

CHARITAS

SERVANTS OF CHARITY: RESERVED PUBLICATION

REFLECTIONS ON "CHARITAS"

THE CONGREGATION'S TASK OF FORMATION

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT AND THE PATH OF HOLINESS

THE SPIRIT OF PROVIDENCE

COMMUNICATIONS

DECREES

DECEASED CONFRERES

Editing Office: Generalate - Vicolo Clementi, 41 - 00148 Rome

ENGLISH EDITION

Year XCII - April 2014 - N. 230

CHARITAS n. 230
RESERVED TO THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY
YEAR XCII - APRIL 2014

Table of contents

LETTER FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Reflections on “Charitas”	5
• The Congregation’s task of formation edited by Fr. Alfonso Crippa, Superior general	8

INSIGHTS

• Life in spirit and the path of holiness by Msgr. Mario Jorge Bergoglio, Auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires	18
• The spirit of Providence edited by Fr. Tito Credaro	35

COMMUNICATIONS

A. Confreres	48
B. Events of consecration	51

DECREES

1. Decree on holidays	54
2. Decrees of erection of new Communities and Residences	56
3. Appointments	62
4. “Nulla osta” for appointments	62
5. “Nulla osta” to take on Parishes or Institutes	64
6. “Nulla osta” for the alienation of properties and projects requiring the authorization of the Superior general	65
7. Changes of Province	65
8. Leaving the Congregation - Exclaustration permissions	66

DECEASED CONFRERES

1. Fr. Alfredo Vincenzo Rossetti	68
2. Fr. Mario Sala	71
3. Fr. Pietro Scano	73
4. Fr. Luigi Romanò	88

LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

REFLECTIONS ON "CHARITAS"

Dear confreres,

The main purpose of our customary annual distribution of Charitas is to recall the events of a year in the Congregation's life and to report the main activities of the General Government.

Through these pages, many of which are of an essentially juridical nature, we are invited to discover the Providence of God, who guides even the least conspicuous details of our Congregation's life. These all form part of the living history created day by day through our dedication, which, even if hidden, is always precious in the eyes of the Lord.

I have included two meaningful articles on the sense of belonging and the spirit of Providence, which are almost like a commentary on our history and can also encourage us to live the events of each day as moments of grace and signs of the Lord's goodness.

The first of these is the initial part of a conference given to our confreres in the "Cruz del Sur" Province in 1996, during their 9th Provincial Chapter, by Pope Francis, when he was Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires.

I think this text is very relevant for reviving our spirit of brotherhood and sense of belonging, in order to experience one of the key aspects of our Guanellian consecration: the "bond of charity", so dear

to our Founder, which we have chosen to examine more deeply this year.

In the meeting with the Superiors General last November, the Pope told us of a firm conviction that he has held for many years: “There is no identity without belonging”. This truth is certainly a crucial point for our religious life: our sense of belonging reveals our identity with the charism. The two values run on parallel tracks. To strengthen our sense of belonging, we need to recognise ourselves as united by the same charism and a common history. Likewise, convinced participation in community events, even the simplest ones, and in events marking our history will strengthen our religious identity. This dispenses us from searching for other spiritualities or forms of mission out of dissatisfaction with what we have, or search for personal fulfilment through projects or activities conducted alone, without the involvement of the Community.

The second article is an examination of the spirit of Providence written by Fr. Tito Credaro, which he divides into three parts:

- *The Life of Providence, in which there is a review of main events in the life of Fr. Guanella, about whom he has also written a biography entitled “The Ways of Providence”, which we all know...*
- *The Works of Providence, in which he emphasises the foundation on which our Houses and our mission in general were established and by which they continue to be sustained.*
- *The Spirit of Providence, to be lived today in continuity with the charism of the Founder.*

(Given the role of “Charitas” as a means of animation, I have only included the third part of the book, which was originally published as issue no. 7 of “Quaderni del Charitas”, in May 1976).

This Charitas also presents to our attention two other issues: The development of the Congregation in the various countries where we are present, with new Professions and Ordinations among our young confreres and an increase in new vocations; The remembrance of our confreres who have completed their mission and came back to the Father’s House, in order to preserve their example as a precious heritage, “confident of forming with them once again in eternity the family begun together in time” (C. no. 23).

The beauty of our history consists in seeing ourselves as pilgrims journeying together to the same destination and “indebted to one another” for the gifts that each one freely receives from the Lord’s Providence.

On this day dedicated to consecrated life, may we all feel inspired to live the gift of our vocation with joy.

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superior General

Rome, 2 February 2014
World Day for Consecrated Life

THE CONGREGATION'S TASK OF FORMATION

Joyful in the vocation we have received, we too, imitating the apostles, strive to raise up more collaborators for the Kingdom of God.

(C. no. 86)

The Institute places among its primary duties the task of assuring its members a solid formation.

(C. no. 82)

The purpose of our Formators' Course

There is a great need in the Congregation to prepare confreres for initial formation and to help young confreres in their first years of integration in the apostolate. For this purpose, a three-week course was organised for our formators in September of last year, in continuation with a similar initiative conducted in September 2007.

We certainly do not claim that the course has solved the problems experienced by the Congregation in these areas. However, the initiative should certainly encourage everyone to seriously address this basic need for the moral and spiritual development of our Congregation, and it should be continued in the individual provinces through regular contact among the various formators. We are all aware of the need for a preparation that is not merely academic but, above all, experiential, in order to prepare spiritual guides that can provide our confreres with a solid formation.

Criticisms casting doubt on the effectiveness of our formation programme are sometimes heard. At times the difference between the life lived in the seminary and that of our communities is highlighted, as if to imply that this time

spent in a “sheltered” situation is relatively ineffective, as it does not give the confreres a sufficient capacity to deal with the realities of life. It is significant, for example, that the personal project is a common practice in the formation communities, whereas in the tirocinium, and especially after final profession and priestly ordination, it is abandoned by a large number of confreres...

Formators are also affected by criticism of the seminary environment, instead of being supported and helped to bring about that integration of theory and practice that can ensure faithful continuity.

The Course for formators also aimed at fostering a formative mindset in the Congregation. Only the creation of a shared formative mindset, method, content and criteria, in other words, a formative culture in the Congregation, can ensure the quality and continuity of our formation programmes.

Naturally, the efforts of the confreres most directly responsible for formation require the cooperation of the entire Congregation and of each confrere in order to create a positive environment in which Guanellian vocations can develop and reach maturity.

It has often been said: each confrere is a formator and each community must be a community in ongoing formation...

While formators, on the one hand, need to be motivated to continue their training and be better prepared for their mission, all of us, on the other hand, should be committed to ongoing formation, because we all have a great influence in many ways on the young vocations that the Lord sends us. Furthermore, we should not underestimate the contribution we can personally make by taking on more work in order to leave the formators free to devote themselves to their delicate task.

As it can be seen from the statistics below, one of our experiences in recent years has been the vocational weakness of some of our confreres, who have abandoned formation or have decided to leave the Congregation for diocesan life. This fragility and lack of a sense of loyalty might not simply depend on the vocational maturity of the young men, but could also be due to the weakness of our formation programmes or our community life...

The main objective of formation

Certainly, during the initial formation of our young confreres, much time and energy is spent on the academic training necessary to broaden the horizons of their minds and prepare them for their future apostolate. However, the acquisition of new knowledge is not sufficient; we need to touch the individual’s inner self: his heart, as expressed in the title of our Ratio *“By the Ways of the Heart”*.

To achieve this objective, we need to offer our young men experiences that can touch their hearts, i.e. that can have a profound influence on their personality, emotions and interior world. We need to instil a new charismatic identity in them that solidifies their vocation and makes them experience the Congregation as their new family. All of us are responsible for this!

Obviously, the primary responsibility for this inner transformation lies with the person undergoing the formation. Only he can be aware of his own convictions, review the events of his life, listen to the voice of his conscience and allow his life to be transformed. Nevertheless, the Congregation has the duty of helping the candidate enter within himself and compare his inner world with the life that is being proposed to him.

This means that we too have to collaborate with the primacy of God's grace and the action of the Spirit, and guide our seminarians with the same care used by parents to help their children to mature.

Reference to the Founder and the Guanellian charism as the basis of formation

The first Guanellians found a sure guide in Fr. Guanella, whose very presence communicated his desire for personal sanctification and passionate vocation for the poor.

It is up to us, then, to replicate the human, christian, priestly and religious experience of the Founder in our own lives: in other words, to live the Guanellian charism so that it can fill our own lives and those of our young men with meaning.

Guanellian formation, therefore, consists essentially in identifying ourselves with the vocation that the Spirit raised up through Fr. Guanella, being inspired by his attitude and formative methods, and having the ability, like him, to share our vocation.

Fr. Guanella was aware since his youth of having received a gift to be communicated and shared with others. At all times he was able to involve his followers and inspire in them responsibility and a sense of family.

Hence the importance, also for us, of formation in fraternity and in belonging to the Congregation, and of a sense of fatherhood towards young confreres, based on mutual trust.

Fr. Guanella, together with those who preceded us, has entrusted it with the Institute, like a father who leaves his most cherished inheritance to his children. This places upon us the responsibility of following in his footsteps and presenting our young men with the worthy examples of those who preceded us.

The Congregation has a more universal character today. The Holy Spirit has made our charism fruitful for the sake of so many forms of poverty and situations that were unknown in our Founder's day.

The situations in which vocations arise and develop are also different, and their quantity, condition and consistency are not the same.

There is a need, therefore, to examine the universally valid values of the Founder's charism more closely, so that it may effectively respond to diverse cultural situations, without losing that sense of unity so dear to Fr. Guanella.

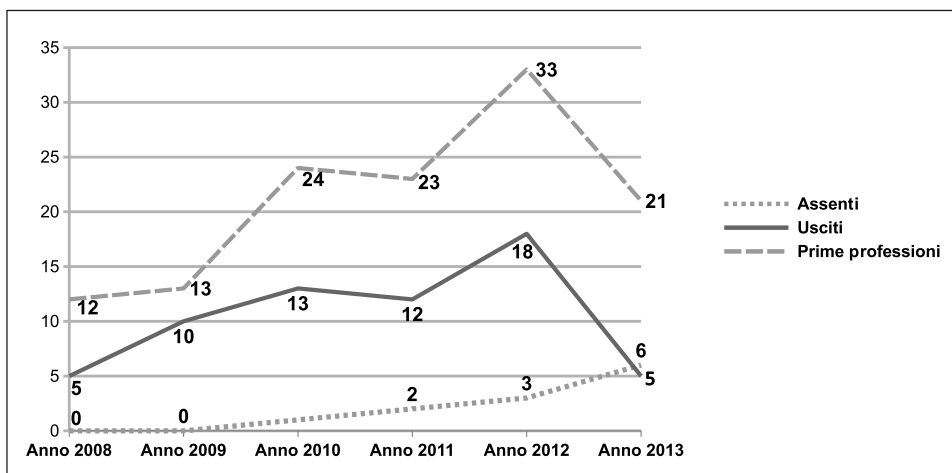
With a universal perspective

The insistent request in recent years to foster the creation of international communities also calls for great efforts in formation, to increase awareness of the Congregation's universality and willingness to serve the Lord and the poor in countries and cultures other than one's own.

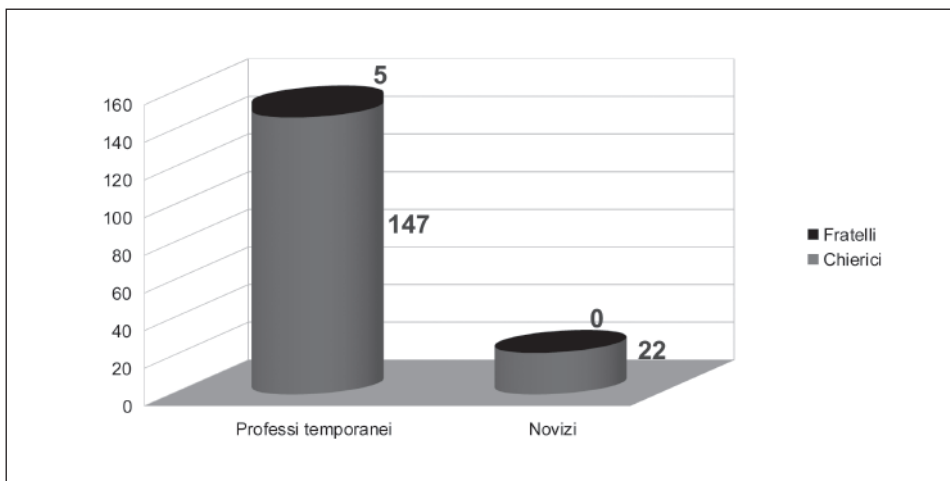
Different cultural contexts bring incentives and challenges that affect both the development of vocations and, in particular, the formation process. They thus require an effort of discernment and the capacity to provide a suitable educational response to the various situations. Understanding these contexts and how they can influence the aspirations of our young men is not only the task of those directly assigned to vocation animation and formation, but also the responsibility of each individual confrere, who must "*become magnets which attract hearts*", as the Founder used to exhort us.

