

CONGREGATION OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY
OPERA DON GUANELLA

PASTORAL PLAN
2007-2008



*Rekindle the gift of your priestly
and religious vocation*

GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

Notes

- ¹ XVIII General Chapter, To rekindle the gift that is with in us, Presentation of the Sup General
- ² XVIII General Chapter, To rekindle the gift that is with in us, Presentation of the Sup General
- ³ Benedict XVI, Meeting with the priests of the Diocese of Albano, 31 August 2006,
- ⁴ Final Document, XVIII Gen. Cha. Introduction to Charism and Formation, Youth ministry and Vocation promotion
- ⁵ Benedict XVI, To the superiors of Institutes of Consecrated life, 22 May 2006
- ⁶ Benedict XVI, To the superiors of Institutes of Consecrated life, 22 May 2006
- ⁷ Final Document, XVIII Gen. Cha.
- ⁸ Benedict XVI, Address to the Canadian bishops, 11 May 2006
- ⁹ Constitutions, no.38
- ¹⁰ Constitutions, no.63
- ¹¹ Benedict XVI, To the superiors of Institutes of Consecrated life, 22 May 2006
- ¹² Benedict XVI, Meeting with the clergy in the Cathedral of Warsaw, 25 May 2006
- ¹³ Benedict XVI, Chrism Mass, 13 April 2006
- ¹⁴ Benedict XVI, Meeting with the clergy in the Cathedral of Warsaw, 25 May 2006
- ¹⁵ Benedict XVI, To the Italian Episcopal Conference, 18 May 2006
- ¹⁶ Benedict XVI, Chrism Mass, 13 April 2006
- ¹⁷ Benedict XVI, Chrism Mass, 13 April 2006
- ¹⁸ Benedict XVI, Meeting with the clergy in the Cathedral of Warsaw, 25 May 2006
- ¹⁹ Benedict XVI, Mass of the Lord's Supper, 13 April 2006
- ²⁰ Benedict XVI, Mass of the Lord's Supper, 13 April 2006
- ²¹ Letter of L. Guanella to father Samuele Curti, Como, 17 November 1907
- ²² "Dear father Paolino, did your anger pass away? Write to me. How many students are there? How many workers in the school? How many constructions? How much money? How much debts? How much sanctity? How much suffering? What situation in bishop's house?... "Letter of L.Guanella to father Paolo Panzeri, Milan, 25 January 1910, Como.
- ²³ Constitutions, no.34
- ²⁴ Benedict XVI, , Meeting with the priests of the Diocese of Albano, 31 August 2006
- ²⁵ Benedict XVI, Meeting with the clergy in the Cathedral of Warsaw, 25 May 2006
- ²⁶ Constitutions, no.30
- ²⁷ Benedict XVI, Chrism Mass, 13 April 2006
- ²⁸ Constitutions, no.32
- ²⁹ Benedict XVI, Holy Mass for the ordination, 7 May 2006
- ³⁰ Antonio Sorrentino, L'arte di presiedere, Ed. San Paolo 1997, pp 6-7
- ³¹ Benedict XVI, Meeting with the priests of the Diocese of Albano, 31 August 2006
- ³² Gianfranco Ravasi, Breviario laico, Mondadori 2006, p. 124
- ³³ Constitutions, no.3
- ³⁴ Constitutions, no.61
- ³⁵ Benedict XVI, Address to the Canadian bishops, 11 May 2006
- ³⁶ Constitutions, n. 86
- ³⁷ Benedict XVI, Interview in preparation of journey to Bavaria, 5 August 2006
- ³⁸ Benedict XVI, To the bishops of Lithuania, 23 June 2006
- ³⁹ Constitutions, n. 86
- ⁴⁰ Benedict XVI, Meeting with the priests of the Diocese of Albano, 31 August 2006
- ⁴¹ Benedict XVI, Meeting with the priests of the Diocese of Albano, 31 August 2006
- ⁴² Benedict XVI, Meeting with the priests of the Diocese of Albano, 31 August 2006
- ⁴³ Saggi storici, vol. 13 pp 206-207
- ⁴⁴ Saggi storici, vol. 13 pag. 206
- ⁴⁵ Speech of the Holy Father, City of Arts and Science, Valencia, 8 July 2006

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PASTORAL PLAN 2007-2008

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GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

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III Part

Programmes and Obligations of the Congregation

1. Following the guidelines of the XVIII General Chapter, Proposal no. 18, which in its turn refers to the Proposal no. 58 of the 17 GC

1.1. The Provincial & Delegation Councils are to accompany their local communities, so that every year:

- There should be a **verification of the faithfulness to their vocation**, and accepting the call that comes from the Motion no. 20 of XVIII General Chapter, “become genetrix of vocations, witnessing the service of faith and charity with joy, in a fraternal life and in the apostolic activities.

- Therefore, it requests, that in the annual Community programming, the guidelines of concrete action be expressed with clarity regarding vocation promotion”.

1.2. The Provincial & Delegation Councils, based on the guidelines contained in the present Pastoral plan, with the participation of the Zonal General Councilor, “draft an organic and unitary Guanellian Youth Ministry and Vocation Promotion in every Nation, Province or Delegation, with the responsible participation of the Guanellian Congregations and the laity”. Such draft has to be made in view of a more incisive and fundamental vocation promotion, in such a way that everyone should feel involved because many houses and confreres have forgotten the vocation promotion.

2. The General Council takes the responsibility, with in the next three years, to “start the coordination of Guanellian Youth Ministry at international level, with the scope of sharing the material, initiatives and programmes etc.”. Some of the means to carry out this coordination and the spreading of information and formation will be:

- **a new website** for the Youth Ministry and Vocation of the Congregation;

- **a column** in Guanella News, that updates and recalls, because communication and narration is a bounden duty. To make know, invite to “come and see” (Jn. 1:39) and then disclose to others that: “we have found the Messiah” (Jn. 1:41), is part of the very nature of the proclamation of the Good News.

