet them, preceded by the Confraternities, vested in their garb, and by the Clergy. The local magistrates usually participate, dressed in formal attire, and with them the prominent people of the municipality and the people.

The opening of a Mission should be considered a day of joy and festivity: God is sending the ambassadors of His mercies to His children. In regions where the wickedness of the sectarians has not already corrupted everyone's heart, the children especially, animated by their guardian angels, should run joyfully to meet the missionaries along the way, sometimes offering them flowers and fruit. The children, like brigades upon a redoubt which flanks the road, welcome them with songs and with the praises of Jesus and Mary. Groups of girls welcome them from along the street with sacred songs and praises of Jesus and Mary.

When the Missionaries come within sight of the Prelate, they prostrate themselves, kissing the ground. They receive a crucifix from him, and he addresses a few words to them, extending a welcome to them. He commends the people to their holy and zealous efforts to the people, who receive them reverently and eagerly. Then the Director of the Mission asks for the blessing and rises, and with the holy image of the Crucifix raised on high, he intones either the Litany of the Blessed Virgin or the psalm, *Laudate pueri Dominum* 'Praise, you servants of the Lord' (Ps 113). At each verse, the people respond with *Lodato sempre sia* 'May he be praised forever,' etc.

The procession moves towards the Church where the Mission is to be held, and the missionaries enter it after the clergy, immediately before the [canons of] the chapter and the Prelate. After reaching the high altar, the *Veni, Creator Spiritus* is chanted. Then the *Salve Regina* is recited, and an Our Father to St. Francis Xavier and one to the Patron of the Church or of the diocese. All [the missionaries] ascend the platform together and humbly kiss it, greeting it with

the phrase: *Sia lodato Gesù e Maria* (this is done in every discourse). They make the sign of the cross as they intone: *In the name of the Father,* etc., and the Hail Mary in the vernacular. The people respond to these prayers by repeating the words in turn.

After kissing the pulpit, the others leave, and the Director alone remains. He gives the Crucifix to a member of the Confraternity appointed for this. He either holds it during the entire sermon or places it upon a pedestal prepared for it. With bare head, the Missionary invites the people in a loud voice to join with him in offering to the Lord the Blood of our Redemption, to which is attached an indulgence of one hundred days. At the beginning of every sermon this prayer is recited solemnly: *Eterno Padre*, etc., and then he begins the sermon.

Whenever the procession does not take place, the Prelate and the Clergy receive the Missionaries at the portal of the Church or at the entrance to the sanctuary. After they have reached the altar, the *Veni Creator* is sung as above. The Prelate ascends the altar to the Gospel side, or if he is a Bishop he goes to the throne, hands them the crucifix and addresses them briefly as was mentioned before. Having received the blessing, "May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips," and having kissed his hands, the Missionaries go to the pulpit.

The introductory sermon should explain the nature of the Mission and how it is a great gift, and that those who preach the Mission have no other purpose but God and the good of souls. [The Director] will ask the faithful in the name of Jesus Christ to lay aside their worldly pursuits during these days to care for their eternal salvation. He will point out the dispositions necessary for attending the Mission in order to draw abundant profit from a grace that for many may be the last. In closing, he will announce the order of the day for the sacred services, which should also be posted at the portals of the Church. He will announce when confessions will be

heard. The introduction is of great importance, as has been said, and the Missionary must win the hearts of the people by showing great respect for the town and esteem for the people whom he addresses. He gains their favor according to the grand principle of St. Augustine: "First, love, and then do what you will." He closes the functions, as also on all other evenings, with the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction. This should be done in a solemn and devout manner, because the solemnity of worship can achieve much in souls that have been moved by the word of God.

Singing also plays a very important part in the holy work of the Missions. Therefore, the Missionaries capable of singing should take care of this, and during the missions a Missionary should be given responsibility for the music, and he should discharge this with great care and correctness. The sacred songs which express [the theme] and stir the soul to responses related to the subject matter of the preaching precede the sermon, so that the divine word may reach the depths of the heart. During the first day, therefore, when seeking to call the people to penance, songs of holy sorrow are to be sung, and invocations to the divine mercy for pardon, or those devout litanies, "God, our Heavenly Father, have mercy on us, etc." Later, other hymns expressing hope and trust, and finally hymns of thanksgiving and praise to God and to Mary shall be sung.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FUNCTIONS IN THE MORNING

As soon as possible after sunrise, so that it is convenient for the common people and servants, who ordinarily participate in greater number, the first exercise of the morning begins with the Holy Mass. The Mass is to be celebrated with great devotion and seriousness by a Missionary, who according to custom is to be the catechist for the morning. During this Mass the Brother-in-service or some pious Ecclesiastic devoutly recites the Chaplet and the Seven Offerings in honor of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. It is important that the people understand the great mystery of the Redemption wrought by Him at a great price (as St. Paul says [1 Cor 6:20]) and in which is placed every hope of salvation.