A statistical view

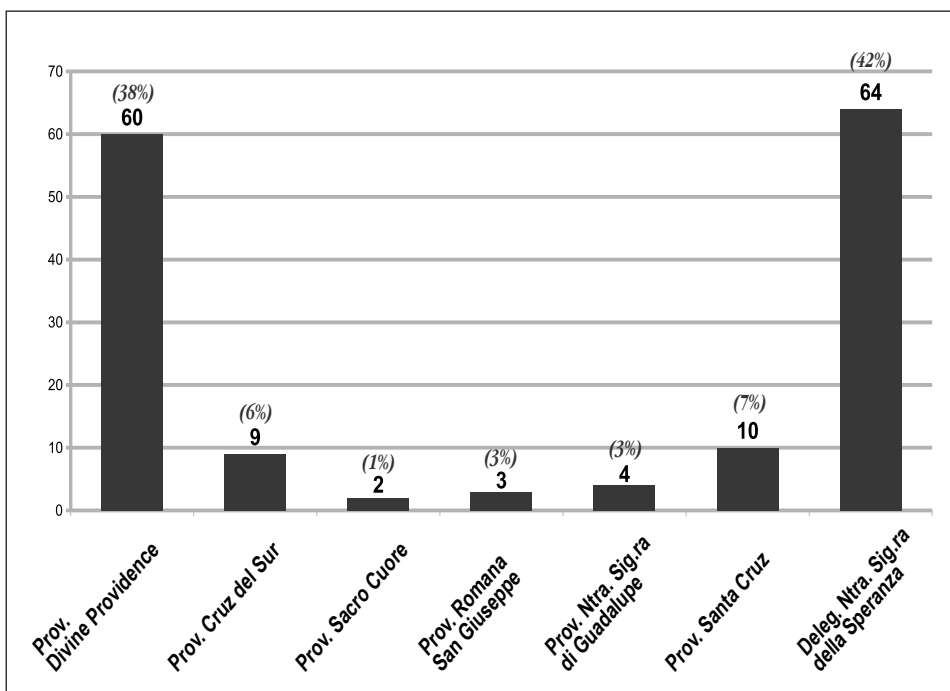
The three lines show the trends in the numbers of absences, departures and new arrivals among the confreres over the last six years.



As of 31/12/2013, there are a total of 152 temporary professed, 5 of which are brothers.



Distribution of temporary professed according to Province.



PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL FORMATION

During the meeting of the General Council with the Provincial Superiors and the Delegation, we reflected on some particular points regarding the vocational ministry and the formation curriculum for our young confreres.

We examined the various realities of the Congregation in which initial formation is conducted and, at the same time, we considered various suggestions made by the formators in their meeting in Rome in September 2013 to improve the various stages of our formation programme.

We have therefore formulated the following points, which are not considered as exhaustive but as complementary to and in application of what is established in the Ratio.

1. General guidelines and recommendations

– The Superiors concerned should provide for the training and stability of confreres assigned to roles in formation and promote dialogue between the formators of the various stages.

– The greatest possible coordination should be encouraged between the formators, both in terms of following the candidates in the various stages of formation, particularly in regard to involvement in final decisions, and in the sharing of experiences with formators from other Provinces.

– Due confidentiality should be observed when dealing with information concerning the candidates.

– Each house of formation should have its own internal Rules, approved by the relevant major Superior, which clarify those points which are not covered in the *Ratio* (e.g. the use of means of communication or particular aspects of community life, etc.).

2. Discernment and Aspirancy

– Each Province or Delegation should establish specific programmes for the Discernment and Aspirancy period, with sufficient flexibility to respond to particular situations, such as late vocations, university graduates or candidates who have already undergone formal initial vocational discernment in another ecclesial setting.

– Those responsible for this stage shall make the best possible efforts to know the family situation and social background of the candidate.

- The initial period of vocational discernment can also be conducted in a non-residential form, taking into account the personal development and maturity of each candidate.
- Nevertheless, a period of residential Aspirancy should be ensured in preparation for Postulancy.

What is of primary importance is fulfilment of the objectives for this initial phase in preparation for Postulancy, as described in our Ratio (no. 169: Preliminary conditions for admission in Postulancy).

3. Postulancy

- The year preceding the Novitiate should be spent free from commitments to academic studies and should be based on the formative content indicated in Appendix I at the end of the *Ratio*.
- Each candidate for Postulancy must submit a written request to the Provincial Superior or his Delegate, based on the outline given in the *Ratio*.
- Those who have guided the candidate shall submit an appropriate report to those responsible for the decision concerning admission, using the outline provided at the end of the *Ratio*.

4. Suggestions regarding the Novitiate:

- the presence of other formation stages in the Novitiate House should be avoided as much as possible, and where this is not possible, the individual formation programmes must be clearly defined and distinguished;
- regular communication and dialogue should be encouraged between the formators of this stage with those of the previous stage...

5. Regarding Philosophy (Juniorate)

- Philosophy shall be studied after the Novitiate in preparation for Theology. For the Brothers, Philosophy can be replaced by other studies to complete their basic human, spiritual and theological education.
- Under exceptional circumstances, the Provincial and his Council may allow Philosophy to be studied before the Novitiate.

6. Regarding Theology

- For the Theology *curriculum*, provincial Superiors must ensure that all candidates for priesthood in their Provinces follow a clear programme of stud-

ies lasting not less than four years, as required by Canon Law for priestly ordination.

– If the programme includes a master’s degree (3+2 years of studies), ordination will be scheduled for the end of the five-year period.

– Confreres sent to study theology in Rome will follow a programme of studies that includes a Licentiate in a specialised field of theology, which the Provincial Superior will establish in dialogue with the confrere and the Rector of the seminary.

– If the programme of studies envisages more than the 3+2 years of the Licentiate, the Provincial Superior shall determine where the confrere shall reside to continue his studies and to exercise some apostolic ministry, in dialogue with the local Provincial Superior.

– For ordained confreres who, in agreement with their Provincial Superiors, are to study specialised courses outside their own Province, the Provincial Superior will determine the place where the confrere is to reside, in dialogue with the Superior of the Province receiving him.

7. Staff in interprovincial Houses of Formation...

A. The interprovincial Novitiate

There are two interprovincial Novitiates: Barza and Luján.

– The provisions of no. 184 of our Regulations should be borne in mind: “The Provincial Superiors involved are responsible for:

- providing suitable personnel;
- keeping frequent contact with their own novices and the master”.

– Article 184 also calls for “establishing, through a common agreement, the norms for the exact arrangement of the program and of the activities of the Novitiate.”

– For its ordinary community life, the Novitiate comes under the responsibility of the local Provincial Superior: i.e., the Superior of the Sacred Heart Province for Barza and that of Cruz del Sur Province for Luján.

B. The interprovincial Post-Novitiate

At the present moment, Porto Alegre is our only interprovincial Post-Novitiate, serving the “Cruz del Sur”, “Santa Cruz” and “Guadalupe” Provinces.

- The guidelines for the interprovincial novitiate also apply in this case.

C. Interprovincial Theologates

The Congregation currently has the following Theologates: the International Theological Seminary in Rome and the Theological Seminary of Bogotá.

– The Rome and Bogota theological seminaries come under the jurisdiction of the Superior General and his Council, both in regard to the establishment of the Seminary programme and activities and to the ordinary life of the Seminary community.

– The Provincial Superiors nevertheless have the following responsibilities:

- to provide suitable staff at the request of the Superior General;
- to maintain relations with their own confreres and with the rector and formation team;
- to receive and approve the confreres' requests for Profession and Holy Orders...

– For greater interculturality among the young confreres, we do not exclude the possibility of Provincial Superiors proposing that some confreres study theology in one of the Congregation's Theologates, in dialogue with the confreres concerned, or of the confreres themselves requesting this.

8. Practicum (Regency)

To fulfil the objectives expressed in nos. 199-202 of our Regulations:

– The Provincial Superior must follow the confreres with particular attention in this stage of formation, through personal meetings and by offering them moments of common formation and reflection.

– When deciding on the Communities where the Practicum will be conducted, he must carefully ensure that these meet the conditions specified in no. 202 of the Regulations:

- the presence of a spiritual guide;
- a true responsibility suited to the confrere's personal abilities;
- the guidance of a confrere;
- a personal formation programme to be completed and assessed.

– Bearing in mind the good of the individual confreres, the Provincial Superior may also offer the possibility of particular experiences in other countries or provinces (see Proposal No. 17, 19th CG).

9. Formation of the Brothers

– *“After Novitiate, the Brothers should continue their formation in the House of Formation, together with the candidates for the priesthood, for at*

least two years” (R. no. 193). A personal study plan shall be defined with each of them to consolidate their religious formation (*See Juniorate above*).

– In exceptional circumstances and with the Superior General’s agreement, the Provincial Superior can assign Brothers to other Communities in the Province for this stage of formation, without prejudice to nos. 193-198 of our Regulations.

– A two-year period of Practicum is normally arranged for the Brothers, to be carried out immediately after the Post-Novitiate or after some years of professional training, subject to the discretion of the Provincial Superior.

– Care should be taken to implement no. 218 of the Regulations, which calls for providing “*means and times necessary to pursue the field of specialization most suitable to their abilities and to the needs of the Province.*”

(edited by Fr. Alfonso Crippa, Superior General)

INSIGHTS

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT AND THE PATH OF HOLINESS

*For your reading and reflection, we present an excerpt from a conference given by Msgr. Mario Jorge Bergoglio when he was Auxiliary Bishop for the Flores Area in Buenos Aires, to which our Tránsito de San José Parish belongs. He was present at the 9th Provincial Chapter of the “Cruz del Sur” Province, on 24 July 1986. He gave a talk at 6:00 pm, entitled: **Life in the Spirit and the Path of Holiness.***

Naturally, several years have passed since then, but we consider the content still very relevant and it also has a certain in-house style.

No one would ever have thought that this skinny bishop would later become the successor of Peter.

We offer these beautiful pages in preparation for the Year for Consecrated Life.

We wish to thank Pope Francis for his Petrine ministry and for reminding us through his teaching of two important aspects of the Guanellian message: God’s mercy and charity towards the most abandoned.

Formation in community life

The Second Vatican Council reminds us that “education must blend its elements together harmoniously so that an integrated life on the part of the religious concerned results” (*Perfectae Caritatis* no. 18). We should understand an integrated life as referring not only to the internal equilibrium of each reli-

gious, but also to the harmonious merger of the individual with the body of the Institute to which life is dedicated. Formation in community life therefore also implies the task of balancing everything that concerns the building up of the apostolic body of the Institute, simply because we do not become fully grown in an incubator but in a family, with growth in the “sense of family.”

The process of *integrated formation* already begins with the Novitiate, in accordance with the particular life of the Institute. In this process, the novice now “tries out” the life of the Institute he has entered; and the formators, on behalf of the Institute, “try out” the novice. A positive outcome should provide clear discernment of the vocation, which - when genuine - is seen in *mature integration into the body of the Institute*.

Another positive outcome is when the formator and the candidate realise that the path is not the right one, and the candidate therefore returns to the place where God wants him. A negative outcome is neither one thing nor the other, i.e. with neither full clarification the vocation nor full acceptance of it... in other words, an attitude of non-integration. Formation in community life implies formation towards full integration in the Institute.

The Novitiate is not merely an academy “for learning things about the Institute”. Nor is it a laboratory test. It is “*entering a family*”; it is giving the young religious *a series of truths* on which the philosophy of the life is based, and these are *experienced rather than understood*. This core of truths, which are felt rather than understood, is what we call doctrine, in the broad sense, i.e. the heritage of a Congregation, and its source is the deposit of faith, the living tradition of the Church, the Magisterium and our own tradition as an Institute. The principal mission of the formator is therefore to instil this core of doctrinal wisdom into the heart of the candidate and teach him to understand it and live it.

How, then, do we achieve this objective in formation in community life?

This is the theme of our meeting.

I will start from the Second Vatican Council.

Vatican II and religious life

Community life is mentioned in many passages of the Council’s teaching on religious life. A central text is *Perfectae Caritatis* no. 15, which is worth studying at length. Generally, whenever the Council speaks of the authentic renewal of religious life, it refers to five key principles:

- 1) A return to the origins, to the Christ of the Gospel.
- 2) A return to the spirit of the Founders.
- 3) Communion in the life of the Church.

- 4) Knowledge of the modern world.
- 5) Interior renewal.

The Council clearly places significant emphasis on certain spiritualities of “return” to the key moments in the history of salvation, such as the experience of Christ, the Founders, interior life, etc. The text mentioned in regard to community life (*Perfectae Caritatis* no. 15) begins with a “return” to the early Christian communities. No one can accuse the Council of “restorationism”, yet it places clear emphasis on the “recovery” of foundational experiences.

Taking this indication as a starting point, we can ask:

In what way is this “return to the origins” helpful in terms of the doctrine on community life that we have to pass on to our formandi? In short, what is the communitarian identity of a religious?

Identity and belonging

To guide us in this topic, we will use the reflections of Pope John Paul II in his discourses to religious men and women during his travel to Brazil.

The essential aspect of religious life is that which forms the *identity* of a person who has embraced the evangelical counsels. However, if we examine the concept of *identity* merely in terms of its characteristic features, it risks losing its intrinsic connection with time and history, and becomes a kind of ideal to which we aspire... Identity, however, is something real; it is what characterises a person in reality. Therefore, the best expression to avoid this problem is probably: *Identity presupposes belonging*. When discussing the identity of religious, we examine their sense of *belonging*. This is what the Pope means when he tells religious:

“Every Christian has full and legitimate freedom, in accordance with his conscience, to choose whether or not to enter religious life. However, *they are not entitled to define or reorganise* that which is essential to *religious life*, disregarding the Church’s life, history, and, I repeat, two thousand years of experience¹.”

A religious *is* such because he or she *belongs*. A person is religious to the extent to which he or she belongs. Hence, when reflecting on the identity of the religious, belonging to *a religious family* is the essential aspect that gives meaning to everything else. Religious acquire their identity from their belonging to the long tradition of the Church and to a religious family.

¹ John Paul II to the religious men in São Paulo (3/7/80), no. 10.

The subject of belonging can be examined on various levels, such as belonging to a particular community, belonging to a province, etc. The important thing that is always present is their belonging to the Church, as religious, and to a particular religious family. Therefore, one does not “enter” religious life, but “is admitted” to religious life. You are welcomed into a family that has its own history and its own family environment. “You live your consecrated vows in an institute and in a fraternal community. These are very important aspects of your religious life in the mystery of the Church, *which is always a mystery of communion and of participation*².”

This mystery of communication and participation, made present through belonging to a religious family, *is expressed through observance of the Rule*, which are, in turn, an expression of the unity of one’s own life with the life of God: “You have chosen ‘a life governed by freely accepted rules’, in a world and a society that tend to distance people from one another and disperse them, to the point that their spiritual unity, necessary for their union with God, is often compromised³.”