Introduction

The evocative call, “to rekindle the gift of God that is within us”, that resounded very often during the celebration of the XVIII General Chapter, will become the leit-motiv, the guiding principle of our annual pastoral plans, with which all our communities, beginning from the Provincial and Delegation Councils, as to their competencies, and that of local councils, should space out their planning stages.

It is a call which we would like to rewrite it, retell and repeat it in its fullness in this first pastoral plan; We would like to make it ours the encouragement which St. Paul gave to Timothy, and place it as the title of our reflections: “Dear, I remind you to rekindle the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you”. (2 Tm. 1:6)

Rekindle, that is, make it active and efficacious, the gift that you have received. Rekindle, that is, be ready to proclaim the salvation brought by Jesus Christ, also at the cost of some suffering.

“Above all – as the Superior General writes in the presentation of the Final Document of the XVIII General Chapter - **at personal level, each one of us rekindle the gift**, and make emerge that which the Spirit asks us today or suggests to our heart”.

The call that emerged from the Chapter gathering is clear.

*“Every Confrere needs to feel the urgency to place at the basics of the personal and community renewal, the evangelical conversion, deepening the knowledge about the Charismatic motivations for which we are together and draw abundantly from the fountain of our Spirituality, through the means of Christian and religious tradition ...”*¹

The ways to keep alive and active the gift received from the Lord are the Word of God, the Constitutions and the Regulations and the operative guidelines that come from the XVIII General Chapter. They place us in that path of sanctity began with our Founder and enriched by many of our confreres during the unfolding of the Guanellian history.

The Superior General – always in the Introduction to the Chapter Document - writes: “It seems to me to be able to affirm that the indications directed to our Local Communities were the most beautiful intuition of the Chapter. We did not want to produce a new document on the Guanellian fraternal life to make evident the beauty of our Charism which has in the bond of charity and in the family Spirit the essential points for our being together and for our mission. But we found out that many shortcomings in living our consecrated life and work and spreading the charity have their origin in our weak community life.

From this conviction is born the urgent call of the Chapter to overcome the individualistic-private form of our spirituality and assume major responsibility in sustaining the Confreres, in encouraging the exchange of material and spiritual goods and in the service of animation in the educational-pastoral Community.

We have understood to be in need of not many organizational and technical changes (even though necessary) but of a new mentality and spirituality in living our relationship with the Confreres, with the lay collaborators, with the world and with the beneficiaries of our mission”.²

Pope Benedict with his encyclical letter on Charity would add and counsel us thus: You need that while you place yourselves totally in the service of the poor, you need to clarify to yourselves (and when it is possible also to those whom you serve) why you do it, or better for whom you do it. We are in need of a daily return to the origins, to the “Bread and the Lord”, but above all to the Bread of the Lord, given in abundance not only to the poor but also to ourselves.

Each of us should become a “champion of charity”, as our Founder. One may become so, if he knows to take seriously the things of God and the neighbor; if he knows to work and pray, both bound together inseparably; if he knows to read and interpret life in its eternal nature.

As the Chapter made direct reference to our local communities, considering them to be capable of renewal and active in charity

family was the first laboratory of faith for father Guanella. It was the place where his vocation was born and from where religious and priestly vocation will blossom if we guide the families that we know, with whom we do some formation courses, to speak to their children about the call of the Lord. This has to be done together with us religious especially in prayer!

The prayer is fundamental. We need to return to ask for vocations by kneeling in prayer because the religious, the priest are a gift, which God gives to the people who ask him. It is not to make priests as “pastoral workers” but “alter Christus”.

The family is an artwork, a masterpiece. Like every masterpiece, we have to do everything so that it is not wasted and destroyed.

The Holy Father when he was in Valencia last summer expressed his feelings of great joy in participating in the meeting of families and pointed out the important characteristic, that is of a divine gift, of a masterpiece wanted by God - “God’s gift of the family”.⁴⁵

“The family is a necessary good for peoples, an indispensable foundation for society and a great and lifelong treasure for couples – said Pope Benedict – remarking that the family consists not only of parents and children but also of grand parents and ancestors. The family thus, presents it self as a community of generations and guaranty of an inheritance of tradition”.

As Pope Benedict does not miss any occasion to confirm the “central role that the family founded on marriage has for the Church and society” so also we, the Guanellian religious and priests place at the center of our pastoral care and our prayer the family, which the Evil one tries to ruin and destroy by all means. Destroying the family, small domestic church means destroying the Church. It is essential and vital for the Church to care for, see the growth and protect the Christian families.

The family was the dream of God, the dream of God. A dream shattered by sin.

The Devil, the invidious and the Evil one by making the heart of men sick had made him incapable of loving.

Therefore, let us become collaborators of God so that he could redo this dream shattered by the Evil one!

2.8. Collaborate also with the Guanellian laity for the vocations.

“The ecclesiology of Communion, the sensibility of the laity to assume their own responsibility and the culture of participation and sharing, offer us the possibility and impose the necessity: a) to strengthen our specific identity in order to understand appreciate and form the different vocations and ministries; b) to form ourselves for the collaboration and to the capacity of being educators and animators of various apostolic forces”. (18 GC, *Final Summary of the Third Commission*). The Chapter proposes, thus, in the proposal no.21, “the collaboration of the **Cooperators** and the **GLM** be inserted in programming the Vocation promotion of Provinces, Vice-Province and Delegations, by promoting also the knowledge and the development of Guanellian lay vocation”.⁴³

2.9. Take care of the families to receive the vocations as gift

This is what the XVIII General Chapter affirms, and points out: The Guanellian Youth Movement and the Family Ministry are to be held as special itineraries in the animation of vocation promotion.” (Proposal 18, c).