After Mass some verses are sung, and the invocation, "In the name of the Father," etc., and Hail Mary, while the Missionary ascends the platform, and having greeted the people, he begins the explanation of the Decalogue. If he finds it beneficial, he may instead give an instruction on the Sacrament of Penance and treat the Decalogue after the midday meal. This instruction should begin by emphasizing the importance of these precepts, which must be observed by those who wish to be saved. *If you would enter into life, keep the commandments* (Mt 19:17). He should also make known to them the solemnity with which God promulgated these Commandments, upon Mount Sinai amid flashes of lightning, the roaring of thunder, and the sound of the trumpet, by which he indicated the account which we must render one day (cf. Ex 19:16). The explanation of the commandments must be clear, precise, and interesting, and based upon the moral theology of St. Alphonsus Liguori. The Missionary is to leave aside the questions and differing opinions of theologians and insist especially upon the duties

which are imposed upon us, the sins very frequently committed in not fulfilling these duties, and the malice of these sins. Thus, for example, when treating the first commandment, in addition to the duty of faith, let him touch upon the obligation of worshipping God publicly as well as privately by means of prayer. This instruction has a twofold aim: first, it reveals the sinner to himself and the errors of his past life; second, it is a guide for his future conduct.

The instructions should always be interspersed with examples from Scripture or from the lives of the Saints. The conclusion should always contain thoughts which instill the fear of divine punishment or lead to the promise of amendment, or of hope of the divine mercy. The length of the discourse should not exceed three quarters of an hour. At the end the preacher greets the people as in the beginning with the words: *Sia lodato Gesù e Maria*, blessing them with the Crucifix when no other special function is to follow. This instruction over, a second Mass follows for those who have arrived late or for those whose family circumstances now permit. This Mass also is celebrated by a Missionary and (when this is convenient for the people) at the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her relic is displayed for public veneration.

At the beginning, a cleric or confraternity brother recites the rosary, which he interrupts for the Gospel. After reading the Gospel, the priest remains on the Gospel side of the altar and speaks of some great favor obtained from the Blessed Virgin, especially the conversion of sinners who had recourse to her or who were commended to her. This should not last more than a quarter of an hour and is intended to stir the faithful to hope and to seek in Mary the necessary assistance for obtaining true sorrow for their sins, pardon from the Lord, and the strength to begin a life worthy of disciples of Jesus Christ after abandoning their old habits. In this sermon (and this holds good also for the instructions and the opening sermon), let the preachers see to

it that their words flow from their deeds; that their hearts are moved only by a great compassion for sinners, and by an ardent desire of seeing them converted through divine grace which is never lacking to one who really desires to be converted. In any case they should not scold, or be contemptuous or bitter, not even toward the stubborn and recalcitrant.

The Missionaries should not complain about any insults or criticisms leveled against them, not even if someone seeks to create a disturbance while they are preaching. In that case, they should respond using only gentle words and prayer. When choosing miracles and graces to share with the people, let them omit those that, while genuine, might provoke derision and disrespect. In the choice of miracles and favors to be narrated to the people, let them see to it that they omit mentioning those that, even though true, might nevertheless provoke derision and contempt, if only on the part of the foolish and the bitter. After the short discourse has been finished, the Rosary begins, to be interrupted again at the consecration and during the communion of the faithful. Afterwards the Litany of Loreto is to be sung according to the short form. When Mass is completed, the celebrant recites the Hail Mary several times for the conversion of sinners and blesses those who assisted at Mass with the holy Relic.

CHAPTER IX

OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE MISSIONARIES IN THE MORNING

During the Missions it is customary, besides preaching to the people in Church, to visit the monasteries of women religious and the schools for girls and orphanages to offer them a message for their edification and lead them to grow in virtue. The Director, in agreement with his Colleagues, designates a Missionary for each of these holy retreats. On two or three successive mornings, he will give them spiritual conferences adapted to their vocation and state of life. If someone insists, he may hear some confessions, but with the permission of the Bishop. This takes place only during the first four days of the Mission, because on the others he must devote himself exclusively to the good of the rest of the people. The Missionaries also visit the Colleges and Seminaries of young men if they do not participate in the Mission, and upon the invitation of the Superiors, should offer these young men appropriate words to encourage them to lead a virtuous life.

More important than all those mentioned are the conferences to the Clergy and to persons distinguished by nobility and culture. The sermons intended for the people are not enough for priests. It is appropriate to remind them of the loftiness and dignity of their vocations, of how God is even more offended by our faults, and how much more he expects of us. We [clergy] will we be judged more severely by Jesus Christ, according to his words: *To whom much has been given, much will be required* (Lk 12:48) The Missionary will see kindled in the Ecclesiastics a commitment to edify the people by their good conduct, a zeal for religious instruction, and attention to devoting themselves to the conversion of sinners.

The conferences to the Clergy are to last an entire week, and a convenient time for them should be chosen in agreement with the Prelate and the Chapter. This gathering of the Clergy in which they hear the reforms proposed to them also serves wonderfully to edify the people and to prompt them to respond faithfully to divine favors. The Missionary who is entrusted with this task should remember to treat the Clergy with great respect, especially when speaking about more serious faults that are worthy of censure.

In a city or neighborhood in which there are many persons of higher position, it is very useful to hold some special conferences for them, directed (if needed) to combatting the dominant errors in religious matters, and to remind them of their proper obligations, among which are to avoid luxuries and excessive comforts, and to give good example. He must remind them of our Lord's warning, *Woe to you who are rich* (Lk 12:48), but in a very polite way, so that they may escape the great dangers to which their state of life exposes them to the detriment of their souls. The Missionary appointed to this work should see to it that his apologetic discourses are especially clear and understandable by all, since knowledge of matters of faith is often lacking even among educated persons. He should speak very clearly with simple words about sublime matters, as did the divine Master. These conferences are to last according to the need or the desire of the class of persons to whom they are directed. These conferences are of great importance, because the piety of distinguished persons is a powerful example for common people.