Thus the reason for the importance given to observance of a Rule of Life becomes clear when seen in relation to communion and participation with God, through the unity of one’s own person. “God forbid that an excessive desire for flexibility and spontaneity leads anyone to dismiss, as obsolete rigidity, that minimum of uniformity in customs and fraternal relations normally required by community life and human maturity, or, worse still, to abandon it... *Faithfulness to this minimum is the measure of personal identification with consecration out of love*⁴.” Continuing our line of observation, we can therefore conclude that faithfulness to this agreed minimum is directly proportional to living one’s consecration out of love, as an indication of its extent. In other words: the degree of belonging is seen in faithfulness... The measure of identity is seen in this faithfulness.

With regard to fraternal communication, the Holy Father stresses the importance in every religious person’s interior life of “a space desired and sought by all in order to make, in the words of one spiritual writer, a “pilgrimage” to one’s own heart to refresh oneself in God⁵.” This is a further point: there is no encounter with oneself, refreshment in God or growth in love outside the sphere of belonging. Otherwise, it would be a meeting, refreshment or a growth with neither substance nor identity.

Up to here, we have been talking about the inner life of the community. The Pope continues and describes the meaning it has in relation to the exterior:

² John Paul II to the religious women in São Paulo (3/7/80), no. 11.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibidem, no. 12.

⁵ Ibidem, no. 13.

“*Also outside the community*, all the activities and contact of religious always have a *community and public dimension*: the religious life is always a visible sign of the Church. For this reason, I encourage you always and everywhere to personally be visible witnesses of the Church and its Lord, in a world moving increasingly towards “desacralisation” under the pretext of modernity. May all people see a sign through which God interrogates them in your behaviour, the way you introduce yourselves and the way you dress⁶.”

The religious life is an image of the Church: this is the basic point. It is an image that interrogates. Here, the Pope once again mentions the world, and the spirit of the world, which is so desacralised. A few paragraphs earlier he described the world as a cause of dispersion that prevents unity. He was talking of the necessary expression of belonging (the Rule); now he is taking about the “slap in the face” caused by being a religious: interrogating an increasingly desacralised world... and challenging it precisely through a sacred image.

The Pope perhaps had all this in mind when explaining why “the Church places its trust in you”; he gives as the second reason: “through your fraternal life, you witness to communion and participation⁷.”

In short, we must form our religious with a sense of body, making them experience their belonging to the body of the Institute in various ways and with discretion. This will allow us to convey to them the doctrine of community life, which is participation in the community life of the Institute, because they belong to it. Then they will understand “why community life, the union of hearts, is the particular point of convergence of our entire religious life”.

I deliberately wanted to exchange the term “community life” with “*union of hearts, or union of souls*”. This union of souls helps us understand that, for us, “love of neighbour has a *clearly privileged focus*: the brothers who share our religious vocation and are part of our religious family”⁸. They are our first and closest “neighbours”; we should devote the best of our concern, our prayers and our good intentions to them. This awareness, arising from basic doctrine on community life, establishes the heart of the young religious and frees it from self-centredness, as well as from that dissolute attitude that leads many religious to become “great apostles”, but not in their own community.

The union of souls is what can make possible “the ideal of our community life: that we are not just collaborators in a common apostolic work, but true friends and brothers in Christ”. This union of souls is not brought about by the simple fact of living together. It is, however, a “requirement of partic-

⁶ Ibidem, no. 14.

⁷ Ibidem, no. 14.

⁸ Ibidem, no. 14.

ipation in the mission of Christ”⁹ and becomes a “witness of God’s presence among men”¹⁰, because “our interpersonal relations within the community also have an apostolic dimension and should characterise our relationship towards the outside... In fact, they should determine the character of our relationship with those we intend to serve and with those who are our neighbours, not merely due to local proximity, but also because they share our problems and hopes”¹¹.

This union of souls arises from *belonging to a specific Institute* and, therefore, from fruitful fidelity to the spirit of the Founder.

How are we to understand this?

The spirit of the Founder

“It redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their founders’ spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions - all of which make up the patrimony of each institute - be faithfully held in honour (*Perfectae Caritatis* no. 2b). Many other Conciliar texts place emphasis on the spirit of the Founders when referring to side issues”¹².

There is something of perennial value in the founder’s intention: “to think that what is born in time is destined to decline and die is an unacceptable historicism that denies the Church’s charism of truth and the permanent value of its history,” said Pope Paul VI to the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus¹³. That is why the Council viewed the traditional patrimony of the Institutes as the insurmountable limit of renewal. There can be no renewal without it.

The *spiritual patrimony* of a religious institute consists of: 1) the spirit and purposes of the Founder and his charism as Founder; 2) the tradition of the Institute, i.e. the foundational charism as lived and enhanced by the Institute in a communitarian and historical form; 3) sound traditions: i.e., habits and customs which, due to their intimate association with the foundational charism and tradition of the Institute, enjoy special permanence and universality as direct expressions of its common and permanent spirit.

This conciliar concept of the spiritual heritage of Institutes does away with a simplistic “return to origins”, which could aim merely at restoring the

⁹ Ibidem, no. 5. “we owe our greatest concern...”.

¹⁰ Ibidem, no. 15.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² *Perfectae Caritatis* nos. 1b; 4; 8; 9; 21.

¹³ Paolo VI, Or 17/11/66.

spirit and aims of the Founder, regardless of the Institute's historical development (tradition and traditions). This Protestant concept of a "return to origins" deprives an Institute of its entire historical process of growth and consolidation, reducing it to something like the adolescent attitude of many Christians, who merely "mimic the early Church", or, like Bultmann's free examination of the Scriptures, to something impersonal and divorced from time. Therefore, when talking about the spirit of the Founder, it is important to take into account the entire path travelled by the Institute, which is reflected in its tradition and traditions. Furthermore, when seeking to instil a sense of belonging in our young people, we must also transmit this heritage to them¹⁴.

As we have said, formation in belonging to an Institute is a fundamental component of Formation in community life and, to do this, we need to be able to transmit the spiritual patrimony of the Institute as a whole (the charism of the Founder, tradition and traditions). We will now examine the relationship between the Founder and the members of his Institute.

The spiritual fatherhood of the Founder

One of the characteristics of Founders is their *fruitfulness*¹⁵. Founders are fruitful in their ability to gather new members and strengthen their sense of belonging to the Institute. Could we describe a Founder as a father? In what way? We notice that religious often talk of "our father" or "our mother" when referring to their Founders. This title of father or mother is perhaps more than just a pious practice: it is a habit based on a theological conviction. Since the time of the early church, fatherhood has expressed an essential aspect of faith: its need for human mediators. It is used in this way, with various nuances, throughout the whole of religious tradition.

For example, in monasticism, the title *Apa* (Father) does not indicate the actual exercise of fatherhood, but the capacity to assume it.

The original meaning of the word "father" refers to the fatherhood of God, as the mystery of God who begets eternally. This fatherhood of God is the source of the paternity of the proclamation, which arouses faith, of baptism, which introduces us into a new life, and of spiritual direction, which leads to holiness.

Thus, for example, the meaning of the title "father" given by the cenobites to St. Pachomius is more developed than that used by the hermits of the Thebaid: it expresses not only the capacity to assume paternity, in the sense of

¹⁴ On the patrimony of the Institute, cf. *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, II, nos. 12 and 14.

¹⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 43a.

personal perfection, but an actual begetting, from which all the cenobites have benefitted. The various other Orders then followed, using the word “father” with their own particular nuances.

However, it is precisely through the foundation of a religious Order that the paternal role of the founder is clarified. It is the essential basis of the Founder’s fatherhood. There is an intimate connection in terms of content between the merits of the Founder and the establishment of the Order. His life of holiness has merited graces and favours for which his children are still indebted. The very foundation of the Order is a grace.

The initiative is always from God: God chooses a person to found it. The grace received, which defines a particular way of serving God, benefits both the recipient and others. This grace is in turn transmitted to their children. It is the “*gratia capitis*” that defines the lifestyle of the disciples.

In keeping with St. Bernard’s teaching on this matter, we can say that the Founder is:

- A *model*, who leads his children to perfection through his example of life.

- A *teacher*, who passes on a doctrine of salvation in his Rule.

- A *mediator*, invoked with devotion by his disciples.

- A *doctrine of life*: the paternity of the founder in the daily life of the religious is seen in the provisions of the Rule. It goes together with his role as legislator. The Founders’ doctrines originate in their fidelity to Christ and his teachings.

- An *example of life*, because he has put the doctrine of life into practice.

Founders are formed by God and instructed by Jesus Christ, who gradually introduces the design of the future Congregation into their hearts and helps them discover, through experience, that which they then teach to others. The Institute can be understood through the life story of the Founder as a mediator. The life of the Founder clarifies the meaning of the special mission intended for his Order.

- *The Founder as a divine image*. The dual role of legislator and life model has been expressed in various images: mirror, source, example, tree of life... The most common expression is that of “*form*”. It is a very bold formulation that is immediately linked to the figure of Christ. For religious, their Founder represents a divine image, a model, who, in his life and teaching, reproduces Christ in a manner appropriate to his children. This term “*form*” entails a kind of ideal perfection that becomes concrete and lived in the personal context and is further enriched by reference to the character of the one sent by

God. This form is willed by God and therefore cannot be dismissed under the pretext of referring directly to Christ.

It should be noted that there is a relationship not only with the Rule of the Institute but also with the life of the Founder. This is one way to dismiss the false dilemma, so fashionable lately, between rule and life. When describing the Founder in terms of “form”, the question then arises of faithfulness to the Founder’s spirit and intentions, and to the particular style of the Institute. Since the religious feel “formed” by the Founder, they do not pose themselves conflicting dilemmas (e.g.: either the rule or the life), but real and viable alternatives for growth.

There is a further aspect, however: it is not enough to merely consult the Founder’s life and his writings to “understand” his message; it requires *sharing the same religious experience*. An essential and mutual bond connects the lives of the disciples with the founding intention of the Founder. This is why we can describe a religious as having the “form” and the “spirit” of the Founder; and it is precisely this spirit and form that enable him to make decisions that were not foreseeable at the time of the Founder.

– *The intercession of the Founder*. Devotion to the Founder is based on fulfilment of the religious vocation and not on any particular grace (health, work, miraculous favours, etc.).

– *Continuity in the Founder’s mission*; a continuity, therefore, that is not broken by the Founder’s death. In this sense of continuity, the Founder emphasises his role as a leader and current head. His “presence” causes his children to be bound to him with strong bonds of loyalty, and the apostolic community is consolidated around this sense of loyalty. The Founder is not a glorious past leader; his work continues, unchanged, through the centuries. Since the earliest days of religious life, monasteries have been modelled on the image of the Church.

Family, body, Church: this is the context in which religious life should be examined.

Reference to the Founder is essential to community life

To this should be added reference to the tradition and traditions of the Institute. In regard to this, I would like to emphasise the importance of the “*Spiritual fathers*” of an Institute. These are men and women religious who were close to the Founder (either in the actual work of Foundation or through a non-contemporary, mystical closeness) and provide the “classics” of an Institute’s spirituality. On many occasions, when talking about spiritual reading, I have remarked that Novitiates often fail to make these “classics” of their spir-

ity available... and at times they are even considered as outdated. Each Institute has its own “classics”, among whom the Founder is preeminent. By “classics”, we mean those moments of strong experience and academic and religious reflection that forge the history of the Institute’s progress. A “classic” of a particular spirituality has the merit of faithfully reinterpreting the authentic charism, and by virtue of the fact that it is a “classic”, it already forms part of the Institute’s “tradition”.

Our young confreres’ sense of belonging can be reinforced through the habit of going back to the “classics” of the Institute. There is an additional benefit: “classics” not only faithfully transmit the charism of the Founder, reinterpreted in a critical moment of the Institute’s life, but are also fruitful and can inspire solutions to new and current problems. They can help us cultivate those two attitudes characteristic of belonging: remembrance of the past and the courage to open up new spaces to God.

The “classics” were strong enough to create new syntheses in times of conflict. However, these were not facile “compromises” or cheap irenicisms, but followed a mysterious process of understanding and faithfulness to what is perennial throughout history to raise everything to a higher level. This is the reason why “classics” have the double virtue of remaining true to history while inspiring new directions to be taken.

Young people should therefore be exposed to the great spiritual classics of the Church and of their Institute already from the time of Novitiate. This reading material should be prioritised, so that they acquire a habit of turning to the “classics” to persevere in loyalty and, therefore, in maturity of community life.

Community life as a spiritual bond and a bond of obedience

The experience of belonging to the same family has two basic aspects that are expressed in daily life: the *spiritual bond* and *obedience*. I will mention them briefly.

The *spiritual bond* is nourished by the life of prayer (especially mutual prayer) and is exercised in anticipating each other’s needs out of brotherly kindness, in mutual respect as members of Christ and in carrying one another’s burdens... as we are recommended to do in *Perfectae Caritatis* no. 15.

Charity lived in a religious community is a gift from on high, but not in a magical sense, like “*manna from heaven*”, and so we have to pray for it with insistence. When the community is mature, it enjoys the presence of Christ. Prayer is therefore an essential factor of union, as it implies the adherence of all to the one Lord. It is the foundation of communitarian unity. True union of souls “is rooted in the intimate communion of each and every one with God

in Christ". Hence the importance of bringing the needs, the people and the problems with which the community is occupied into this familiarity with God... and giving them priority.

Internal charity is also expressed in carrying each other's burdens. Christ showed his love for those who were of least importance to the society of his time. It is in these instances that love becomes purer and more disinterested. When religious behave like this (like St. Francis kissing the leper, or the charity of St. Teresa towards the sisters of her community), they discover that great love and preference for the poorest of the community. When novices or young religious are formed in this aspect, they are also formed in the truth of the "kenosis", which is the foundation of the sequela Christi... a kenosis that reaches its climax with death for the definitive eschatological manifestation of religious life.