Our Founder held his family as important for his life of faith, the origin, the growth and the perseverance of his vocation in priesthood. In the family, “the teachings entered in the life of little Louis through the gentle humility of the mother and the faith and justice of the father”. It is in the family that everyone learns to give and receive love and forms himself as free and responsible person. His family, a bundle of affection, in faith and in the life lived contributed to make him first as child-gift, then as adolescent gift and finally a young priest, man of gift for others. In fact, little Louis educated his heart and his dreams seeing “ his mother merciful towards the towards the poor, who never knocked at the door of her house and went with out being satisfied fully; and to teach her children the duty of being merciful, often she gave them the alms so that they do it with their hands”.⁴⁴ Those hands, his (= of little Louis) and of his sister Catherine that “mixed mud and water to prepare the soup for the poor” prepared the future of Louis. The

and pastoral ministry, so also we turn to every community of our Congregation so that it is responsible and helps each confrere who is part of it to rekindle the priestly and religious gift that he received from God.

It will be a path of renewal and re-qualification that will have good result on condition that the community becomes a strong point of support and reference, a laboratory of ideas, capable also to support and comfort the confreres in difficulty and in times of hardship.

Following the last Chapter, **the local community, therefore, will be the object of our care and privileged subject of the pastoral plans during our mandate.**

It is a community called above all to make the confreres to speak with their life and give voice to their witness. It is a plan, with which the General Council, intends to embrace the global programme of the Chapter:

- to resume the themes of the Chapter assembly;
- so that the application and the realization of the proposals and motions are guaranteed, avoiding that they remain dead words as it happens with many well announced programmes;
- and involve each single community so that it promotes a personalized itineraries with the accompaniment of the Provincial Council.

The programme schedule is marked by the following stages:

- 2007-2008: The community and the priestly and religious vocation
- 2008-2009: The community and the religious consecration
(on the occasion of the Centenary of the Congregation)
- 2009-2010: The community and the Guanellian prayer
- 2010-2011: The community and the Guanellian family:
SC - DSMP - CoopG-GLM
- 2011-2012: The community and the Guanellian apostolic spirituality
and the mission of charity.

THE CONTENTS & METHOD to develop the Pastoral Plan:

- The Document contains some basic principles from which are born some guidelines, which every Provincial Council will adopt to help the communities to prepare their own programmes and operational plans.
- they could also serve as a deposit of ideas to facilitate the individual and communitarian commitment to practice what is required.
- it could be an initial text for the journey together of the many minds and hearts...

SOURCES OF THE PASTORAL PLAN:

- **The Word of God, the teachings of Pope Benedict XVI**, Universal Pastor, who with out any rival, succeeds today to make the discernment of the difficult times that we are living.
- **The Founder**, fundamental for the charismatic source.
- **The operatives guidelines** that come from the **XVIII General Chapter**.

LAST DATE TO SUBMIT THE ANNUAL PASTORAL PLAN:

end of December. In this way every Province and Community has sufficient time to plan out its operative plan.

CREATION OF A COLUMN ON GUANELLA NEWS, as the place of collection and presentation of testimonies on what has happened in the communities with regard to the theme of the year, in order to promote the emulation but also with out any boasting show to all the good face every single community.

courage to make definitive decisions. Even though in some geographical area where our Congregation is present there is a shortage of vocations, we should not doubt that God continues to call boys, youth and adults to leave everything and follow the Lord. Notwithstanding “the secularized mindset” in which the youth live, “do not hesitate to propose explicitly to youth the Gospel ideal, the beauty of the *sequela Christi sine glossa* without compromises; help all who set out on the path of the priesthood and the consecrated life to respond generously to the Lord Jesus”.³⁸

2.2 One of the aspects that is not cared for today is the spiritual direction, the role of guidance and counseling, the discernment and advice. It is a pastoral service, which is no more in use because it is transferred to others. Instead, it is urgent and necessary that “each of us should work diligently to help boys and young men especially to discover God’s will for them and to follow it generously”.³⁹

2.3. Guide the youth to choose volunteer work. “It is vital not to leave young people to the mercy of discos but to have useful tasks for them to do in which they see they are necessary, (the tasks) which guide them on the way of a positive service of assistance inspired by Christ’s love for men and women, so that they themselves seek the sources from which to draw strength and commitment”.⁴⁰

2.4. Create and Support groups of prayer

“Another experience is offered by the prayer groups where, in their own youthful context, the young learn to listen to the Word of God, learn the Word of God and enter into contact with God”.⁴¹

2.5. To begin and coordinate regular prayer meetings of silent adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist, so that the faithful, but above all the youth, will find consolation and light.

2.6. Open liturgy schools for the youth. “It would also be useful to have liturgy schools that young people could attend which at first sight might perhaps seem rather inaccessible to them. The liturgy is important because it is the common form of the prayer”.⁴²

2.7. Create special itineraries of vocational discernment, not only for the youth, but return to propose them also to the pre-adolescents, boys and finally also to the adults.

tener. The words directed towards the youth, good children and the aged should not only have substance but also a clear preaching capacity. We should not satisfy ourselves with the usual good words, but the preaching should be understood... without any explanation.

OPERATIVE GUIDELINES TO RE-ORGANIZE THE YOUTH MINISTRY AND VOCATION PROMOTION

- Confirming what Pope Benedict has already said that “true pastoral care for vocations will draw strength from the lives of men and women who witness to passionate love for God and for their brethren, in faithfulness to Christ and the Church”.³⁵
- Conscious that the vocation promotion – as affirmed by our Constitutions that it is a “work of works”, we recognize our obligation to become magnets which attract hearts, as the Founder used to exhort”.³⁶
- As a result, the commitment is clear that every Guanellian religious priest has to assume the responsibility to rekindle the gift of his religious and priestly vocation.

Now we allow ourselves to give some guidelines for the animation of youth ministry and vocation promotion.