Those in prison are also to participate in the benefits of the holy Mission. The Director is to ask permission of the respective authorities so that one of his Missionaries can preach to them for at least three days, possibly in the morning and afternoon, and hear their confessions. This is very enriching work and is always accompanied by good fruit. The love and compassion that those unhappy persons read on the face of God's minister who comes

to console them sometimes wins over even the hardest of hearts. The one chosen for this ministry should have a gentle spirit and a profound understanding of human beings.

Finally, our venerable method recommends visits to the Hospitals, so that some word of comfort may be spoken to those troubled souls, and to support their spirit by reminding them how God will reward their patience, which St. James calls the crown and fulfillment of the virtues: *Let patience have a perfect work* (James 1:4)[452] All of the other sick persons will be advised that the Missionaries are ready to hear their confessions if they wish. When circumstances permit, on the morning after the end of the Mission there will be a solemn general Communion of the sick, with two Missionaries accompanying the procession. When entering with the Blessed Sacrament, they are to take turns offering each sick person some word that will kindle in their heart a lively love for the loving Jesus who comes to visit them.

452 Another possible translation of the Greek would be: *Let endurance have its perfect effect*.

CHAPTER X

PRACTICES OF PIETY TO BE PERFORMED BY THE MISSIONARIES AND ABOUT THE REFECTORY

The works of the ministry during the holy Mission, although they may be varied and ongoing, should not so absorb the attention of the Missionaries to the extent that they neglect caring for their own souls, as St. Francis Xavier wrote to Fr. Gaspar Barzeo. All the Masters and models in these holy undertakings, St. Alphonsus Liguori, Fr. Segneri, Fr. Pinamonti, and our Venerable Founder, are agreed that a half hour before noon the Missionaries are to gather together for meditation. No one may excuse himself from this. If, however, that time should not be suitable for all because of preaching, another time should be substituted for it. The fire of love is enkindled especially through meditation, and the sermon that flows from one who is filled with that spirit which God communicates in prayer is twice as forceful in reaching into the heart of others. The Missionaries assemble in the same way in the evening to make an examination of conscience and recite the customary prayers. Their constant concern during such days should be to live united with God. Since they are unable to devote themselves to long prayers, they take care to invoke Him more often than ever by ejaculations, to enable them to fulfil their duty in a holy manner.

Before leaving their rooms to ascend the platform to preach, the holy Missionaries are accustomed to prostrating themselves before God with their faces to the earth. They confess their own poverty and lack of ability and ask His divine assistance, by declaring themselves ready to bear even the trials, the criticism or the contempt of their listeners. This humiliation should become a useful means for rendering the ministry more fruitful for the good

of souls and for promoting the divine glory. When they become aware that their preaching was blessed, from the recollection, the profound silence or the tears of the people, they immediately thank God for this, warding off every shadow of human complacency. Let them be mindful of what St. Paul says, that *neither he that plants is anything, nor he that waters* (1 Cor 3:7) Venerable del Bufalo was most exact in maintaining such a wise practice.

It would be wrong for a Missionary to seek to know whether his sermon was pleasing and whether the hearers were satisfied and inspired by it. Surely one may inquire from the Director or one of his colleagues about his defects, as a means of correcting himself, but never to satisfy his vanity. Even less should one speak about his sermons to outsiders.

In the dining room, after the reading of a selection from the Gospel, a Cleric or other Ecclesiastic will read from *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection* by Rodriguez,[453] or some selection from the life of Saint Francis Xavier, or of the Venerable Founder, so that the shining examples of these apostolic men may be an impetus to their disciples to imitate their zeal and tireless labors in ministry.

The menu should be frugal, and no different from the ordinary fare in our houses. If it is not possible to imitate St. Leonard and others, who, while engaged in tireless labors, would engage in rigorous fasting, we should at least avoid all delicacies and whatever stimulates the palate. For this reason, fruit preserves, sweet desserts, and foreign wines are strictly forbidden; the Director must insist on observing this prohibition exactly. Should one be invited to the table of some Prelate, he should be informed of what the rule prescribes for us. When these [delicacies] are offered, the Missionaries are to

453 Alphonsus (Alonso) Rodriguez, S.J., was the author of this three-volume work that was first published in 1609. It was very popular, was translated into several languages, and is still available today. He should not be confused with St. Alfonso Rodriguez, S.J., a Jesuit lay brother of the same era.

thank him graciously, and they should let him know that if they accept them it is only for the sake of courtesy. If they are living apart and similar gifts are offered, and they cannot refuse them, they can accept them and send them to the sick in the Hospital, or to elderly poor persons of the town. Along with charity, this mortification will be a good example that will bear immediate and abundant fruit. In those areas where friendly and well-to-do families send the Missionaries prepared food, often in great abundance, then the brother-in-service will immediately give what is left over to the poor. The same holds for the evening meal.

After the midday meal they engage in pleasant conversation, during which they can discuss the progress of the Mission. After this recreation period is over, they retire in silence, and whoever is in need may take a nap. Sleep at night is not to exceed seven hours, and on the final days when there are many coming to confession, this can be reduced by one or two hours. In his method for the Missions, Saint Leonard strongly emphasizes faithfulness to community activities and to all that has been established in the schedule.

CHAPTER XI

THE FUNCTIONS AFTER DINNER

Young people of both sexes have a right to be cared for during the holy Mission, and often young people derive great benefit from it. Their hearts are not yet possessed by passions, and the divine word makes a deeper impression on them. During a mission, vocations to the priesthood and religious life should be discussed often. In these holy days many laid the foundation for a life that grew to great perfection.