It is therefore harmful for those taking their first steps in religious life to live in a select atmosphere of "thoroughbreds". With due discretion, we must begin to assume responsibility for the "*poorest*" in the Community (those less attractive, the sick and the elderly), by serving them. Just as community life is based on a sense of belonging, so too it also grows and is strengthened through loving contact with those who appear to "*be less*". Obviously, I repeat, the contact between *forandi* and the other professed religious of the province must be discreet; but this discretion includes contact with the elderly and the sick.

This will provide them with a model for committing themselves with greater affection to the more difficult members of those communities to which they will be sent in the future. It requires great patience for true union of souls to become established. This is merely a means for cultivating it right from the start.

There is also a further benefit: young religious imbibe the history of the Institute through contact with the elderly. Through contact with the sickest and most limited members of the community, they will receive the grace of unselfish love, free from ulterior motives: with this rectitude of intention in charity and this grace they will understand the eschatological value of the union of souls.

The spiritual bond is not the same as an attitude of "peace at any cost". "Irenicism is one of the most subtle enemies of true union of souls, because it attempts to highlight a false peace and sense of tranquillity, with a "nothing is wrong here" attitude, and deprives religious of a certain "combative" sense in life, which has its theological basis in the struggle of Satan against the Lord and the Church.

Communities can be tempted by irenicism, or false peace. In these circumstances, we should call to mind what Ignatius says of the exercitant who has neither distractions nor temptations: he is performing the Exercises poorly. We

should beware of a community or a religious that has no distractions or temptations: “The moments of turmoil and trial that occasionally threaten our fraternal communion can become moments of grace that strengthen our surrender to Christ and make it credible.” Thus, true peace is achieved through acceptance of temptations and struggle. We have said that the union of souls is a gift from God... but it is a gift that is earned through prayer and struggle.

The union of souls “is attained *largely* by means of the *bond of obedience*”. Because it is a bond of union, it also ensures our apostolic effectiveness. Obedience is a primary requirement for the union of souls.

The entire edifice of community is underpinned by obedience, which gives it its harmony. The exercise of obedience provides the *unction* that strengthens community life and binds it together. The superior is the fatherly extension of the Founder and therefore, by way of analogy, what we have said about the Founder also applies to him. His role is not limited merely to organising the work of the community: it transcends the external apostolic mission to reach the very core of the internal mission, which is the union of souls. He is required to have the “spiritual character for government”, to be a father in the same sense as the Founder and to preserve the fraternal union in his community.

“Community life”, “mission” and “obedience” cannot be separated in religious life. They are the expression of the intra-Trinitarian life. They are rooted in belonging. There can be no community life without participation in an apostolic mission or without obedience. This is not all, however: there can be no community life, mission or obedience without a “*sensus Ecclesiae*”. “The union between us depends ultimately on the fact that we are united, mind and heart, to the Church established by Christ.” This “feeling with the Church” is the soul of the union of hearts because community life can only be developed within hierarchical Holy Mother Church.

Forming our young people in a true sense of obedience and a genuine feeling with the Church means to strengthen their loyalty to the Church and to the Institute, the faithful child of the Church.

I think that an approach based on the *sense of belonging* is the most suitable one for establishing our young people in community life.

This can then provide a basis for various other reflections on secondary and complementary aspects of community life. However, these aspects alone are incapable of forming the youth in any deep sense if everything I have mentioned earlier is lacking.

Ultimately, living in community is living in a family, with its own history, family atmosphere and way of being, where the young grow and the old get older, where there are sick members, and where there are also limits... and these limits can be accepted if one has learned to love his family, feel part of it, and belong to it.

Questions... and how to discern them

Specifically, the questions we could ask would be the following: does my attitude build up or destroy? Does it unite or divide? Does it strengthen the foundations or merely adorn the battlements? In regard to myself, does this attitude help me grow or cause me to lapse? Does it consolidate me or cause me to fall apart? Does it strengthen or weaken me?

We can only find help to answer these questions by turning to the Gospel.

The Gospel is a school of discernment for determining the authenticity of our attitudes towards the Institutions.

In the family atmosphere offered us by the Gospel, where we feel free from exterior threats, it might perhaps help us to visualise the Lord's disputes with the various groups of Israel, who had clearly defined attitudes towards the Institutions.

The Pharisees

For example, what did the Lord do with the Pharisees, who were so attached to their own institutions? What was Jesus' response when the Pharisees condemned the disciples for picking ears of corn on the Sabbath? It was certainly not that of an anarchic *leader*, who fights against the institutions, which are, without doubt, the result of people's accumulated patience and love. Neither is it that of a self-critic, who establishes or abolishes at will, according to his whim.

Jesus leads the Pharisees to distinguish what is primary from what is secondary, a commentator's interpretation for a specific moment from the profound meaning of a commandment; and when he responds by presenting the scene of the loaves of offering, taken from the history of God's people and their leader David, he invites them to consider dignity rather than servility. However, this dignity, in my opinion, cannot be identified with a liberal individualism that prioritises attention to the marginal needs of humanity, while stifling that which is more profound: the need for God. This could perhaps be a criterion for discerning between the authentic flexibility of the institutions and that which is nothing more than servile submission to a hedonistic, selfish and competitive society. The most profound thing that the Lord says in this dispute is that no institution should obscure the newness of Christ. And the newness of Christ, which is the measure of all things, is obscured by both the retrograde as well as the purely innovative.

However, perhaps the deepest core of the Pharisees' temptation in regard to the institutions is that of stealing God's prerogative as the Father who calls everyone together. This is the arrogance and the drama of the Pharisees, be-

cause human efforts are too weak to grasp the power of God; and for this reason, that which is pharisaic crumbles and breaks.

The pharisaic attitude, like pharisaic institutions, has feet of clay. The Pharisee steals, attributing God's eschatological judgment to himself.

The Sadducees

Another false attitude towards the institutions is that of the Sadducees.

The world of the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the dead, is that of the defenders of the institutions, even when based on injustices.

They are dead who bury their own dead. They are intent on stealing God's power; it is a poor caricature incapable of becoming a seed of the Kingdom. For them, the institutions are tombs and as such they defend them to negate time and control their own death.

The Zealots

There is another way of negating time: it is the temptation of utopia, the temptation to replace the Kingdom of God with a human utopia. It is failing to measure the foundations before building the house. It is a refusal to accept our reality as creatures, who, in order to achieve something, must first assess the means. It is the magic that turns ethics into ethicism.

It is the philosophy of the Zealots: to steal God's glory and divert it towards the caricature of triumphalism.

The Zealots fight to destroy the structures that oppress humanity, but historically, they struggled for the sake of others, who were equally inadequate.

The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots all share the same elitist attitude of thinking on behalf of all and in the place of all. Just as each in turn stole God's glory, power and final judgment, they also deprive their brethren of their capacity to make decisions, the right to develop a process and become organised, and to become institutionalised.

The newness of Christ

I said that the logic of the Lord in his disputes leads us to discover his newness. Discovering the newness of Christ requires being able to abandon what is retrograde and what is inappropriately novel: it requires a down-to-earth approach.

Here lies the difficulty.

Becoming rooted in the past prevents us from seeing the march, the faces and the concrete signs, which gradually become blurred with distance. It is like reducing life to a restoration workshop. Concrete vision of the newness of Christ also eludes those who intend to trace it from a sterile laboratory of utopias.

Restorationists and utopians will struggle to attain power, hegemony and the institution. The argument is formulated in terms that leave two possible alternatives: either our institutions will be a great restoration workshop or else a great laboratory of utopias.

And while we discuss this and pass our time arguing about that, we fail to notice the march of God's faithful people: with this people goes strength and wisdom; real problems, which truly hurt, as well as salvation.

It will be the same as always: the ideologues of "restorationism" and utopianism, incapable of bearing the sweat of the march, will be left behind in the midst of their elitism, preserving their hollow stories to avoid becoming just another person in the march of history, where God saves us and makes us a body, an institution.

God's power enters history to unite human beings in a single body.

The heart of the attitude of the Pharisee, the Sadducee and the Zealot towards the institutions is unwillingness to form a body. There is sectarian ambition and an assertion of privilege: the privilege of "spiritual" power in the Pharisees, the privilege of reactionary religious power in the Sadducees and the privilege of pseudo-revolutionary religious power in the Zealots. And so this power is divisive and is not unifying like the power of God.

The essence of every ecclesial institution

From what we have seen, in this effort to re-examine non-evangelical attitudes towards the institutions, we have gained an insight into the essence of every ecclesial institution: to help people unite in awareness of the plan that establishes them as the one people of God.

I think the Gospel invites us to have the courage to recognise ourselves in these positions. The Lord is opening the door to us, to allow us to breathe the pure air of freedom and help us see that every authentic ecclesial institution is open to hope.

I would venture to say that the root of all loss of hope lies in breaking away from the march of the body, when we no longer say "our God," but "my God", when we no longer gather around the Lord of all, but a custom-made God. Nothing remains in that isolation except the cold ritual of an atemporal idol, with no relation to the past or the future, because we are enclosed within a narcissistic project.

Reconciliation with the institutions

I think a man and a woman are reconciled with the institutions and with their religious Institute - assuming that the Institute is reconciled with the Church - when their attitude towards the institution favours the idea of the body and the idea of time, as did Christ.

I would also venture to say that the Beatitudes of the Kingdom show us which attitudes to abandon and which to adopt so that the Kingdom can become an institution among us.

Blessed are the poor, because they have to unite in order to pursue their project of liberation. Blessed are the poor, because, for them, justice is a something they inevitably have to seek, because they need it and thirst for it. They are happy, because they are conscious of time and waiting, and because they do shirk the suffering that leads to the resurrection.

And since they have been wounded (persecuted), they know where (is) the real enemy lies; they do not make war with anyone, because the search for peace and justice has given them clarity, it has purified their hearts. Because they accept their deepest weakness, which is sin, they are always willing to grant an alternative in front of the palest glimmer of good will: they are merciful and wait, *in* time and *beyond* time, because they are wise and know that God alone satisfies.

Belonging to the Institute

If we examine the lives of many religious who have gradually - almost imperceptibly - distanced themselves from loyalty to their Institute, whether totally or partially, we will find that very often their lives have been obscured by categories enkindled by other ideological stances, by other disciplines, which conceal the originality of the Kingdom of God.

So, for example, religious groups are labelled as “right wing” or “left wing”, with those who are “prudent” (falsely prudent) described as “moderates” (lukewarm, “neither hot nor cold”). This separates people and is not from God.

I would suggest another way of categorising, which might be useful. I hope it is useful, and I do not wish to label anyone, but invite everyone to salvation in the body of Christ, which goes far beyond sectarian disputes.

I would outline it as follows: is the position of this Institute, or the critical attitude of a religious towards his Institute, an elitist one, i.e. divisive, ahistorical and lacking in hope? Is it an eclectic position, which lumps together but does not unite, and obscures history and hope with vain optimism? Or is it the position of someone who feels himself to be a member of a body and unites,

without denying the conflict, in the knowledge that life is much more than conflict; of someone who gives more importance to history than his own petty story; of someone who knows that love judges history and that hope surpasses our expectations?

Conclusion:

Christian principles of reconciliation with one's own Institute

Everything that has been said so far would be a mere collection of abstract reflections if we do not situate it in the context of the religious experience of our own Institutes and in the life of the Church, the faithful people of God.

I think that any reconciliation should have its roots in the faith of our fathers, as we receive it in the Church and in our own religious Institute. If we have a close look at the faith of our fathers, the original intention of our Founders and the particular wisdom of those we call the faithful, who are the people of God, we will discover, in regard to the institutions, that four Christian principles are upheld that are the pivot of reconciliation: the whole is greater than the part, unity is superior to conflict, reality is superior to ideas and time is greater than the space.

Those who are not reconciled with the institutions, religious who have lost a sense of belonging to their own Institute in their hearts, anchor their hope in factions, conflicts, ideas and the petty spaces that have been able to keep for themselves. Those men and women who prefer their own company within communities, who always fuel their hearts with conflicts (true collectors of injustices... those nuns that St. Teresa described as spending their lives saying "I have been treated unfairly"), who dream of ideas with no basis in reality or of unviable projects, who try to gather for the "moment" and not for the wealth of "time".

Becoming reconciled with one's religious Institute means to welcome the profound privilege of time, of unity, of the whole and of reality, rather than the narrow interests of partial spaces, of divisive conflicts, of fragments that obscure objective appraisal and of ideologies that have nothing to do with reality.

Msgr. MARIO JORGE BERGOGLIO
Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires

THE SPIRIT OF PROVIDENCE

In the Father's school

The life of Fr. Guanella, lived under the banner of Providence, which allowed him to establish so many works to help the poor, would be sufficient to show us the kind of spirit that should permeate our entire life and work as Servants of Charity.

However, it might also be useful to provide a few reflections to help us understand the spirit of Providence in the life of today.

I feel that this effort to penetrate more deeply into the mind of Fr. Guanella is justified by the fact that the *spirit of Providence* is not just a personal attitude of the Founder, as we shall see, but also a characteristic aspect of the Work that he founded: it is not just a mode of operation but a way of life, not only of the Founder but also of his children.

Providence today

I will therefore attempt to apply the great Guanellian themes of Providence to our own life. It would be mistaken to view these as outdated in the context of today's world, which would like to take the place of God with its technology and social laws. The economic assets and social laws produced by today's society are merely the means provided by Providence to humanity. Even if these are created for purely human purposes, or worse, as an alternative to faith, they are part of a providential plan of God. Fr. Guanella believed

that people become puppets in the hands of Providence, without their intention or awareness.

Modern civil societies, if well organised, can provide the needy with excellent material assistance; but without a vision of faith, it will lack that human and Christian warmth that should be at the heart of service to the poor and that no civil law can replace. Only the conviction of being co-operators with God in service to our needy brethren, who are images of God himself, can create that atmosphere of serenity of those who know – even in need – that they are living under the wings of Providence.