2.1. Awaken in the youth the courage to make definitive decisions and to risk making the leap towards the definitive

The youth today are afraid to commit themselves.

The Pope affirms: “Young people are very generous, but when they face the risk of a lifelong commitment, be it marriage or a priestly vocation, they are afraid. (The educators have to) Reawaken the courage to make definitive decisions: they are really the only ones that allow us to grow, to move ahead and to reach something great in life. They are the only decisions that do not destroy our freedom but offer to point us in the right direction. Risk making this leap, so to speak, towards the definitive and so embrace life fully”.³⁷

In the personal dialogue and in the spiritual direction with the youth and adolescents we should not be afraid to awaken the

I Part

Some Basic Principles

The commitment to rekindle the gift of one’s own vocation should not be lived in view of the shortage of vocations, but it has to answer first of all to one of your exigency, your need, your responsibility that you have before God and the gift that has to “burn the fingers”.

Before the crisis of the vocations, the feelings of being in few, the oldage and sickness, the great temptations is always that of reducing everything to practical solutions and ask ourselves: “What shall we do?”.

Instead, we have to ask ourselves: “How do we do? How are we?”.

How is my religious life?

How is my priestly life?

Am I happy to be fully so?

Today on the one hand the shortage of vocations for the Church and for our Congregation in the West and on the other hand the necessity to give strength and solidity to a promising growth of vocations in new areas of East where the Congregation is present in the recent decade present themselves as challenges that could be faced

and won on the condition that there are charming priests and religious, that is lovers of their vocation, in circulation.

There are too many priests and religious unhappy about themselves and disliking the priestly and religious life.

We need to stop, raise our head, find more great and profound motivation, which are then evangelical and simple as all of us know.

We need to free us from the incrustations of the process of secularization, which have suffocated the beauty of our priestly and religious vocation.

The more strong is the union with God, the more great is the charity that urges and we are more able to intervene the needs of the poor above all of those who are silent and mute.

Is there still hope for our Congregation?

Is there still hope, not withstanding our incoherencies and that of our communities?

To these questions and doubts, lost feelings and those which each confrere of every community could add, we leave the answer to the Holy Father Benedict XVI who meeting the priests of the diocese of Albano on 31 August 2006 said: "what is necessary for all of us is to recognize our own limitations, to humbly recognize that we have to leave most things to the Lord. Today... We fit into her with our small gift and do the best we can, especially those things that are always necessary: celebrating the sacraments, preaching the Word, giving signs of our charity and our love".³

We should not loose hope!

"Not withstanding the feeling of suffering caused by the horizon of an uncertain future in some parts of the world, the Chapter notices also signs of hope for the growth of vocations in the new areas where the Congregation has made its presence".⁴

The word of the Lord does not contradict itself but remains eternal above all in difficult times. With in our circle, even there are not many vocations in Europe, there is a growth of vocations in Africa and in India that encourages us to continue on this path, confident that the Lord will not delude and the hope will not fail.

scheme than the concreteness of the liturgical celebration".

"Father Giuseppe De Luca, (1898- 1962), lively figure of the Italian culture of the past Century tells that, "no one has the right to dress up the Word of God. The preaching should have a long gestation of prayer, thoughts and affection". He underlines two elements that apply to all. The first one is that we should not dress up the Word of God, reducing it to an ordinary reality, careless, plain and taken for granted. The second point is all the more important: to know and to witness the Sacred Word it is not sufficient to have a theological background alone (though necessary and irreplaceable). The long gestation of prayer, thoughts and affection are essential and we need to allow ourselves to be guided, first of all and above all by the Holy Spirit, in prayer".³²

1.3 When the catechesis is truly "special"?

Sometimes we forget that "we are sent to evangelize the poor"³³, "to announce the good news of salvation to the poor".³⁴

How do we proclaim the Good News to our poor? Do we care about it with intelligence and passion?

The Guanellian pastoral ministry and the catechesis was considered for long time as "special" only because the subjects of the proclamation were "different". It is instead "special" for the love, the intelligence and the creativity which has to be practiced by the pastor or the catechist, not only with regard to the Word to be proclaimed but also regarding the persons to whom it is announced.

Very often, we bring forward motivations, which then reveal to be weak, in order to justify our behavior not so "pastoral" with regard to our beneficiaries – good children, aged, youth and simple and poor people – whom we think that they do not merit a time to be dedicated for the accurate preparation for their catechesis. We should never "let down the homily", think or worst say words like: I found these four things to say at the last moment".

Even the small, simple messages appearing to be "easy" are to be prepared with a "long gestation".

The words have to be prepared in an intense inner hearing together with the capacity to read the receptive intelligence of the lis-

Of course, external things must also be associated with this fundamental condition:

a) We must learn to say the words properly. Naturally, to learn to say words correctly one must first understand the text with its drama, with its immediacy. It is the same for the Preface and for the Eucharistic Prayer. Therefore, things can only go better if the Eucharistic Prayer is said well and with the correct pauses for silence, if it is said with interiority but also with the art of speaking.

b) There must then be an adequate preparation of the Altar servers. Altar servers must know what to do; lectors must be truly experienced speakers. Then the choir, the singing, should be rehearsed: and let the altar be properly decorated.

All this, even if it is a matter of many practical things, is part of the *ars celebrandi*. To conclude, the fundamental element is the art of entering in communion with the Lord, we prepare with our whole of our life as priests".³¹

1.2.2. The homily also needs attention

With regard to the homily, it seems worth citing what the Italian bishops write in the document "Evangelization and Sacraments":

"The homily is a form of evangelization with in the celebration. It is not a moral preaching, an empty, unctuous exhortation and not even a scholarly exposition. A true homily is to be from the Sacred Scripture "as said by the Council (cfr. SC 52). The exposition has to be simple and relevant and the multiform richness of the mystery of Christ and the sacred rite performed has to enter the life of the assembly members. Naturally, the homily to be worthy of its task has to be prepared with care. The personal preparation begin with prayer may avail also of the suitable guides; but a communitarian preparation is also needed to give heed to the needs of the people in order to transform them into reflections and relevant exhortations. A preaching done with the seriousness of commitment and carried on methodically on the rich choice of biblical readings made available by the liturgical reform or the homily on the most important text of the celebration could, in few years, substitute eminently a certain form of catechesis of the past, perhaps, more tied to a theological

BEFORE WHATEVER ACTION...