All Missionaries truly zealous for souls were also engaged in the ministry of catechetical instruction. With the agreement of the Pastors of the place, the young people of a certain age, whether they have already received their First Communion or are about to, should be invited to attend at a set hour. Then they are divided into classes according to the numbers, and if appropriate, they are to be instructed by some pious Priest with the help of the Missionaries.

First, they should be reminded of the mysteries of the faith, and then on the manner of receiving the Sacraments. At the end of the instruction, which should last about three quarters of an hour, the Missionary or his substitute will propose one of the eternal maxims to the young people, and with few but enthusiastic words he will impress this on their minds and in their hearts. Then they are to recite the acts of faith, hope, and charity, and they are dismissed with the priestly blessing.

The Missionaries leave the examination of the knowledge necessary for those not yet admitted to Communion to the Pastors, unless they have been delegated to do this either by the Pastors or by the Bishop.

Once the boys and girls up to the ages of fourteen or fifteen have been prepared over the space of five or six days, it is strongly suggested

that they celebrate a general Communion with all solemnity. The day before, their confessions should be heard, and on the occasion of first Communion it is prudent that these be general confessions. It is very important that a Missionary make himself available to help them with an examination of conscience and motivate them with a few persuasive reflections leading to sorrow [for their sins]. In these pious practices there is always to be a ready obedience and a great respect for the church, and the Missionaries are the first to be outstanding examples of this.

On the morning when Communion is to take place, they gather again, clean and dressed as well as possible, without vanity (in the past the children carried a crown of thorns on their head and the holy Rosary around their necks), and they process to some nearby church, alternately praying the psalm *Laudate, pueri* 'Praise, you children [of the Lord]' (Ps 113), and the refrain, *Lodato sia Gesù e Maria*. If there is a baptistery in the Church where the Mission takes place, the Bishop or Archpriest waits there. After a few appropriate words from the Missionary, the Prelate asks the baptismal questions in the local language, and the children reply, soundly renouncing the devil, etc., how they believe in God, etc. A question is added to these, asking whether they promise to persevere always in the love of God and of religion with a virtuous life. When he has received their collective response, the Prelate recites the following prayer from the Ritual for the kneeling children:

> Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who said: *Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these* (Mt 19:14), pour out the power of your blessing + on these children and consider the faith and devotion of the Church. Advancing in virtue and wisdom before God and men, may they reach a blessed old age and finally attain everlasting salvation. We ask this of you who live and reign forever and ever.[454]

454 This prayer is in Latin in the original text.

As they draw near to the altar, they sing the Psalm *Sicut desiderat cervus*. . . 'As the dear longs [for flowing waters]' (Ps 42) or some verses in the local language with the same meaning. Some *fervorini* are given, and then Communion follows, after which each is given some memento. Finally, one of the Missionaries exhorts the children to persevere, and he then turns to the parents and urges them to care for the children and to edify them by their good conduct. This function always succeeds in producing abundant conversions among the adults, as they are moved by the devotion and recollection of the children who are taking part.

On the following days, after the midday meal (if this is convenient), and if possible on a Sunday, there is a conference for each confraternity, to reawaken in them the spirit of piety, and to remind the members of the purpose of their institution, and of their duties, because faithfully fulfilling them is linked to spiritual graces granted by the Supreme Pontiffs, and merit in the sight of God.

CHAPTER XII

THE INSTRUCTION ON THE SACRAMENTS AND THE GREAT SERMON OR MEDITATION

At an hour indicated by the schedule, (while the people are gathering the Rosary may be said) the general function opens with the singing of some penitential verses, towards the end of which the Missionary entrusted with the instruction on the sacraments mounts the platform. This work is very important, since the grace of the sacraments is linked to the dispositions of the Christian who receives them, and grace is greater to the extent that those dispositions render the person worthy. Such a duty, therefore, belongs especially to a man with a good knowledge of moral theology and who understands the human heart through long experience. His sermon must follow safe doctrine, but it should be expressed in a very simple manner, adapted to the capacity of the uneducated, without annoying the educated. A fitting model is *The Christian Instructed* of Fr. Segneri. "To the people one must speak in the language of the people. Whatever is necessary for all should be spoken about as people ordinarily speak. Unaffected speech is dear to the simple and sweet to the learned. A teacher should speak words which will profit all."[455]

The evil of the times demands, in first place, that without making a show of apologetics, the preacher show how this institution, besides being divine, is also most wise, both because it responds to the needs of the human heart and because with wonderful effectiveness it improves the individual and thus benefits society. He should also propose a practical method for examining [one's conscience] and go over the principal commandments. He should make them understand what constitutes sorrow [for sin], its various

455 St. Peter Chrysologus, sermon 43. Original text is in Latin.

kinds, the characteristics required for justification, and the means for arousing such sorrow. It is also appropriate that he insist on the duty of repairing that evil that has been done by restoring honor as well as material goods, and by repairing scandals. He should also speak at length of how a sinner who genuinely wants to be converted must have a firm purpose of amendment and be steadfast in avoiding occasions of sin.

Another essential feature is to use one's energy, effort, and effective speech to convince those who are ashamed to manifest their sins [in confession]. Everyone who gives Missions knows from experience that in every town, even the better ones, how many sacrilegious confessions are made because of shame. He is to add instructions on the Eucharist to these instructions in preparation for receiving [Communion]. Let simplicity and sweetness be companions to strength and richness: "My spirit is sweeter than honey" (Sir 24:27). "Whatever is couched in grace and delight makes a firmer impression upon the minds," said St. Anthony the abbot.