This is why we need to ask ourselves: is it possible today to live, create works, manage them, deal with all the various difficulties and find means of support using the same style as Fr. Guanella?

I believe that the answer can and should be positive, provided that our knowledge of Fr. Guanella is not merely superficial. We therefore need to conduct a careful and loving study, perhaps together with the motto “*pray and suffer*” as our programme of life, which still remains the secret of all success.

Once we have done this, it will be easier to get to grips with the practical reality of the present day. The spirit of Providence should be given priority in personal decisions and those regarding the administration of the Congregation, especially in these present times of darkness regarding the future of the works of charity and distrust in human behaviour.

Providence is love

Providence means the divine action that sustains, controls and guides all the events of creation, so that nothing happens against or without the divine will, especially in relation to human affairs, both individual and collective, in the lives of individuals and in history. This divine action can only be the fruit of God’s love, because “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8). Love requires love to be understood and accepted, and so only those who love can feel and see the Providence of God. Only those who love God and believe in his love see all things, without distinction, as providential. In other words, God’s loving Providence is the premise for interpreting all events. The hand of Providence in events cannot be demonstrated to those who do not share this Christian perspective. Here too, faith is the prerequisite and foundation: “*We have come to believe in the love God has for us*” (1 John 4:16). We believe in God’s love for us and therefore, although we may not understand everything, we know that it is part of a plan of love, even if we are unable to decipher this plan of love in the events of our lives and of history: “*We know that everything God works for good with those who love him*” (Rom 8:28).

This is the reason for the attitude of every believer in front of personal and social events; it is the reason for the attitude of Fr. Guanella in all the events of his life, lived in commitment to a plan of love for the poor. He felt Providence more like a loving son than a theologian: he did not see God's action in Providence in a merely static sense, or simply as a governing activity; it was the continuous expression of God's fatherly love; Fr. Guanella invites us to envisage God as "*present to us, like a child whose eyes are constantly turned towards his father. We should say: God sees me, God provides for his children*".

Furthermore, Providence is not seen merely as an extension and completion of the work of creation, but rather as an extension and implementation of the work of redemption by the Fatherhood of God; his Providence is in the Redemption, in which he manifests his Fatherly action, and in this lies the difference between the paternity of man and that of God

Providence, therefore, consists essentially in the loving care of the Father, who wants to benefit humanity with the fruits of his Son's Redemption; and therefore he does not only exercise it in the field of natural laws, but also, and fundamentally, in the supernatural order, i.e. the order of grace. In this order, our lives must be penetrated by divine life, which requires a filial relationship with God the Father in a continuous intimacy that embraces everything. The Father is eager to foster the spiritual progress of his children in everything, and allows the perfection of his fatherly love to be felt everywhere. Although he normally allows the laws of nature follow their course, he accompanies their progress with constant care and love.

Fr. Guanella does not understand Providence as a type of divine magic, as if God responds to every request with a miracle: Providence presupposes faith in the love of God as a Father who sees everything and provides for everything.

This also explains the intimate relationship Fr. Guanella saw between faith in Providence and love for the poor. His works of charity were primarily based not on human activity but on the eternal and loving action of God, who is wisdom, wealth, and infinite love. In short, Fr. Guanella sought to give his houses a *spirit of Providence* that views creatures and the Creator in a proper perspective and gives ample space to faith and love. He wanted our love for the poor to be a manifestation of the love of Providence itself, whose "*favourites*" should be given preference, "*since Divine Providence would suffer to be left aside*".

“Have faith!”

The spirit of Providence is seen in acts and attitudes based on loving trust in God the Father and accompanied by active human cooperation, composed of prayer, faith, work, sacrifice, poverty and love.

In the words of Fr. Mazzucchi, *“Providence has written a wonderful story through the life and deeds of Fr. Luigi.”* It carefully prepared him during the years of his youth, sustained him during times of darkness, and guided and helped him in the establishment of his institutions. In short, his life was lived in the shadow of Providence, *“whose guidance he always felt”* and whose presence he perceived in all its manifestations: in interior inspirations as well as in the will of his superiors, in opposition as well as in the help of those who understood him, in the needs of the poor as well as in the generosity of the rich, in the collaboration of the sisters and confreres as well as in the hostility of his enemies, and in failure as well as in success. *“Everything is providential!”* he would often say.

This is what every believer, especially the spiritual children of Fr. Guanella, should feel if they wish to see the supernatural sense of the events of their lives, of the vocation to which they are called and of the responsibilities they are assigned, as well as of the challenges they face.

Naturally, this requires faith. It is certainly not easy to discern at times: in the less-than-friendly attitudes of others, the setbacks that frustrate us, the problems that dissuade us from our set goals, the misfortunes that obstruct our work, or misunderstandings it is not easy to see the hand of God. It takes faith, *“Have faith! Have faith!”* he repeated to the sisters, instilling in them the warmth of his own faith. In *“Let’s go to Heaven”*, he wrote: *“With faith, you look at God like a child gazing with joyful eyes on the face of his beloved parent. Faith is a light that enlightens the mind and stirs the heart”*. It is very difficult to gaze with *“joyful eyes”* while weeping and when pain tightens its grasp. And yet faith performs these miracles, because it is a light that enlightens and, above all, moves the heart, naturally, of those who are able to love.

“A pinch of humility”

Believing in Providence also requires *humility*, because it means recognizing God’s supremacy over man. Modern man rejects this supremacy, proclaims his right to full independence and does not acknowledge his Creator. He claims total emancipation from the supernatural, to which he opposes science and technology, and prefers wealth, pleasure and power to Christ’s plan of salvation. *“Once,”* relates Fr. Vanoni, *“after giving a talk to the Sisters on the various duties of the house, Fr. Guanella turned to one sister... and urged her to also accept a duty and perform it humbly under the direction of her superiors. The sister responded, “For your information, a pinch of my intelligence is worth more than all the activity of your sisters.” Fr. Guanella then replied, “For your information, a pinch of humility is worth more than all your pre-*

sumption, because with humility the Lord gives graces but pride has a sorry end."

This was his conviction: *"We need a spirit of simple humility, through which the individual always and in everything sees the Lord, who arranges people and things..."*

This attitude of *"simple humility"*, which allows us to always see the Lord, is the secret of the holiness that many hidden souls have attained.

If a soul has faith and humility, it will certainly become the abode of filial trust in God, making it peaceful and strong, and providing the words for confident prayer. *"Banish doubt! The Lord hears our prayers; the Lord hears our prayers because he is not like us, who are inclined to anger, cruelty, partiality and other passions. The essence of God is goodness. He has no other desire than to do good. We know that holy people here on earth do good to their brethren. So what, then, will God do, who is the source of all goodness and holiness?"* And elsewhere: *"The Lord is a good Father to us; it is impossible and absurd to think that he would deprive his children, who trust in him, of the help they need."*

This is genuine Guanellian doctrine and it should constantly inspire our hearts. The priority needs we should ask for are those of the soul, and personal sanctification, which are certainly part of God's providential plan for us.

There is an example from the life of Fr. Guanella that is worth mentioning and shows the effectiveness of the Guanellian method for the sanctification of souls. Let us hear it from the person involved, Fr. A. Gemelli: *"It was Pius X who led me to a close spiritual relationship with Fr. Guanella, in around 1906, when the battle against modernism was raging. Due to my studies, I found myself in the company of some famous modernists, who later betrayed their priestly vocation. They also greatly disturbed my peace of mind, to the point that one day I exposed my inner conflict and doubts to the Holy Father Pius X.*

With great benevolence, the Holy Father suggested that I go to see Fr. Guanella. I clearly remember reminding the Holy Father that the reasons for my doubts and the causes of my difficulties were of a theological nature, whereas I did not know Fr. Guanella to be a theologian. The Holy Father interrupted me and said: "Haven't theologians disturbed your mind enough already? You need a priest with great love and zeal. Go to him in my name and do whatever he tells you." Following this advice, I set off to find Fr. Guanella. When I told him about my state of mind, he used no theological arguments but led me to consider the providential guidance of souls and to see that if Providence had helped me overcome many other difficulties to become a religious, it would not fail to assist me again and help me to become a priest. That was when I became aware of Fr. Guanella's profound supernatural spirit, his great humility and his gentleness of soul. Despite our difference in position and age, a spiritual friendship developed between us."

“Souls gathered under the wings of Providence”

The choice made by religious souls is not something that depends solely on their own will: there is a call from God, and so it is a providential matter, requiring firm faith. This was how Fr. Guanella considered it. “*The Institute*,” he writes in the Rule of 1910, “*with sentiments of faith, welcomes the postulant into the novitiate as if God is sending him*”.

We may even fail to remember that we were sent by the Lord on the day we entered religious life, but we must not forget that our vocation, according to Guanellian thought, has set us on a “*way of Providence*.” Whatever our personal situation, whatever the task assigned to us, we must consider ourselves as “*instruments*” and, if necessary, even *puppets* of Providence.

This language may seem extreme, especially today. Even in religious life there is fear of being exploited. Out of respect for our own personality, we are afraid of being sacrificed for the sake of the works, or that our personal qualities may be stifled by the structures; we regard whatever we are called to do under obedience with diffidence.

Sometimes the Rule itself is considered as something that stifles the spirit. The superior is seen as a confrere with his own limitations and, in the name of greater openness, he is placed within the narrow horizons of the human mind.

Fr. Guanella, however, saw things entirely through the eyes of faith. If his doctrine reflects the traditional concept of the superior as God’s representative, it also anticipates the teachings of the Second Vatican Council on the role of the superior, who must exercise his authority in a spirit of service to the brethren. Fr. Guanella writes in the *Internal Rule of the Little House* in 1889: “*The true superior of the family (the House) is the Lord in his Providence. The superiors of the House represent God and are mere instruments of Divine Providence.*”

There are also moments in life when we pass through a desert or darkness. This is the time to verify whether the spirit guiding us is truly the spirit of God; it is the moment when trust in the Lord reveals itself as truly providential.

We have the life of Fr. Guanella before us, like a magnificent painting, set in a precious frame of various troubles and sufferings, which he calmly received from the hands of Providence.

The pace of modern life also presents us with continuous problems, and constantly obliges us to make daily choices, without giving us time to reflect or sufficient peace of mind to make a calm decision. This leads to indecisiveness, uncertainty, anxieties and discouragement.

The example of Fr. Guanella can be of comfort to us, as Fr. Mazzucchi reminds us: “To less capable people who asked ask, ‘How do you manage to

do all that?’ we answer, ‘It is God who does it.’” One day the venerable Pontiff Pius X asked him, “*Do you sleep at night?*” “*Yes, Holy Father, and sometimes even during the day.*” “*Don’t you have worries?*” “*No, Holy Father, because I take care of things until midnight, and then God sees to the rest.*”

This was the secret of Fr. Guanella’s serenity and perseverance: *it is God who does!*

“*Are you disturbed by fear of the outcome?*” he wrote to the sisters. “*Abandon yourself in the arms of Providence, where your name and your strength come from, and live in certainty of triumph.*” Fear of how things may turn out can affect us at any time, even in religious life, and no one is exempt from this danger. We therefore need to learn, from Fr. Guanella’s teachings, how to overcome it and to cooperate with the action of God, so that the vocation of each one becomes a story of the wonders of Providence, like that of the Founder.

Faithfulness of children

What Fr. Guanella writes for souls aspiring to perfection is truly beautiful: “*God is the Almighty; so if that is what he is, then he can look down at your wretchedness and sanctify you! Can he not also use you for a work of His glory? Try to remain faithful to the Lord by recognising your limits and then entrust yourself to him.*”

Faithfulness should not be put into doubt by any obstacle or temptation, but assured by a humble mind and heart, and by an unshakeable confidence in the Lord’s paternal goodness, expressed primarily in confidant prayer, of which the Founder is our teacher. “*An earthly father,*” he writes in his ‘Svegliarino’, “*provides at once when he knows his child’s needs. And so does our Heavenly Father when he hears us sighing: Father, Father! why do you not come to our aid?*” “*Whoever asks, receives... God is a Father and he answers those who pray.*”

The Lord, in his providential goodness, is more interested in people than things; he is interested in everyone and in each particular individual: “*In this,*” confirms Fr. Guanella, “*he is like the sun in the middle of the sky, which gives light and its heat to the mountains as well as the plains, and to the cliffs as well as the sea. It looks down on everyone, but at the same time shines its rays on you, as if it had nothing else to do but provide for you.*”

“*Your present, past and future are all before the Lord, who takes as much care over them as if you were the only one he had to think about.*”

Summarised in these passages is a wonderful doctrine for the spiritual guidance of souls, which draws its inspiration from the Providence of God. Frequent crises of heart or mind, which lead to discouragement or the aban-

donment of commitments, could be overcome or put into perspective by these simple but profound teachings of Fr. Guanella, without seeking solutions in human means alone.

In the Founder's footsteps

It is not just individual lives that need to be nourished by this spirit of Providence, but also the life of the congregations he founded. This spirit is part of his legacy and is intimately bound to our charism; i.e. service to the poor must be carried out with a particular style, aimed at the most abandoned, with means sought and accepted from the hands of Providence.

Trust in Providence also gave Fr. Luigi serenity in regard to the future of his Congregations after his death. Whoever creates a Work always thinks about its future with trepidation. The Work of Fr. Guanella had still not received official approval from the ecclesiastical authorities, due to its burden of debt, and so there was much reason to fear in regard to its future.

Yet Fr. Guanella, looking ahead with the eyes of faith, was described as serene. *"I trust in the Lord,"* he confided to his close friends a few months before he died. *"I do not have, and have never had, any fear about debts or succession... The debts are the Lord's..."* *"Others worry and ask anxiously: When Fr. Guanella's eyes are finally closed, who will take his place?"*

"He will close his eyes, saying goodbye to this world, to which has never given his heart, and bidding farewell to his own, who will take better care of the Works he has founded than he did. These Works, like himself, are the Lord's. Whoever has faith will firmly believe that He who raises up people and Works will see that they continue without him, a mere atom lost in space. Each night, this poor atom places himself and the Works so dear to his heart in the hands of God, and then peacefully falls asleep."