"The service of authority demands a persevering presence, able to enliven and take initiative, to recall the *raison d'être* of consecrated life, to help the persons entrusted to you to correspond with ever-renewed fidelity to the call of the Spirit".⁵

This pastoral plan, prepared by the General Council, intends to help each confrere and communities to find the *raison d'être* not only of their religious consecration, which will be any way taken again and will be studied deeply in a better way next year(2008), the centenary of the Congregation, but above all of their priesthood.

"In fact, the secularized culture has penetrated the mind and heart of not a few consecrated persons (today)... As a result, in addition to an undoubted thrust of generosity capable of witness and of total giving, consecrated life today knows the temptation of mediocrity, of middle-class ways and of a consumerist mentality... Courageous choices must be made, both at the personal and communal levels, which give a new discipline to the life of consecrated persons and bring them to rediscover the all-encompassing dimension of the *sequela Christi*."⁶

The proposal no. 19 of the XVIII General Chapter exhorts thus: "**Every Confrere** -has to underline with major clarity the identity of the Guanellian religious, as foundation in which the vocation of priests or Brothers and their ministries and proper tasks are understood and lived".⁷

Therefore every, Guanellian priest **rekindle the gift of their own priestly and religious vocation** and "true pastoral care for vocations will draw strength from the lives of men and women who witness to passionate love for God and for their brethren, in faithfulness to Christ and the Church".⁸

This document does not want at all "to get stuck" in the moving sands of the "ideology", nor embrace any school of thought on the youth and vocation ministry - There are many experts in the field - but it wants only to call simply each confrere and every Guanellian community to start again with enthusiasm, with the

lovable look of Jesus who one day “caught” each one of us. Andrew of Betsaida, brother of Simon Peter, fascinated by the call of Jesus, after having remained with him and having learned all that was taught by Jesus, he did not keep the treasure within himself, but hurried up to reach his brother, to communicate the richness that he had received (Jn.1:41). In the same way you also together with your community find the again the freshness of that call, of those moments that were decisive in your life.

Our Constitutions illumine us in this way: “In the decisive moments of our life the Spirit of God led us to discover Jesus as the only necessary good, which truly fills the heart and gives meaning to our existence. Everything appeared inadequate to us in comparison with knowing and loving Christ; because of him we have left everything eager to live on, and die because of nothing other than his charity”.⁹

A call, like that of ours, will reveal itself always more true, the more it makes to feel the urgency of a mandate, a mission which then becomes the “Samaritan” way on the roads of suffering and of abandonment.

It is the same mission to which Jesus felt to be called and expressed so clearly by the Holy Spirit, in the words proclaimed at the synagogue of Nazareth: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen to bring good news to the poor” (Lk. 4:18).

The General Council, after these introductory words, calls the confreres and communities to review their own priestly and religious vocation and plan out the initiatives, the youth programmes and vocation proposals based on the following suggestions:

DO NOT KEEP IT WITHIN YOUR SELF THE TREASURE THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED AS GIFT, BUT AFTER HAVING REKINDLED, HURRY UP TO COMMUNICATE IT TO YOUR BROTHER THE RICHNESS THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED.

colloquy. In proclaiming the Word, he feels himself in conversation with God. He is a listener to the Word and a preacher of the Word, in the sense that he makes himself an instrument of the Lord and seeks to understand this Word of God, which he must then transmit to the people. He is in a conversation with God because the texts of Holy Mass are not theatrical scripts or anything like them, but prayers, thanks to which, together with the assembly, I speak to God. It is important, therefore, to enter into this conversation
The Second dimension: the *celebratio* is harmony, consonance between us and the liturgy.

The sacred Liturgy gives us the words; we must enter into these words, find a harmony with this reality that precedes us. Thus, to be well in tune, it is very important to understand this structure that developed over time and to enter with our *mens* into the *vox* of the Church. To the extent that we have assimilated this structure, comprehended this structure, assimilated the words of the Liturgy, we can enter into this inner consonance and thus not only speak to God as individuals, but enter into the “we” of the Church, which is praying. And we thus transform our “I” in this way, by entering into the “we” of the Church, enriching and enlarging this “I”, praying with the Church, with the words of the Church, truly being in conversation with God. Thus, our celebration truly becomes a celebration “with” the Church: our hearts are enlarged and we are not doing just anything but are “with” the Church, in conversation with God. Thus, the fundamental element of the true *ars celebrandi* is this consonance, this harmony between what we say with our lips and what we think with our heart.

In other words, the *ars celebrandi* is not intended as an invitation to some sort of theatre or show, but to an interiority that makes itself felt and becomes acceptable and evident to the people taking part. Only if they see that this is not an exterior or spectacular *ars* - we are not actors! - but the expression of the journey of our heart that attracts their hearts too, will the Liturgy become beautiful, will it become the communion with the Lord of all who are present.

world. Eating the bread of the Eucharist means to assimilate with joy the total gift that Jesus made of himself, but also we ourselves become broken bread for the hunger of many.

“Take and eat... this is my body...”. “My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. If you do not eat and do not drink my blood, you will not have life in you.” (Jn. 6:55;53)

Allow oneself to be taken by the other, offer one’s own body as bread and wine and enjoy the supreme benediction of seeing ourselves as through the eyes of the other... this is Eucharist!