Some harmless joke may also sometimes be allowed to counter prejudices or objections, provided it be done with moderation. After instruction, the same Missionary makes whatever announcements are to be made.

Upon this instruction, after the singing of some invocations of the Litany as, *Padre celeste Iddio abbiate a noi pietà* 'God, heavenly Father, have mercy on us,' the Sign of the Cross and the Hail Mary, the sermon called great (*di massima*) follows immediately. In meditating on the eternal truths, this sermon aims at leading the heart to penitence for the sins committed. The preacher ascends the platform with serious demeanor, preceded by the crucifix carried by a Brother vested in habit and accompanied by two torches. This ceremony (which cannot be carried out in every place) serves to awaken the attention and reverence due to the divine word in the audience.

The preacher kisses the feet of the crucifix, greets the people as usual, and recites, as did St. Leonard, those verses containing reminders of the Last Things. He invites his listeners to repeat them so that once they learn them, they can be admonitions to help reject temptations.[456]

The subject matter for the sermons is ordinarily taken from the meditations of the exercises of St. Ignatius, adapting them to the needs of the audience. To the discourses on the salvation of the soul or on human destiny, and on sin in general, let him add a serious sermon on the wickedness of blasphemy, and another on the sin of dishonesty, since these are committed more frequently. Other sermons on the Last Things follow. Sermons of this kind are to be delivered with dignity, although without too much severity, and with animation. "Let him put on those affections of the soul, which he wishes to imprint upon the souls of his hearers; for he does not move others who has not before moved and inflamed himself. Thus, someone of old said once: 'If you wish me to weep, you yourself must weep first.'"[457]

He must always close by allowing at least a ray of hope of divine pardon shine into the eyes of the sinner. To accomplish this, at the final sermon on the last things, after the Missionary has awakened in the mind of his hearers a lively awareness of the wrath of God that their sins have merited, he opens their hearts by inviting the Priests (according to circumstances and place) to bring in the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or he shall make it appear suddenly using a device with candles, accompanied by the sound of the organ and the ringing of bells as on a feast day.

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456 The footnote here quotes some short verses, apparently attributed to St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio, which are found in the *Laudi spirituali,* the collection of hymns and verses compiled by St. Gaspar. At one time they were part of C.PP.S. *Manual of Prayers*. Here is an English translation: *Life is short, and death is sure; the hour of death remains obscure. A soul you have and only one; if that be lost, all hope is gone. Waste not your time while time shall last, for after death 'tis ever past. The all-seeing God your judge will be, and heaven or hell your destiny. All earthly things will pass away; eternity shall ever stay.*
457 St. Francis Borgia, *De ratione concionandi*.

With Catholic people this function always has wonderful effects and is an occasion of many conversions. Nevertheless, it should not be theatrical or an obstacle to the grandeur of religion. The preacher then asks that our Lady intervene and obtain mercy for him and the people. He promises in her presence, and in the name of everyone, that from now on they will avoid sin and all the works of the devil that lead them away from God. Some choose a moment like this to have the listeners repeat the promises of baptism.

The image of the Blessed Virgin is then placed on a suitable throne on the platform, and the faithful are invited to burn candles in front of it as a sign of veneration and love for her. If some gifts are brought, these remain before the holy image of Mary, to whom they were offered as a remembrance of graces received. If the Missionaries brought their own image, those gifts are placed as ornaments on the altar of the Holy Virgin in the church where the Mission took place.

The sermon on mercy must also be given and this is also very beneficial. The sermon on peace or the love of enemies is given next. In the past, the Priests of the place would ascend the platform, and after the preacher had embraced them all, the first in rank would, in the name of all his Colleagues, ask pardon of the people for having offended anyone or for not fulfilling their duties as they should have. Many tears would be seen at that point, and one would hear the entire audience repeat this, asking pardon for the feeble response to their zealous efforts. At the end of the sermon, the preacher announces that at the first or second hours of the night, the great bell will ring, and this will be the sign that family members should ask pardon of one another: children subject to their parents or masters (*padroni*), wives to their husbands, and so on. Having forgotten the past, they reestablish the bonds of blood and fraternal charity in their relationships to live in steady and peaceful harmony. Whoever was harboring animosity toward another would be encouraged to be reconciled. Some pious and qualified persons who are available

to be mediators are announced, so that all rancor and bitter quarrels can be brought to a peaceful close.[458]

Another sermon that should be given is on the passion of Our Lord. When the Mission does not last more than twelve days, the duty to love one's enemies can be added as a topic, as noted above. Where it is customary, and the circumstances do not prohibit this, one can then present the image of the dead Jesus, which is carried to the sepulcher, as noted in chapter four. For this sermon one can also substitute the function of the seven sheddings of the precious Blood with the solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. In that case, the theme of making peace with one's enemies is combined with that of mercy. The final sermon is always on paradise, the reward for whoever has truly returned to God and perseveres in living a life that is in conformity with the Gospel. The function after lunch always concludes (as mentioned elsewhere) with the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, singing the *Tantum ergo* and concluding with *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*.

458 This is probably a reference to what St. Gaspar called the *peacemakers* or *pacieri* who would be appointed to aid in settling disputes and bringing about reconciliation.