When the time of his departure drew near, his conversations were aimed particularly at inspiring trust in the Lord. Msgr. Bacciarini states: *"On 16 September 1915, he addressed the sisters as if it were the last time he would speak to them. On that occasion, he also spoke to us priests with such particular emphasis on distrust in ourselves and trust in Divine Providence that it seemed as if he was really preparing us for the trails that awaited us in his death."*

His children understood this lesson on trust in the Lord well and put it into practice immediately after the departure of their Father. They addressed the public, anticipating the question in many minds: *"Now that the great heart of Fr. Guanella has stopped beating, his arm has become rigid and the light has gone from his eyes, what will happen to his Works? What will happen to the two Congregations which he brought to life at the cost of his own?"*

The reply was as follows: “On the front of Fr. Guanella’s house is written: *Work of Divine Providence*”. Divine Providence does not die, but survives the destinies of man and knows how to raise up children of Abraham and instruments for his own designs from these stones. Therefore we are not afraid, we have no fear about the future of Fr. Guanella’s houses.” And history has proven that Fr. Guanella’s legacy passed into good hands.

A continuous and loving study of the spirit of the Founder is necessary to prevent this precious heritage from fading. We still remember how insistently Fr. Guanella spoke to his own about Providence. Fr. Mazzucchi, the most authoritative interpreter of the Founder’s spirit, collected his maxims and teachings, sowing them in handfuls throughout the pages of *“Charitas”*, which can be considered a goldmine of the Guanellian spirit. The subject of Providence dominates these pages.

Providence and charism

When speaking of the duty of preserving the Institute’s character and remaining faithful to its spirit, Fr. Mazzucchi encouraged the confreres not only to maintain a spirit of untiring diligence, nurture Eucharistic piety and ensure the continuation of the preventive system, but also added: *“above all, keep the spirit of trust in Providence alive.”*

Trust in Providence is a fundamental component of the Congregation’s spirit. In this regard, we recall the highly significant and enlightening episode related by Fr. Mazzucchi, when Fr. Guanella suspended the procedure submitted to the Holy See for approval of his Institutes as religious congregations, partly because he feared that the impositions of canon law might negate the spirit and direction of his foundation, especially in regard to its particular character of trust in and abandonment to Providence.

It is also worthwhile reflecting on those comforting and challenging words of his Rule, which always give joy to the hearts of his children *“Let the Servants of Charity always bear in mind, however, that our Work was born and has grown with the visible help of Providence and that it will never fail, provided that they do not go astray from their own duties.”*

We still remember what Fr. Mazzucchi wrote about Fr. Guanella’s faith: *“From this faith... came that extraordinary trust in the help of Providence, which was a very important aspect of his Christian charity.”*

Is not the key to discovering our identity precisely here, in this relationship between Providence and charity?

This report is not purely theoretical, but should have an effect on the life of the Work: it should serve as a guide for major decisions at the level of Chapters and Government, as well as in the daily affairs of the houses and the

spiritual lives of each religious. It should become a catalyst in the religious life of the communities, as well as in the activities carried out in the name of Fr. Guanella throughout the world.

“How good it is to live and die under the care of Divine Providence”

These words of the Founder could be used to summarise the lifestyle of the Guanellian religious families. Every religious Institute, in addition to the particular mission for which it was born, also has its own way of living the *sequela Christi* and intimacy with the Lord. This has produced the great schools of spirituality that have enriched the Church throughout the centuries.

Guanellian spirituality also has its own features and characteristic traits, the most notable of which is its trusting relationship with God, our loving and provident Father. Fr. Guanella bequeathed this spirit to the families he founded as his most beautiful legacy.

This trust, based on the goodness of God, prevails over the fear that naturally arises from awareness of human weakness and the holiness of the Lord.

This kind of feeling can make a religious community resolute in the face of hardships, wise in its decisions, united in charity, tireless in apostolic activity and a living witness of the spirit of Providence, which sanctified Fr. Guanella and should also sanctify his followers.

Even in times of illness or distress, the Servants of Charity are children of Divine Providence. It is precisely in these situations that they should show their confidence in our common heavenly Father, who feeds good and bad alike and promises special love and assistance to his faithful children and servants.

On his bed of pain, shortly before his death, he repeated: *“I believe that God’s providence has sent me this sickness so that extraordinary graces may be poured out upon the House... I think that my malady is one of those that send us off to Heaven... God will take care of you: none of us here on earth are indispensable; Providence will help you... to die... paradise... I entrust myself to the hands of the Lord...”*

The works of Providence

In addition to its own way of living the *“Sequela Christi”*, a religious Institute also has its own style of operating, which naturally comes from the example and teachings of the Founder.

We know the trust Fr. Guanella had in Providence in his work for the poor.

Times change, however. The works develop and adapt to new circumstances, but the spirit that sustains them must remain unchanged. All human activities

have their own problems; religious works also have them: some are common to all times and places, while others are related to a particular period or place.

Some of Fr. Guanella's teachings are always of help when dealing with problems and are highly relevant today. They are useful when choosing works and deciding how to administer them, because they highlight values that are always relevant, irreplaceable and indispensable, and are rooted in divine doctrine and evangelical prudence.

Some situations become problematic mainly because we lack the faith, the virtue or the ability to deal with them. Even today, we still have much to learn from the school of Fr. Guanella!

Holiness and work

There is a tendency nowadays to exclude the supernatural from social work, and this also brings a wave of technicality to charitable religious Institutes. The standards indicated by psychologists or sociologists are regarded as the ideal goals, difficulties are addressed by purely human means, educational methods are based purely on natural principles, financial resources are provided almost entirely by public authorities, and so on. Even religious inspiration, without being excluded, is downgraded in importance.

Fr. Guanella spoke another language: *"The Works are sustained by the spirit of trust in Providence, of work and of sacrifice, i.e. holiness and work."* *"...One grain of confidence is worth more than a hundred of social security and human providence."* *"The only things we should fear in regard to the life of our Houses are sin and lack of trust in the Lord."*

The contribution of science and technology is necessary and proper, but must be framed in a wider context of spirituality and supernatural grace, which gives a sense of mission to the work of the operator and a sense of dignity to the assisted person, who is the image of God himself.

There is a danger of forgetting our precious heritage, accumulated over years of experience, as the fruit of true love and suffering, and of enlightening faith and daily work, following the example and guidance of Fr. Guanella. A lack of openness towards using the means and methods discovered by human research would likewise be just as harmful: these are true means with which the Lord provides us today. In the words of the Founder, *"We are obliged to make us of those means that Divine Providence itself provides for us"*.

Guanellian Legacy

The Guanellian family cannot boast a legacy of abundant material goods or wealthy and well-furnished houses. Nor can it boast a large patrimony of

knowledge and learning. However, the Founder has left us *a spirit of Providence in service to the poor*, carried out with a programme of prayer, sacrifice, work, poverty and simplicity, which are complementary to the action of Providence. This precious and inexhaustible heritage should nourish not only the members of his Congregations, but also those friends, benefactors, guests and faithful who are in any way connected with the Guanellian charism and spirituality. All Christian communities, especially today, need a breath of the supernatural. Today's world, immersed in materialism, rejects God's rule and thinks it can do without him; it therefore needs a humble way of return and to feel itself once more in the arms of his paternal Providence. Otherwise there is the danger of a loss of hope and faith in the future.

Christians must play a leading role in this movement of return to the sense and presence of God and to faith in his Providence, and the sons of Fr. Guanella must be the soul of this work, in the small world that surrounds them.

Pope Paul VI masterfully outlined the figure and work of Fr. Guanella in the address he gave in St. Peter's for the Founder's beatification: "*... At this point, our reflection on this magnificent picture of the works of Fr. Guanella seems to become a vision before us, presenting us the new Blessed, Fr. Luigi Guanella himself, who, seeing the living and resplendent circle of his children and those they assist, quietly but authoritatively reminds us, as he did when he was still alive: 'It is God who does!' It is Divine Providence! Everything is God: the idea, the vocation, the capacity to act, the success, the merit and the glory are all God's, not man's. This vision of diligent and triumphant goodness is a reflection of divine goodness, which has found ways to make itself known and to work among us. 'It is God who does!'*"

We can conclude with his words as Father and Teacher

These are words he spoke to his Sisters, but we can apply this beautiful text to us all.

"Divine Providence! Recognise it in all your actions, both large and small; recognise it in every wise thought in your minds and in every kind feeling in your hearts. Recognise it, in all your acts, as your mother, because you are daughters of the great Mother, Divine Providence.

Never cause her the slightest offence. Greet her as Queen in your house and do allow those who are not to her liking to enter, nor close the door to those whom you know to be dear to Divine Providence, your Queen and Mother. Do not give the lowest place in the house to those who should come first, the poorest ones, the most abject and abandoned, because the Lord is the guardian of the little ones and the abandoned.

Do not fear hardship or poverty, because the invitation, or rather, the command to favour the most abandoned comes from God, who expressly asks us: 'Welcome this poor man and feed him for me, and I will reward you.'

Do not prefer rich people or offerings from powerful men to Providence. The demands of men must not prevail over the will of God. A great and blessed man is he who recognises Jesus Christ, poor and destitute, in the person of the needy; he is indeed blessed because in his own hour of need, and on the last day, the Lord will deliver him.

And you, apostles of charity and missionaries who give the most and the best of yourselves to the poor, to comfort them in their physical and spiritual needs, do not doubt, because you will never lack for anything. The Most High, who clothes the flowers in beautiful colours, will also clothe you, and he who feeds the birds and nourishes the worms of the earth will not forget you. Are you not worth much more than the birds in the sky or the worms in the earth?

You, who have left home, family and everything to follow Jesus Christ, will receive a hundred times more and will have the supreme gift of eternal life."

(Edited by Fr. Tito Credaro)

COMMUNICATIONS

A) CONFRESERES

a) MEMBERS AT THE END OF DECEMBER 2013

	Bishops	Priests	Seminarians	Brothers	Total
Perpetual	1	334	5	34	374
Temporary	—	—	147	5	152
Novice	—	—	—	—	22
Total	1	334	152	39	548

b) GEOGRAPHY OF THE CONGREGATION

Country*	Communities and Residences	Perpetual				Temporary		Novices	Total
		bishops	priests	clerics and deacons	brothers	clerics	brothers		
Argentina	7	—	18	—	2	—	—	3	23
Brasile	12	1	29	—	5	12	—	—	47
Cile	5	—	9	—	6	—	—	—	15
Colombia	1	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	3
Colombia (C.G.)	1	—	2	—	—	9	—	—	11
Filippine	2	—	8	—	—	2	—	2	12
Germania (C.G.)	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
Ghana	1	—	1	—	—	2	1	—	4
Guatemala	1	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	3
India	10	—	42	—	—	54	—	4	100
Israele	1	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	3
Italia (S. Cuore)	19	—	85	—	9	—	1	3	98
Italia (Romana)	11	—	60	—	2	—	—	—	62
Italia (C.G.)	2	—	10	3+2	—	13	—	—	28
Messico	2	—	9	—	1	—	—	—	10
Nigeria	4	—	9	—	3	34	—	10	56
Paraguay	3	—	9	—	1	—	2	—	12
Polonia	1	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	2
R.D. Congo	3	—	8	—	3	20	1	—	32
Spagna	2	—	5	—	1	—	—	—	6
Spagna (C.G.)	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
Svizzera	1	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	5
U.S.A.	2	—	10	—	—	—	—	—	10
Vietnam	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
Total	94	1	334	5	34	147	5	22	548

* Among the confreres and novices who live in that nation it could be that there are some confreres and novices belonging to other provinces (in the case of Italy, we distinguish Sacro Cuore Province (S. Cuore), San Giuseppe Roman Province (Romana) and Generalate (S.G.).

c) JOYFUL EVENTS IN 2014

1. 90 years and over		Years
Bredice don Armando	22-08-1917	97
Cantoni don Giuseppe	16-07-1920	94
Credaro don Tito	11-02-1922	92
Vaccari don Danilo	01-12-1922	»
Invernizzi don Antonio	06-12-1922	»
Altieri don Vincenzo	11-12-1922	»
Belotti don Francesco	06-02-1923	91
Di Ruscio don Romano	24-04-1923	»
Fogliamanzillo Fr. Salvatore	05-04-1924	90
Moroni don Angelo	25-09-1924	»
Altieri don Marcello	27-12-1924	»
Rizziero don Giuliano	29-12-1924	»
2. Over 80 years old		
Castelnuovo don Mario	23-08-1925	89
Maglia don Carlo	21-07-1926	88
Liborio don Battista	05-09-1926	»
Maniero don Pietro	18-05-1927	87
Pasquali don Pietro	09-10-1927	»
Gandossini don Anselmo	22-07-1928	86
Gridelli don Tonino	13-12-1928	»
Tamburini don Antonio	23-10-1929	85
Casali don Tarcisio	10-02-1930	84
Cornaggia don Franco	11-12-1930	»
Gasparoli don Mario	08-06-1931	83
Zanella don Settimo	10-06-1931	»
Merlin don Giuseppe	22-09-1931	»
Brulletti don Pietro	24-09-1931	»
Bini don Giuseppe	04-10-1931	»
3. 80th birthday		
Simion don Pier Giorgio	06-03-1934	
Sgroi don Carmelo	01-05-1934	
Iannitto don Enrico Carmine	14-07-1934	
Argenta don Romano Giuseppe	16-09-1934	
Dall'Amico don Guido	04-10-1934	
Lorusso don Pietro	06-11-1934	

4. 50th birthday

Rojas Franco don Sergio	17-01-1964
Silguero Avalos don Cecilio	01-02-1964
Adorno Orihuela don Eladio	18-02-1964
Riva don Marco	23-03-1964
Back Fr. Edgard	19-05-1964
Obiagba don Christopher	21-06-1964
Leiva don César Augusto	22-09-1964
Cerbito Galit don Eduardo	13-10-1964