1.2.1. Give attention to the art of celebration

The priests have to re-appropriate the art of presiding the eucharistic celebration, which does not want at all signify a return to the vericalistic understanding of the Church and of the liturgy or worst to a set of rubrics which occupies time.

“Presiding is above all to make feel the live presence of Christ, opening the heart to welcome the mystery celebrated and on the communication level, make all the essential elements as eloquent and convincing.

Presiding is a source sanctification, not because the priest makes his involvement to an act of individualistic piety and personal devotion rather it depends on the measure with which he consecrates himself in the pastoral care and liturgical celebration of his community. This dedication is the source of his spirituality and the guaranty of his sanctification”.³⁰

Let us come back to a well-celebrated Holy Mass, without hurry, with care, with “heart”, because as many priests celebrate the Mass today, they are annoying, ugly, careless and trivial.

Let us come back to give attention to the art of celebration, which includes various dimensions. This time also Pope Benedict becomes our master in this regard.

“*Ars celebrandi*: here too I would say that there are different dimensions. The first dimension is that the *celebratio* is prayer and a conversation with God: God with us and us with God. Thus, the first requirement for a good celebration is that the priest truly enter this

Vocation Promotion:

as witness;

as contagious;

as fire that spreads one to another, lighting everyone of the same light;

as “meeting”;

as “bridge” of meetings to narrate the meetings with Jesus.

REDISCOVER THE CHARM OF BEING RELIGIOUS

Take the Founder as example and model who was a “Sword of fire in the Sacred Ministry”.

“Sword of fire ” evokes a similar image with which the Bible describes the divine Word. “The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together. It judges the desires and thoughts of the “(Heb. 4:12).

Become” sword of fire “ to warm up the heart, melt the coldness of distrust and illumine the mind.

Called to follow Christ, poor, chaste and obedient in prayer; but especially in the service to the least, the little and poor, what is the word, the Guanellian religious is called to say today?

What is the principal mission of the one who has decided to follow Christ, poor, chaste and obedient?

It is that which our Constitutions clearly describe when they call the confreres to be faithful to their own vocation, which “demands of us an apostolic spirituality. Remaining firmly rooted in Christ, we must lay down our life for the brothers as he did”.¹⁰

The first task of the religious, therefore, is that of being rooted in Christ, of “*Belonging to the Lord*” – so would say Pope Benedict XVI- with an expression all the more strong.

“*Belonging to the Lord* means to be on fire with his incandescent love, to be transformed into the splendor of his beauty: our littleness is offered to him as a sacrifice of sweet fragrance so that it becomes a witness of the greatness of his presence for our epoch,

which has great need to be inebriated by the richness of his grace. Belonging to the Lord: this is the mission of the men and women who have chosen to follow Christ - chaste, poor and obedient - so that the world may believe and be saved.

To belong completely to Christ so as to become a permanent confession of faith, an unequivocal proclamation of truth that frees us from the seduction of the false idols that deceive the world.

To belong to Christ means to keep the flame of love always burning in our heart, continually fed by the richness of faith, not only when this brings with it interior joy but also when it is joined to difficulty, aridity and suffering. Prayer is the nourishment for the interior life, intimate conversation of the consecrated soul with the divine Spouse. Even richer nourishment is daily participation in the ineffable mystery of the divine Eucharist, where the Risen Christ makes himself continually present in his corporeal reality...

In this way, and only in this way – the Pope concludes - can one follow Christ crucified and poor without reserve, immersing oneself in his mystery and making his choices of humility, poverty and meekness one's own".¹¹

REDISCOVER AND BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF YOUR PRIESTHOOD

We need to believe in the power of our priesthood, many times suffocated by the secularized mindset.

The pope, during his visit in Poland exhorted the priests thus:

"Believe in the power of your priesthood! By virtue of the sacrament, you have received all that you are. When you utter the words "I" and "my" ("I absolve you ... This is my body ..."), you do it not in your own name, but in the name of Christ, "*in persona Christi*", who wants to use your lips and your hands, your spirit of sacrifice and your talent. At the moment of your ordination, **through the liturgical sign of the imposition of hands**, Christ took you under his special protection; **you are concealed under his hands and in his Heart.**

destructive if they lack the power of prayer, from which flow the waters of life that irrigate the arid land".²⁷

1.2. The Eucharistic liturgy be more loved and cared for

Take care of one's own way of participating and celebrating the, especially the Holy Mass and the Liturgy of the hours.

To the religious and for a greater reason to the priest, the daily Eucharist is necessary like the air that he breaths, the food that he eats and the water with which quenches the thirst.

Return to be religious, priests, lovers of the Eucharist to communicate the "eucharistic awe".

Pope John Paul II – in the letter to the priests for the Holy Thursday 2004 – wrote that "that which is worth is the love for the Eucharist, the fervor which we celebrate, the devotion, with which we adore, the zeal with which we give it to the brothers, especially the sick.... Only the priests who love the Eucharist are in a state to communicate the "eucharistic awe".

"The Eucharist is the life of the Institute, which, like the sun illumines, warms up and makes the soil bring forth fruit, a true paradise on earth for all who firmly believe".²⁸

"The daily Eucharist is very important for the priest. In it he exposes himself ever anew to this mystery; ever anew he puts himself in God's hands, experiencing at the same time the joy of knowing that He is present, receives me, ever anew raises and supports me, gives me his hand, himself. The Eucharist must become for us a school of life in which we learn to give our lives. **Free for God**

Life is not only given at the moment of death and not only in the manner of martyrdom. We must give it day by day. Day after day it is necessary to learn that I do not possess my life for myself. Day by day I must learn to abandon myself; to keep myself available for whatever he, the Lord, needs of me at a given moment, even if other things seem more appealing and more important to me: it means giving life, not taking it".²⁹

Only the Eucharist is able to transform the Guanellian and make him "bread to be eaten" by the brothers, "broken bread" for a new

remained in the house, to ask also: “**but...with sanctity how are you?**”.²² Questions that he would perhaps ask us also today...