CHAPTER XIII

THE *SVEGLIARINO* AND THE EVENING ORATORY

If there are no difficulties, at about the hour of the Angelus or a little afterward, after the afternoon functions have concluded, a Missionary with staff in hand, aided by some of the Brothers in habit, prostrates himself before the altar. He recites the *Venite adoremus*, as is practiced in the evening Oratory in our houses, and then a Hail Mary to Holy Mary and an Our Father to Saint Francis Xavier. He then rises and exits the church, preceded by the Crucifix with two or more torches or lamps, and sings, with the help of the Brothers, some verses on penance during the first days of the Mission, and on the following days some invocation to Mary. When he arrives in the piazza or a central place that has been designated, he sits down in a chair and for a few minutes delivers some words of warm encouragement, in order that all can take part in the holy Mission and profit for the salvation of their souls. He emphasizes one or the other of the eternal truths. When this brief discourse is finished, he returns by another route in the same manner, inviting the people who had not been able to take part in the functions of the afternoon.

If the city is large, two Missionaries can go out to different places, changing places each evening for the preaching. Women are to be advised that they are forbidden to participate in this pious exercise on the streets, and to enter the church at that time.

This practice was used a great deal by the holy missionaries, as St. Alphonsus Liguori attests, and produced the best fruits. People who did not know about the holy Mission or those who had resolved not to participate because they were enslaved by their passions were shaken by these words which they could not avoid hearing, and they were stirred to do penance. One reads of this in the life of St.

Francesco di Girolamo,[459] who used the same method and won great conversions of recalcitrant sinners.

After they enter the church, the Missionary reviews the sermon preached earlier for about twenty minutes, with those additions and exhortations that he judges to be appropriate. He concludes with a fervent appeal to his listeners not to refuse the grace that the Lord offers them. Then they recite a sincere act of contrition and the Missionary blesses them with the crucifix. As he dismisses the congregation, he begins the Rosary, recommending that they continue reciting it as they go on their way.

Meanwhile, all the Missionaries are at their assigned places hearing confessions of the men. Many of them choose that time so that they are not observed. One should see to it that the church and the adjacent Sacristies or rooms where confessions will be heard are illuminated, and some Priest of the town or some pious sacristan should be there to watch so that evil persons do not use the occasion for some disruption.

Especially during the winter, when the afternoon function finishes after nightfall, the evening Oratory is omitted. This is done even if the penitential procession took place, as noted in chapter four. In this holy exercise of the evening Oratory Saint Leonard would sometimes invite those present to kiss the ground again and again in compensation to the Lord whom they offend with their blasphemies, and at other times to give themselves some strokes of the discipline, while reciting the *Miserere* or the *De profundis* in satisfaction for the indecencies which offend the divine majesty in persons, who are made in God's image. On one or two evenings he would also have a bell sounded to invite everyone to pray for hardened sinners who refuse to be converted. All of this, however, is left to the prudent judgment of the Missionaries.

On one of the last evenings, the bell is rung as a signal inviting people to pray for the souls in purgatory.

459 St. Francesco di Girolamo (1642-1716) was a zealous Jesuit preacher in the Kingdom of Naples. He was canonized in 1839.

CHAPTER XIV

CONFESSIONS

Since leading sinners back to be reconciled with God is the principal work of the holy missions, all the Missionaries, and primarily the Director, must provide for all to have a convenient opportunity to approach the tribunal of penance. To meet this need with appropriate arrangements, the hours for this ministry should be announced, with hours established so that the first hours of the morning are occupied with the confessions of the men, for as long as this is requested. The rest of the time is for the women. The hours after the siesta are devoted to women's confessions until the evening Angelus. At that time the Confessors are to attend to the care of the men, as in the morning. It would be good to note the hours devoted to this ministry at the bottom of the schedule. The Director, or whoever gives the conferences to the Clergy, should also take care to ask all the Priests and Religious of the place who are approved for confessions to lend themselves with all zeal to this holy work of charity. Where there are not enough clergy available, the Director will ask the ecclesiastical Superior of the town that additional zealous Confessors of the surrounding areas be called in. Persons of the best reputation who are capable of this ministry are to be chosen, since during the Missions persons most in need of spiritual help present themselves to Confessors who are not known to them.

Often among these are those who have incurred a censure in the Church or who have contracted canonical impediments or are bound by serious obligations. It is necessary that they be able to fulfill their obligations quickly, because if their fervor flags, the devil could win them over again. There are also difficult cases in the

matter of justice which must be resolved quickly. It is thus necessary that the Confessors know how to apply the necessary prudence to such cases, in the light of the teaching of the moral theologians, so that the penitent finds the best way of freeing himself from the bonds of proximate occasions [of sin], or from other obligations of conscience, safeguarding the dignity and good reputation of the penitent, and without neglecting the first and most necessary of all matters, the salvation of the soul.

All the Confessors are to go to the Director of the Mission or to some older Missionaries in doubtful matters and difficulties for the appropriate advice. They should not forget to bring along a text by some distinguished moral theologian and the list of faculties that have been granted to them.

All should endure patiently this long and uncomfortable labor and the ignorance of the penitents, recalling the great reward that they will have. They are to hear, with unwavering tranquility, their confessions and their doubts, questioning them and admonishing them with the charity and the spirit of Jesus Christ. Confessors should be very careful not to assume obligations, directing penitents to some pious Ecclesiastic of the place. This is especially true when it is a matter of making restitution, as has been noted elsewhere.
They should also avoid making inquiries about the conduct of Ecclesiastics or civil Authorities, or persons of high standing. Nor should they seek to know the interests or opinions of the penitents or of others; they should avoid anything that does not pertain to their holy responsibilities. They must also avoid letting their disdain for a town be known, nor should they discuss, even from afar, the ignorance, the vulgarity, and the defects that are prevalent there, nor anything that is heard in confession. Even less should they complain, nor reveal that they know the criticisms that are made of their office, or perhaps even the insults hurled against the holy ministry. If they are treated rudely, which frequently happens, let it be a source of consolation for them.