5. 50th anniversary of Profession

Codega Don Antonio	24-09-1964
Cogliati don Mario	24-09-1964
Faggiano don Tommaso	24-09-1964
Minuzzo don Giuseppe	24-09-1964
Parini don Amelio Giampiero	24-09-1964
Pedagna Stefanelli don Cosimo	24-09-1964
Pravettoni don Alberto	24-09-1964
Rubagotti don Alfredo	24-09-1964

6. 25th anniversary of Profession

Seveso Fr. José Maria	01-03-1989
Patuelli don Davide	08-09-1989
Scibetta don Domenico	08-09-1989

7. 50th anniversary of Ordination

Curri don Giuseppe	27-06-1964
Bongiascia don Enrico	28-06-1964
Checchinato don Livio	28-06-1964
Iannitto don Enrico Carmine	28-06-1964
Lorusso don Pietro	05-07-1964

8. 25th anniversary of Ordination

Latín Ramírez don Hernán	29-01-1989
Avilés Araya don Jorge César	04-02-1989
Rutigliano don Nicola	18-03-1989
Colafemina don Donato	15-04-1989
Villegas Vallejo Don José	08-09-1989

B) EVENTS OF CONSECRATION

a) NOVICES

1. Bangalore (Divine Providence Province)

Antonyraj Arunkumar
Chinnappa Joseph Raja
John Philip Kalaikovan
Merugu Anil

2. Barza d'Ispra (Sacred Heart Province - Province S. Giuseppe in Rome)

Mistur Marcin Tadeusz	<i>Province S. Giuseppe in Rome</i>
Rizzi Domenico	<i>Province S. Giuseppe in Rome</i>
Russo Giovanni	<i>Province S. Giuseppe in Rome</i>

3. Luján (Province of Cruz del Sur - Province of Santa Cruz - Our Lady of Guadalupe Province)

Mariano Amaral Víctor	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Morales Hernández Saúl	<i>Our Lady of Guadalupe Province</i>
Moura Silva Rafael	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>

4. Nnebukwu (Delegation Our Lady of Hope)

Agu Paul Chima
Anike Benedict
Awudi Nicholas Selasi
Iournumbe Stanislaus
Manipia Jean Lady
Mpia Bakuamakusu Elie
Nwanza Mbangu Raphael
Ngumba Gabriel Pombo
Obiyor Michael
Onuoha Chinedu Henry

5. Quezon City (Divine Providence Province)

Adornaldo Jacob
Matulac Alfie

b) FIRST RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

Alexis Francis Xavier	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Almaraj Johnson Rajesh Kumar	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Bisa Bea Gilberto	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Maria Nathan Bosco Yesuraj	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Mariya Anthuvan Arun David	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Packiam Kulandai	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Prasad Vijay Kumar Pilla	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Sebastian Arockia Nathan	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Solomon Stalin	<i>Divine Providence Province</i>
Aquino Marquez Arturo	<i>Our Lady of Guadalupe Province</i>
Diaz Caceres Benoni	<i>Province of Cruz del Sur</i>
Garcete Ramos Edelberto	<i>Province of Cruz del Sur</i>
Ovelar Ruiz Diaz Luis Ernesto	<i>Province of Cruz del Sur</i>
Huning Riccardo	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Kroetz Alexandre	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Perini Fachin Marcio Antonio	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Souza Santos Renan Rafael	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Zwirtes Sulzbaker Diovane	<i>Province of Santa Cruz</i>
Ekpo Mark	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Kapapa Joel	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>
Mongi Herman	<i>Delegation Our Lady of Hope</i>

c) PERPETUAL RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

Anukam Chukwuemeka Nathan	(Italy) in Rome	20-04-2013
Asogo Terna Ignatius	(Italy) in Rome	20-04-2013
Mputu Lote Jean Junior	(Italy) in Rome	20-04-2013
Saluzzi Rocco	(Italy) in Bari	26-05-2013

d) PERPETUAL RELIGIOUS PROFESSION AND DIACONATE

Anandarayer			
Perianayagasamy	(India) in Poonamallee	24-03-2013	24-03-2013
Arul Antony Samy	(India) in Poonamallee	24-03-2013	24-03-2013
Arul Pragasam Paul Francis	(India) in Poonamallee	24-03-2013	24-03-2013
Joseph Arputha Raj	(India) in Poonamallee	24-03-2013	24-03-2013
Michael F. Arockia Doss	(India) in Poonamallee	24-03-2013	24-03-2013

Raj Maria Michael Shantham	(India)	in Poonamallee	24-03-2013	24-03-2013
Selva Raj Sagaya Raj	(India)	in Poonamallee	24-03-2013	24-03-2013
Thavamani Anandhan	(India)	in Poonamallee	24-03-2013	24-03-2013
Xavier Leo Joseph	(India)	in Poonamallee	24-03-2013	24-03-2013
Cerutti Michele	(Italy)	in Rome	20-04-2013	21-04-2013
Corso Diego Omar	(Italy)	in Rome	20-04-2013	21-04-2013
Guerrero Barreto Félix	(Italy)	in Rome	20-04-2013	21-04-2013
Johnson Aniekere Emmanuel	(Italy)	in Rome	20-04-2013	21-04-2013
Ortiz Candia Juan Manuel	(Italy)	in Rome	20-04-2013	21-04-2013
Aquino Gastón Gabriel	(Italy)	in Rome	24-10-2013	26-10-2013

e) **PRIESTLY ORDINATION**

Luvunu Lowu François	(R.D. Congo)	in Kinshasa		7-07-2013
Alphonse Baktiswalagan	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Anandarayer Perianayagasamy	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Antonysamy Jegan Patrik Daniel	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Arul Antony Samy	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Arul Pragasam Paul Francis	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Joseph Arputha Raj	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Michael F. Arockia Doss	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Raj Maria Michael Shantham	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Rayapillai Amalorpavanathan	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Selva Raj Sagaya Raj	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Thavamani Anandhan	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Xavier Leo Joseph	(India)	in Cuddalore		6-08-2013
Putonor Baridi Lawrence	(Nigeria)	in Owerri		10-08-2013
Unegbu Chigozie Vitus	(Nigeria)	in Owerri		10-08-2013
Corso Diego Omar	(Argentina)	in Buenos Aires		7-09-2013
Guerrero Barreto Félix	(Paraguay)	in San Joaquín		14-09-2013
Cerutti Michele	(Italy)	in Arona		23-11-2013
Johnson Aniekere Emmanuel	(Nigeria)	in Owerri		7-12-2013

DECREES

1. DECREE ON HOLIDAYS

Prot. n. 407/02-13

Ai Reverendi Superiori provinciali
e Superiore di Delegazione

LORO SEDI

OBJECT: *Decree on confreres' holidays*

Il Consiglio generale, a partire dalla Mozione finale del XIX Capitolo generale che così si esprime: «*Il Capitolo dà al nuovo Consiglio generale il compito di ritoccare, precisare e adattare nella forma tutte le Proposte e le Mozioni approvate dal Capitolo generale, di promulgarle e renderle operative nel sessennio*».

Sollecitato anche dai Superiori provinciali, ritiene conveniente precisare con una norma generale quanto riguarda le vacanze dei confratelli che operano in Province differenti da quella di origine, in modo che i Superiori provinciali possano avere un più chiaro orientamento nell'applicare la Mozione n. 10 che dice: «*Il Capitolo, considerando il crescente numero di coloro che vivono l'impegno apostolico fuori dalla propria Nazione o Provincia, e di coloro che studiano nei Seminari internazionali, richiede che il Superiore provinciale, in dialogo con il Provinciale di origine del confratello e con il consenso del suo Consiglio – nel dare orientamenti e norme circa le vacanze – tenga presenti i criteri di equità e di testimonianza della povertà*».

Per cui, avendo ottenuto il voto favorevole del mio Consiglio, a tenore del CIC n. 622 e delle Cost. n. 117

**promulgo il seguente Decreto,
che entra in vigore a partire dal 1° marzo 2013.**

«I confratelli di voti perpetui che vivono l'impegno apostolico o realizzano studi accademici in una Provincia diversa da quella di origine, potranno usufruire di una vacanza in famiglia di trenta giorni ogni due anni. Il Superiore provinciale, in casi particolari, può decidere diversamente, dopo aver sentito anche il Provinciale di origine del confratello.

Per i confratelli di voti perpetui, inseriti in Comunità di Nazioni diverse dalla propria di origine ma della stessa Provincia religiosa, sarà il Superiore provinciale a dare orientamenti e norme (v. Reg. n. 15), attenendosi il più possibile alla norma dei due anni».

N.B. Il presente Decreto riguarda i confratelli di voti perpetui. I confratelli di voti temporanei che studiano in Seminari internazionali o che realizzano il periodo di Tirocinio in Comunità di altra Provincia, seguiranno le norme stabilite dal proprio Superiore provinciale in accordo con i responsabili del Seminario.

Le motivazioni per concedere visite straordinarie in famiglia dovranno essere valutate con prudenza dai Superiori provinciali a cui corrisponde la facoltà di dare queste autorizzazioni.

P. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superiore generale

P. GUSTAVO DE BONIS
Segretario generale

Roma, 6 gennaio 2013.
Solemnità dell'Epifania del Signore

2. DECREES FOR THE ERECTION OF NEW COMMUNITIES AND RESIDENCES

Prot. n. 414/03-13

To the Rev. Superior
Fr. Soosai Rathinam
and his Council
Divine Providence Province
CHENNAI
INDIA

SUBJECT: *Decree of erection of a new Religious House at Kumbakonam*

The general Council on March 25th has read your request of erection of a new Religious House in Kumbakonam, taking into consideration the motivations and a correct number of confreres who will belong to that community,

the Superior general erects

as Religious House the **Community of Kumbakonam**, Diocese of Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu State.

No objection for Fr. A. John Bosco, appointed as **local Superior** and **Parish priest** by the provincial Council.

Wishing to Fr. John Bosco and to all the confreres of this Community a good work in fraternal union and joyful enthusiasm, we assure our remembrance to the Lord and to Mary Mother of Divine Providence.

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superior general

Fr. GUSTAVO DE BONIS
General Secretary

Rome, March 26th, 2013

Prot. n. 415/03-13

To the Rev. Superior
Fr. Soosai Rathinam
and his Council
Divine Providence Province
29, James Street
POONAMALLEE - CHENNAI
INDIA

SUBJECT: *Decree of erection of a new Religious House at Thalavadi*

The general Council at March 25th has read your request of erection of a new Religious House in Thalavadi, taking into consideration the motivations and a correct number of confreres who will belong to that community,

the Superior general erects

as Religious House the **Community of Thalavadi**, Diocese of Ootacamund, Tamil Nadu State.

No objection for Fr. Alphonse Maria Ligory, appointed as **local Superior** by the provincial Council.

Wishing to Fr. Alphonse Maria Ligory and to all the confreres of this Community a good work in fraternal union and joyful enthusiasm, we assure our remembrance to the Lord Jesus Christ, to Mary Mother of Divine Providence and to Saint Joseph.

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superior general

Fr. GUSTAVO DE BONIS
General Secretary

Rome, March 26th, 2013

Prot. n. 431/05-13

Al Rev.do Superiore provinciale
Don Marco Grega
e Consiglio
Provincia Sacro Cuore
Via Tommaso Grossi, 18 - COMO

e al Rev.do Delegato
Fr. Uche Ifesinachi Desmond
Delegazione N.S. della Speranza
New Olubadan Palace Road
IBADAN - NIGERIA

OBJECT: *Decree for the erection of new Residences*

Il Superiore generale, nella seduta di Consiglio dal 23 al 25 aprile scorso, avuto il voto favorevole del suo Consiglio, valutato il parere favorevole del Superiore provinciale e suo Consiglio, nonché le motivazioni del Consiglio di Delegazione, a tenore del Reg. n. 343

erige

le seguenti Residenze:

- Good Samaritan House di Adidome dipendente dalla Comunità di St. Theresa Centre di Abor.
- Don Guanella Farm School di Moniya dipendente dalla Comunità della House of Providence di Ibadan.
- Our Lady of Providence di Owerri dipendente dal Superiore di Delegazione.

Assicuriamo le nostre preghiere affinché le nuove Residenze erette giovinno ad una positiva azione progettuale per lo sviluppo della Delegazione Nostra Signora della Speranza.

Con affetto e riconoscenza, a nome del Consiglio generale

P. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superiore generale

P. GUSTAVO DE BONIS
Segretario generale

Roma, 1° maggio 2013

Prot. n. 435/06-13

To Rev. Fr.
Antonysamy Soosai Rathinam
Provincial of the Divine Providence
Province
29, James Street
POONAMALLEE - CHENNAI
INDIA

SUBJECT: *Decree of erection of a new residence*

The general Council, during the meeting of May 28th, has read your request of erection a new religious Community at Madurai. Taken into consideration the good motivations that you explain the Superior general with the consensus of his Council

erects

the Community **“Soosai Thottam” at Madurai City - Tamil Nadu State, India, as Residence**, under the dependency of Sivagangai Community.

Imploring from God special graces and blessings upon this new creature of love and charity, we wish a very good work among the elderly, children and persons in need who may be in the street at the style of Fr. Guanella.

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superior general

Fr. GUSTAVO DE BONIS
General Secretary

Rome, June 7th, 2013

Prot. n. 453/09-13

To Rev. Fr.
Antonymsamy Soosai Rathinam
Provincial of the Divine Providence
Province
29, James Street
POONAMALLEE - CHENNAI
INDIA

SUBJECT: *Decree of erection of a new Residence*

The general Council, during the meeting of September 21st, has read your request of erection a new religious Community at Kallathupatti St. Anthony the Hermit Church. Taken into consideration the good motivations that you explain the Superior general with the consensus of his Council

erects

the Community at **St. Anthony the Hermit Church, Kallathupatti (South)-Tamil Nadu State, India, as Residence**, under the dependency of the Provincial.