1. How is your prayer? Do not forget that is your first pastoral commitment.

Our Founder, taking in hand the Constitutions, would read to us an important passage: “We need prayer as our “life’s breath”. It is necessary, therefore, “to pray always without growing weary”, as the Lord says— as I did always, so would add father Guanella”.²³

“The time we set aside for prayer is not time taken from our pastoral responsibility but is precisely pastoral “work”; it is also praying for others... the dialogue with God is pastoral work!”.²⁴

“Let us not be consumed with haste, as if time dedicated to Christ in silent prayer were time wasted. On the contrary, it is precisely then that the most wonderful fruits of pastoral service come to birth. There is no need to be discouraged on account of the fact that prayer requires effort, or because of the impression that Jesus remains silent. He is indeed silent, but he is at work. In a world where there is so much noise, so much bewilderment, there is a need for silent adoration of Jesus concealed in the Host. Be assiduous in the prayer of adoration and teach it to the faithful. It is a source of comfort and light particularly to those who are suffering. The faithful expect only one thing from priests: that they be specialists in promoting the encounter between man and God. The priest is not asked to be an expert in economics, construction or politics. He is expected to be an expert in the spiritual life”.²⁵

Let us pray above all for the poor that the Lord has entrusted to us and “share their sufferings and aspirations, we stay with them and pray with them, happy to share fraternally faith, hope, love.”²⁶

“Activism by itself can even be heroic, but in the end external action is fruitless and loses its effectiveness unless it is born from deep inner communion with Christ. The time we spend on this is truly a time of pastoral activity, authentic pastoral activity. The priest must above all be a man of prayer. The world in its frenetic activism often loses its direction. Its action and capacities become

Immerse yourselves in his love, and give him your love! When your hands were anointed with oil, the sign of the Holy Spirit, they were destined to serve the Lord as his own hands in today’s world. They can no longer serve selfish purposes, but must continue in the world the witness of his love”.¹²

He took possession of me, saying to me: “You belong to me”. However, in saying this he also said: “You are under the protection of my hands. You are under the protection of my heart. You are kept safely in the palm of my hands, and this is precisely how you find yourself in the immensity of my love. Stay in my hands, and give me yours”.

In the sacramental gesture of the imposition of hands by the Bishop, it was the Lord himself who laid his hands upon us. **This sacramental sign sums up an entire existential process.**¹³

The greatness of Christ’s priesthood can make us tremble. We can be tempted to cry out with Peter: “Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man” (*Lk* 5:8), because we find it hard to believe that Christ called us specifically. Could he not have chosen someone else, more capable, and more holy? But Jesus has looked lovingly upon each one of us, and in this gaze of his we may have confidence”.¹⁴

“The mystery of our priesthood consists in that identification with him by virtue of which we, poor and weak human beings, through the Sacrament of Orders can speak and act in *persona Christi capitis*. The whole journey of our life as priests cannot but aim for this goal: to configure ourselves in the reality of daily life and behavior, with the gift and mystery that we have received.

Jesus’ words must guide and comfort us on this path: “no longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (*Jn* 15: 15). The Lord puts himself in our hands, he transmits to us his deepest, personal mystery, and he wants us to share in his power of salvation. But this obviously requires in turn that we be truly the Lord’s friends, that our sentiments conform to his sentiments, and our will to his (cf. *Phil* 2: 5), and this is an everyday journey”.¹⁵

THE GUANELLIAN PRIEST: FRIEND OF JESUS

“The Lord laid his hand upon us. He expressed the meaning of this gesture in these words:

“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you”(Jn15: 15). I no longer call you servants but friends: in these words one could actually perceive the institution of the priesthood.

The Lord makes us his friends; he entrusts everything to us; he entrusts himself to us, so that we can speak with him himself - *in persona Christi capitis*. What trust! He has truly delivered himself into our hands.

The essential signs of priestly ordination are basically all a manifestation of those words: the laying on of hands; the consignment of the book - of his words that he entrusts to us; the consignment of the chalice, with which he transmits to us his most profound and personal mystery. The power to absolve is part of all this. It also makes us share in his awareness of the misery of sin and of all the darkness in the world, and places in our hands the key to reopen the door to the Father's house. I no longer call you servants but friends. This is the profound meaning of being a priest: becoming the friend of Jesus Christ. For this friendship we must daily recommit ourselves. Friendship means sharing in thought and will. We must put into practice this communion of thought with Jesus, as St Paul tells us in his Letter to the Philippians (cf. 2: 2-5). And this communion of thought is not a purely intellectual thing, but a sharing of sentiments and will, hence, also of actions. This means that we should know Jesus in an increasingly personal way, listening to him, living together with him, staying with him. Listening to him - in *lectio divina*, that is, reading Sacred Scripture in a non-academic but spiritual way; thus, we learn to encounter Jesus present, who speaks to us. We must reason and reflect, before him and with him, on his words and actions. The reading of Sacred Scripture is prayer, it must be prayer - it must emerge from prayer and lead

II Part

Operative Guidelines

- to revitalize your vocation to religious and priestly life
- to reorganize the youth ministry and the vocation promotion of your community

OPERATIVE GUIDELINES TO REVITALIZE YOUR VOCATION TO RELIGIOUS AND PRIESTLY LIFE

As introduction, we would like to present an extract of a letter which father Guanella wrote to father Curti. They are the questions which today our Founder would ask each of us as he asked one day some hundred years back to father Samuel: “Dear donkey (he writes confidentially to father Curti), you will say: 1 How do you find yourself in Rome; 2 how do you go in accord with father Philip; 3 How do you involve in caring the children of the house and the workers; 4 how much result do you obtain from the work in the field; 5 and above all how well do you pray the Liturgy of the hours; 6 and how do you celebrate the Mass; 7 and how many meditations and spiritual readings and for how much time ...”²¹

Father Guanella, with his discreet style, simple, essential and practical, while he is interested to know about the concrete things of life, he does not forget those more important and indispensable things that support the spiritual life of the confreres and the communities. He is able, while asking a confrere about how much money

come to his table. In this, the entire mystery of Jesus Christ is expressed. He is continually on his knees at our feet and carries out for us the service of a slave, the service of purification, making us capable of God. His love is inexhaustible, it truly goes to the very end".¹⁹

"For I have given you an example" (Jn 13: 15);

"You also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn 13: 14).