When they are interviewed by Prelates, let them be very cautious in making known any moral faults that they are aware of, especially those of the Clergy, so that this may not be held against the Missions. A Confessor should not offer gifts of books or other items to the penitents, because this is a cause of trouble and regrettable preferences. Rosaries, chaplets, and other articles of devotion can be given to those who render some service, to the young, and to those who cannot easily provide these for themselves, and to similar cases. Least of all is he to give remembrances or written mementoes or commit himself with promises of spiritual correspondence. He is to be very careful not to make facile judgements about the ordinary Confessors, or vocations, or about those souls who seem called to extraordinary divine communications.

CHAPTER XV

GENERAL COMMUNION

It is very beneficial to promote general Communions as exercises of public worship which give greater glory to God and are an incentive for edification. To be successful, they must be carefully arranged. In more populous places, three general Communions are held: the first for the youth, then for the women, and finally for the men. The general Communion for the youth has been discussed previously.

On the day of the general Communion, the altar is prepared as for a feast day. To avoid confusion, and if the environment of the church permits, the benches should be arranged in two parallel lines from the main altar to the back of the church, with enough free space in the middle so that the one distributing Communion and his assistants can pass through. Where there is a large population, once the Bishop or Prelate has begun, two or more Priests join in administering Holy Communion to the faithful. The women have been advised to dress modestly with head covered by a veil. The preferred section is for those who belong to the Confraternities, according to the order of precedence they have established. The older women then follow, and the younger will willingly relinquish their seats to them.

The men who belong to the Confraternities dress in their respective garb and approach in the order in which they customarily participate in processions. The hour for the Communion, which is to be set at a time convenient for most of the people, is announced by the festive ringing of bells, and the holy Mass is accompanied by organ and by sacred hymns that have the Blessed Sacrament as a theme.

At the offertory, a Missionary ascends the platform, and with enthusiastic words inflames the hearts to respond with faith,

devotion, and the charity appropriate to the holy Mystery that the faithful receive. As the moment for Communion approaches, one of the Priests chants the *Confiteor*, and during the administration of the Blessed Sacrament to the devout faithful, sacred hymns continue to be sung and the organ plays appropriate melodies.

The previous day, the Missionaries will have already counseled good order, quiet, recollection, and that no one should be in a hurry and be an obstacle to the overall piety. For this purpose, one or two more respected Priests of the place or an older Missionary should supervise. The confessors have already been advised that during those days they should give preference to hearing the confessions of those who are going to be making the general Communion. So that the Missionaries can help with confessions, on those mornings the catechetical instruction is omitted when there is no special reason to hold it. It is a beneficial practice on these occasions to give those who come to the holy Mass some devotional image with a prayer or the maxims of the Christian life, or mementoes of the holy Mission, with the dates of the Mission and the Institute that preached it, but without the names of individuals.

If a *fervorino* of thanksgiving is given, it should last only a few minutes, and should finish with the benediction with the Blessed Sacrament or of the Crucifix, or the solemn chanting of the *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes 'Praise the Lord all you nations'* (Ps 117), or the recitation of the seven Offerings of the Precious Blood. The children who make their first Communion are given the image of the Crucifix to kiss.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SERMON OF REMINDERS, THE FINAL BLESSING, AND THE ERECTION OF THE CROSS

After the noon meal of the last day, which should preferably be a feast day, the holy Mission is closed with a discourse on perseverance in the resolutions made to abandon sin and to lead a Christian life. The preacher is to praise the piety shown by the faithful, and if some have resisted, he shall deplore the misfortune by recommending them to the prayers of the virtuous. Then he gives them three principles to remember to help them preserve the fruit of the divine word, choosing those that are most appropriate for the needs of the people. Let these be stated in a few words easily intelligible to all. Once again, he counsels the faithful to care for the salvation of their souls as the one thing that is necessary. He puts on the stole and blesses the crosses, rosaries, images of the crucifix, and medals, and attaches the indulgences to them. This can also be done before the sermon.

Finally, on behalf of himself and of his companions, he takes leave of the people with some affectionate words, commending the people to God's blessings, which he invokes over them, and especially over the Prelate, the Clergy, the young people, and all who have assisted in making the Mission a success. Then he imparts the blessing with the image of the Crucifix, which carries with it a papal plenary indulgence, for all those present who have received the Holy Sacraments.[460] The function closes with a solemn *Te Deum* and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. If the circumstances permit and it is the wish of the people, there can be a procession with a statue of the Blessed Virgin or of the Blessed Sacrament, carried out with the greatest possible festivity.

460 Reference is made to a rescript of Pius VII.

When the function is finished, a Cross in memory of the holy Mission is blessed by the Director, who attaches to it the indulgence for all who participate in this act of devotion. This Cross is to be erected at some crossroad or elevated area outside the city or village. The Director or another Missionary, preceded by the customary Brothers singing a hymn to the Cross, accompanies it to the place chosen.