Pope Benedict asks us: "Of what does "washing one another's feet" consist? It means:

- to come down, learn humility and the courage of goodness, and also the readiness to accept rejection and yet to trust in goodness and persevere in it.
- Washing one another's feet means above all tirelessly forgiving one another, beginning together ever anew, however pointless it may seem.
- It means purifying one another by bearing with one another and by being tolerant of others; purifying one another, giving one another the sanctifying power of the Word of God and introducing one another into the Sacrament of divine love".²⁰

to prayer. The Evangelists tell us that the Lord frequently withdrew - for entire nights - "to the mountains", to pray alone. We too need these "mountains": they are inner peaks that we must scale, the mountain of prayer.

Only in this way does the friendship develop. Only in this way can we carry out our priestly service, only in this way can we take Christ and his Gospel to men and women... I no longer call you servants, but friends.

The core of the priesthood is being a friend of Jesus Christ. Only in this way can we truly speak *in persona Christi*, even if our inner remoteness from Christ cannot jeopardize the validity of the Sacrament. Being a friend of Jesus, being a priest, means being a man of prayer. In this way we recognize him and emerge from the ignorance of simple servants. We thus learn to live, suffer and act with him and for him.

Being friends with Jesus is par excellence always friendship with his followers. We can be friends of Jesus only in communion with the whole of Christ, with the Head and with the Body; in the vigorous vine of the Church to which the Lord gives life. Sacred Scripture is a living and actual Word, thanks to the Lord, only in her. Without the living subject of the Church that embraces the ages, more often than not the Bible would have splintered into heterogeneous writings and would thus have become a book of the past. It is eloquent in the present only where the "Presence" is - where Christ remains forever contemporary with us: in the Body of his Church.

Being a priest means becoming an ever-closer friend of Jesus Christ with the whole of our existence. The world needs God - not just any god but the God of Jesus Christ, the God who made himself flesh and blood, who loved us to the point of dying for us, who rose and created within himself room for man. This God must live in us and we in him. This is our priestly call: only in this way can our action as priests bear fruiti".¹⁶

THE HANDS OF THE GUANELLIAN RELIGIOUS AND PRIEST BECOME THE HANDS OF THE LORD IN THE WORLD

The characteristics of the Guanellian religious and priest is that which is well described in the letter to the Hebrews, when it says about Christ: “we do not have a High Priest who does not know to share our infirmities, for he himself was tested in everything except sin” (Heb.4:15).

As Jesus exercises a ministry of mercy and compassion, so also the Guanellian exercises his priestly ministry sharing the suffering and the weakness of those who suffer.

The Guanellian priesthood is defined both for its relation with God and for the solidarity with the brothers in pain, in abandonment and in solitude.

Here is our mission! Here is our principal animation!

The pope said to the priests thus on the Holy Thursday of this year: “Then let us remember that our hands were anointed with oil, which is the sign of the Holy Spirit and his power. Why one’s hands? The human hand is the instrument of human action, it is the symbol of the human capacity to face the world, precisely to “take it in hand”. The Lord has laid his hands upon us and he now wants our hands so that they may become his own in the world. He no longer wants them to be instruments for taking things, people or the world for ourselves, to reduce them to being our possession, but instead, by putting ourselves at the service of his love, they can pass on his divine touch.

He wants our hands to be instruments of service, hence, an expression of the mission of the whole person who vouches for him and brings him to men and women. If human hands symbolically represent human faculties and, in general, skill as power to dispose of the world, then anointed hands must be a sign of the human capacity for giving, for creativity in shaping the world with love. It is for this reason, of course, that we are in need of the Holy Spirit”.¹⁷

Don Guanella said: “in placing the plate, do it in a delicate way”. It is an invitation which should not exhaust in assuming the exquisite gestures of charity, but it is completed only when our hands know to place the “plates” of Eucharist; when our hands will come back to bless, to absolve and to console. Only then they will be new hands.

What we are listing are not rules of good education, of good manners, which are left according to the time...

To have new hands, we need a strong heart.

To have hands of tenderness we need to have a new, motivated and clear interior attitude. “When your hands were anointed with oil, the sign of the Holy Spirit, they were destined to serve the Lord as his own hands in today’s world. They can no longer serve selfish purposes, but must continue in the world the witness of his love”.¹⁸

Other than the hands of the Guanellian priests who bless, absolve and transform the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus... We cannot but thank God for the hands of many lay brothers who bring to reality in the simple and daily gestures of care, healing, touching, placing the plate, accompanying and attending ... the concreteness of charity of Christ.

What did Jesus do with his hands?

“Jesus knowing that the Father had given him everything in his hand” (Jn. 13,3), took a towel, a water jug, a basin, and began to wash the feet of his disciples, leaving as an inheritance to his sons the instruction for the use and the cleaning with the hands. **Here is what he did with his hands!**

“He cast aside the raiment of his divine glory and put on the garb of a slave. He came down to the extreme lowliness of our fall. He kneels before us and carries out for us the service of a slave: he washes our dirty feet so that we might be admitted to God’s banquet and be made worthy to take our place at his table - something that on our own we neither could nor would ever be able to do. God descends and becomes a slave, he washes our feet so that we may