Once a fire has been started there, the playing cards, bad books, and obscene pictures are burned, and the pieces of the forbidden weapons and the ashes are thrown into the open hole, and the Cross is placed on top of them. As this is being done, the Missionary, with brief but forceful words, reminds them that the Cross is the only hope of the faithful. On the day of universal judgment, it will be a sign of eternal happiness to the good, and a witness and evidence for eternal condemnation for the ungrateful. He then kisses the Cross and returns to the church. If there is to be no solemn Communion of the sick the following day, the Missionaries, following the example of our Venerable Founder, leave as soon as possible, avoiding applause and without people accompanying them or other demonstrations of honor.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PIOUS WORKS CUSTOMARILY ESTABLISHED BY THE MISSIONARIES ON THE OCCASION OF THE MISSION

According to the mind of our Founder, the Congregation is obliged to promote the following pious institutions as much as possible.

1. The Evening Oratory for men assisted by the Brothers of the Association of St. Francis Xavier. This is an excellent institution for the preservation of the fruits of the holy missions, for it offers the country folk and the laborers in the early evening hours a diversion from saloons, theaters, immoral conversations, and other snares of the devil for the ruin of souls.

2. Above all, the Pious Union of the Precious Blood with its related Association is erected. The Pious Union honors the august Mystery of the price of our salvation with special devotion. For this reason, the Chaplet of the Precious Blood is recited daily at the holy Mass, the month of June, dedicated to the Precious Blood by Pius VII, is celebrated, and the most solemn feast of the Precious Blood is observed on the first Sunday of July, which Pius IX ordered to be extended to the entire Church. If desired, this Union could also be supported by the Association of Saint Francis Xavier mentioned above.

3. The union of the Ladies of charity for the spiritual and corporal comfort of the sick poor and of abandoned children.

4. The society of the daughters of Mary to preserve girls from the dangers of the world, and to help them grow in a virtuous life, reception of the Holy Sacraments, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

5. The Association of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga for boys, for the preservation of honest habits, maintaining the fear of God in their hearts, and directing them to be true Christians, faithful to God and to the Catholic church.

6. The Confraternity of farm workers (*contadini*), who gather on feast days to listen to a sermon related to their spiritual needs. They praise God with prayer, and they bind themselves by a holy covenant to preserve in their families the spirit of religion, which is the spirit of justice, of order, of rectitude, and thus greatly beneficial for the private and public good.

All the above-mentioned societies have their respective rules. If it is impossible to establish all these societies, then, on the advice of the Clergy and the good citizens, those which meet the needs of the people and have the promise of taking root should be chosen. Having made the choice with the consent of the ecclesiastical authorities, some lay people and a few fervent Priests are invited to the undertaking in a motivational conference. The various classes of people are urged to join these associations through preaching. When establishing these, the Director of the Mission needs to exercise great prudence to avoid jealousies or conflicts, which so easily arise, especially in small towns.

The choice of the one who is to preside at these associations should be carefully considered and should be made in accordance with the wish of the ecclesiastical Superior, without whose assistance he would not be able to guide the sodality. Naturally he must keep in mind that in everything the approval of the Most Reverend Ordinary is necessary.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION

When the Mission is over, the Missionaries return to their houses or to some holy ministry, taking at least two days of rest. The trip must be made as described for the trip to the Mission. They should avoid the company of lay persons as much as possible and should be occupied with some hours of meditation in silence.

The Director of the Mission will give an account to the Superior regarding the outcome of the Mission and will give a written account of the Mission to the Historian of the Congregation or of the Province. He should make note of the place, the number of inhabitants, their desire for the word of God, the reception that was given to the holy Ministers, the frequency of sermons, the special conferences given to monasteries and to other categories of persons, the approximate number of those taking Communion, and the pious institutions erected or revived. He records the names of the Missionaries and of the Brother-in-service, the days taken up by the holy undertaking, and whatever is worthy of remembering.

It is rare that in a large Mission, and sometimes also in smaller ones, that there is not some special case or that there are not conversions of great sinners that edify the people, or the reconciliation of notorious enemies, or other special graces sometimes given to the Missionaries through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, or of Saint Francis Xavier. The holy water blessed with the Relic of this Saint according to our Ritual often cures the sick or alleviates their pains. It is thus a good thing to have some of [this water] ready, or to bless it at the final sermon, advising people of this in advance. This is a means which God sometimes uses, through the intercession of the Saint, to help the sick or those afflicted by spiritual troubles. Let the

Director of the Mission see to it that this faculty [to bless the holy water] be granted to some good Priest. This is attached to the faculty to enroll the faithful in the Pious Union of the Precious Blood, to bless red scapulars and cinctures, and to give those enrolled in the Pious Union the pontifical blessing at the moment of death.

Finally, the Missionaries should not neglect giving ample thanks to the Lord who has given them the honor of being his ambassadors, and ministers of the highest of all the graces, and for giving them in this work a means of the highest merit in his divine presence.

If they have made some mistake, they should propose to avoid this in the future, so that they can always make themselves more suitable instruments of his great works. Charity will also oblige them to pray that the fruit of their labors will persevere, and that in paradise they will be seen surrounded by a great number of souls, snatched from the hands of the enemy and from the extreme danger of ruin, and presented by their works to bless and glorify in eternity the Blood of Jesus Christ, the noble price of our salvation, as described in the book of Revelation: *Worthy are you, O divine Lamb, slain out of love for us, of all praise and glory,* because *you have redeemed us, Lord in your blood . . . and made us for our God a kingdom*.[461]

PRAISE TO GOD AND TO THE LAMB.

461 "Cf. Rev. 5:9-10. The first quotation is in Italian, and, while faithful to the sense of the passage in Revelation, is a kind of paraphrase. The second quotation is in Latin, from the Vulgate.