Imploring from God special graces and blessings upon this new creature for the pastoral care of a portion of people we wish a very good apostolate at the style of the Samaritan Parish.

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superior general

Fr. GUSTAVO DE BONIS
General Secretary

Rome, September 21th, 2013

Prot. n. 431/05-13

Ai Rev.di
Don Wiesław Baniak e
Don Maria Arokiadoss Anthonisamy
Pforzheim - Diocesi di Friburgo
BADEN-WÜRTEMBERG - GERMANIA

OBJECT: *Decree for the erection of Sankt Alois Guanella Mission as Residence*

Il Superiore generale, nella seduta di Consiglio dal 16 al 18 dicembre scorso, avuto il voto favorevole del suo Consiglio, a tenore del Reg. n. 343

erige

la seguente Residenza:

- **Sankt Alois Guanella Mission**, nella città di Pforzheim, Diocesi di Friburgo, nello Stato di Baden-Württemberg, Germania.

Allo stesso tempo comunico la nomina di:

- **Don Wiesław Baniak**, come *responsabile della Residenza*, e **Don Maria Arokiadoss Antonyraj**, come addetto alle attività pastorali.

Assicuriamo le nostre preghiere affinché la nuova Residenza eretta giovi ad una positiva azione pastorale in mezzo agli emigrati e per la diffusione del carisma guanelliano in terra germanica.

Con affetto, nella Carità di Cristo!

P. ALFONSO CRIPPA
Superiore generale

P. GUSTAVO DE BONIS
Segretario generale

Roma, 30 dicembre 2013

3. APPOINTMENTS

- **Prot. n. 401 of January 23rd, 2013**

- Fr. Uche Desmond, Superior Delegate - Delegation Our Lady of Hope
- Fr. Franco Lain, 1st Councillor - Delegation Our Lady of Hope
- Fr. François Mpunga, 2nd Councillor - Delegation Our Lady of Hope
- Fr. Giancarlo Frigerio, 3rd Councillor - Delegation Our Lady of Hope

4. “NULLA OSTA” FOR APPOINTMENTS

- **Prot. n. 398 of January 22nd, 2013**

- Fr. Cristian Fr. Sepúlveda R., superior de la Comunidad de San Miguel y La Piedad (con residencia en San Miguel) y párroco en la Parroquia Miguel Arcángel, de Asunción, República de Paraguay
- Fr. Eladio Adorno O., superior de la Comunidad del Tránsito de San José y párroco en la Parroquia del Tránsito de San José, en Buenos Aires, República Argentina
- Fr. Sebastián Bente Di Giambattista, superior de la Comunidad de Tapiales Hogar-Seminario-Escuela-Parroquia de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, República Argentina
- Fr. Jorge A. Domínguez, superior de la Comunidad de Batuco, República de Chile
- Fr. Wilson Villalba Ch., párroco en la Parroquia San José Obrero, de Villa Madero, Provincia de Buenos Aires, República Argentina

- **Prot. n. 404 of February 6th, 2013**

- Fr. Jorge Pintos Recalde, superior de la Comunidad de Renca y Párroco de la Parroquia Tránsito de San José de la Arquidiócesis de Santiago, República de Chile

- **Prot. n. 416 of March 26th, 2013**

- Fr. S.P. Viswasam, as superior of Cuddalore Community
- Fr. R. Gnanaraj, as superior and rector of the Community “Guanella Preethi Nivas”, Bangalore

- Fr. A. Adaikkalam, as novice master at Bangalore
- Fr. A. Kulandaisamy, as superior of the Community “Yesuvanam”, Sivagangai
- Fr. J. Samson Rajasegaram, as superior and rector of the Don Guanella Major Seminary, at Poonamallee-Chennai
- Fr. M. Peter Sebastian, as superior at Vatluru
- Fr. P. Peter Joseph, as parish priest at Sacred Heart Parish, Vatluru
- Fr. M. John Paul, as parish priest at Saint Anthony the Hermit, Dindigul Diocese

• **Prot. n. 440 of June 25th, 2013**

- Fr. Luigi Bianchessi, parish priest in Torre Canne (BR), Conversano Diocese- Monopoli
- Fr. Mario Cogliati, superior of the Community in Perugia (third triennium, according to R347 our “nulla osta” is needed)

• **Prot. n. 447 of August 30th, 2013**

- Appointments of new confreres composing the formation team of Theological Seminary Msgr. Aurelio Bacciarini in Rome:
 - Fr. Alessandro Allegra was confirmed as Superior and rector of the International Theological Seminary Msgr. Aurelio Bacciarini
 - Fr. Francis Selvaraj, 1st councillor
 - Dn. Juan Manuel Ortiz Candia, treasurer
 - P. François Luvunu Lowu, collaborator
 - Don Peppino Maffioli, spiritual guide

• **Prot. n. 464 of November 27th, 2013**

- Pe. Selso Feldkircher, superior of the Community do Recanto Nossa Senhora de Lourdes a São Paulo and parish priest at Paróquia Santa Cruz at the Archdiocese in São Paulo
- Pe. Odair Danieli, superior of the Community Patronato Santo Antônio in Carazinho
- Pe. Iraní José Villani, superior of the Community Água Boa and Canarana

- Pe. Deoclésio Danielli, superior of the Community Anchieta - Itaguaí
 - Pe. Adelmo Maldaner, superior of the Community Brasília
 - Pe. Geraldo Ascari, parish priest at Paróquia Santa Teresinha at the Archdiocese in Brasília
- **Prot. n. 466 of December 14th, 2013**
 - Fr. Berardin Mbaya Balela, parish priest at S. Cyril Parish Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- **Prot. n. 473 of December 20th, 2013**
 - Fr. Christopher Orji, of the Community of Nnebukwu, parish priest at St. Juoe di Egwe Parish, Nigeria
- **Prot. n. 474 of December 20th, 2013**
 - Fr. Andrés García Velasco, superior local de la Comunidad de Amozoc, República de México

5. “NULLA OSTA” TO TAKE ON PARISHES OR INSTITUTES

- **Prot. n. 405 of February 11th, 2013**
 - Nulla Osta for assuming of the Pastoral Care of the Kallathupatti Parish, St. Anthony the Hermit Church, at Tamilnadu, India
- **Prot. n. 466 of December 14th, 2013**
 - “Nulla Osta” for assuming of the Pastoral Care of the S. Cyril Parish in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo

- **Prot. n. 473 of December 20th, 2013**
 - “Nulla Osta” for assuming of the Pastoral Care of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Orsu Obodo, Nigeria

6. “NULLA OSTA” FOR THE ALIENATION OF PROPERTIES AND PROJECTS REQUIRING THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

- **Prot. n. 403 of February 1st, 2013**
 - Visto bueno para la renovación del contrato de comodato a los Cooperadores Guanellianos de Coyhaique del inmueble sito en Coyhaique, República de Chile
- **Prot. n. 466 of December 14th, 2013**
 - “Nulla Osta” for a social agriculture project at “Cascina Don Guanella” in Valmadrera, Rosé
- **Prot. n. 471 of December 19th, 2013**
 - “Nulla Osta” to proceed with the stipulation of contract of loan for use of the area in favour of Essescuola in Via della Bufalotta in Rome, Italy
- **Prot. n. 472 of December 20th, 2013**
 - “Nulla Osta” for the purchase of the Royal College in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

7. CHANGE OF PROVINCE

- **Prot. n. 427 of May 1st, 2013**
 - Fr. Wiesław Baniak, from the Province San Giuseppe in Rome to the Generalate

- **Prot. n. 434 of May 1st, 2013**

- Fr. A. Maria Arokiadoss, from the Divine Providence Province to the Generalate

- **Prot. n. 456 of September 19th, 2013**

- Fr. A. Jegan Patrick Daniel, from the Divine Providence Province to the Sacred Heart Province

- **Prot. n. 461 of October 7th, 2013**

- Fr. Gabriele Mortin, from the Sacred Heart Province to the Province of Cruz del Sur

8. LEAVING THE CONGREGATION - EXCLAURATION PERMISSIONS

PEOPLE WHO HAVE PERMANENTLY LEFT THE CONGREGATION

- Monaco Rodrigo (*Novice - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 2nd March 2013
- Latorre B. Dennis (*Novice - Divine Providence Province*) on 3rd April 2013
- Akong Christopher (*Novice - Delegation Our Lady of Hope*) on 14th March 2013
- De Macedo Elimar A. (*Temporary Professed - Province of Santa Cruz*) on 21st May 2013
- Gonçalves Valdecir (*Temporary Professed - Province of Santa Cruz*) on 18th June 2013
- Lansana Müller Ir. Darlan José (*Temporary Professed - Province of Santa Cruz*) on 28th October 2013
- Angel G. Fuentes G. (*Priest - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 21st May 2013 received the decree of definitive exclauration
- Borges Vânio (*Perpetual Brother - Province of Santa Cruz*) on 14th October 2013 received the decree of definitive exclauration

EXCLAURATION PERMISSIONS

- Ambrose, Fr. Pravin Vinodh Raj (*Priest - Divine Providence Province*)
- Cejas P. Sergio A. (*Priest - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 1st January 2013 for one year
- Pérez G. P. Adrián (*Priest - Our Lady of Guadalupe Province*) on 3rd February 2013 for one year
- Adones C. Carlos Adones (*Temporary Professed - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 1st March 2013 for one year
- Urra C. P. Agustín W. (*Priest - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 1st April 2013 for one year
- Alfaro G. P. Mauricio (*Priest - Our Lady of Guadalupe Province*) on 22nd August 2013 for one year
- Sánchez Sánchez P. Benjamín (*Priest - Our Lady of Guadalupe Province*) on 30th August 2013 for three years
- Nzioko Jean de Dieu (*Temporary Professed - Delegation Our Lady of Hope*) on 10th October 2013 for one year
- Manganiello Don Aniello (*Priest - Province of San Giuseppe*) on 24th March 2012 for three years
- Julián P. Hugo (*Priest - Province of Cruz del Sur*) on 23rd June 2012 for three years in view of his incardination in the Río Cuarto Diocese (Argentine Republic)
- Mora Gelvez P. Pablo Emilio (*Priest - Our Lady of Guadalupe Province*) on 18th February 2012 for three years

RETURNS

- Gallo Fr. Vincenzo (*Brother – Sacred Heart Province*) returned to the Sacred Heart Province in June 2013

DECEASED CONFRERES

1. Fr. Alfredo Vincenzo Rossetti
2. Fr. Mario Sala
3. Fr. Pietro Scano
4. Fr. Luigi Romanò

1. Fr. Alfredo Vincenzo Rossetti

Born in Cinisello Balsamo (Milan) on 24 January 1932
Entered in Fara Novarese on 10 October 1946
Novitiate in Barza d'Ispra, from 12 September 1950
First Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1952
Perpetual Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1958
Ordained priest in Como on 26 June 1960
Died in Genoa on 28 January 2013
Buried in the monumental cemetery in Como



Fr. Alfredo Rossetti was born in Cinisello Balsamo (Milan) on 24 January 1932 to Andrea Rossetti and Rosalia Perale, as the first of six children. In addition to his own vocation, the atmosphere of faith in his family would also lead the desire for consecration to blossom in his sister, who became a nun. On 31 January 1932, he was baptised in the Parish of Sant' Ambrogio ad Nenum in Cinisello, and he received the sacrament of Confirmation on 24 April 1941. He began his journey of religious life in 1946, as an aspirant in Fara Novarese, followed by the novitiate in the house in Barza d'Ispra in 1950. In September 1952, he made his first vows and definitively consecrated himself to the Lord with his perpetual profession on 12 September 1958. He received the minor orders in the houses in Como, Barza d'Ispra and Chiavenna, and was ordained priest in Chiavenna on 26 June 1960.

Fr. Alfredo was called to carry out his apostolate in various houses of the Sacro Cuore Province over the course of his life, working mainly as an educator in youth institutes: Como (Casa Divina Provvidenza), Pollegio, Roveredo, Riva San Vitale, Milan, Caidate Sumirago and Genova Sestri.

We gladly recall a few of the characteristic traits for which he became known during these experiences. Fr. Alfredo was a very practical man, who was able to put his considerable entrepreneurial and organisational skills to good use on behalf of the Congregation. Important renovation and new building works were completed under his responsibility: the new wing of Collegio Sant'Anna in Roveredo, the modern gym and new building of Casa Alpina di Alagna in Milan, and the new section of the Casa dell'Angelo youth centre in Genoa. Another of his characteristic traits was his witty grasp of details concerning people and situations, an ability that made him a source of humour and of happy, positive relations in the most varied situations. This can also be seen in his writings, which are humorous and light-hearted, but also show his sensitive and caring nature. His ability to engage people and bring them together, often through small gestures of kindness and gratitude, is another trait for which he is remembered by many. His experience in Milan, where he was involved with families in various initiatives and meetings, was where this quality of his found its best expression.

He obeyed his superiors with a deep spirit of faith and with joy to serve the Congregation and his poorest brethren. He was given various roles in the houses where he lived: as an educator, community superior, treasurer and head of the Work. He held important positions in the Sacro Cuore Province, including councillor, treasurer and procurator.

Many of Fr. Alfredo's friends remember him as a simple, sensitive and affable person, with a ready smile and reassuring expression, who was passionate about his mission.

During the homily on the day of his funeral, the Superior General, Fr. Alfonso Crippa, remembered Fr. Alfredo with the following words: "The life of a priest is the mystery of a man who allows himself to be led by the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the Good Samaritan, to also become a Good Shepherd and Good Samaritan to his brothers. This path sums up the life of Fr. Alfredo. The daily Eucharist he celebrated taught him day by day to entrust his entire being to the Lord: an act of self-giving that comes to its definitive fulfilment with his death. In an intensely active life, from when he responded to the Lord's call and entered the seminary in Fara Novarese (1946) to priestly ordination in 1960 and then the small and large acts of obedience asked of him by his superiors at the service of the Lord in the poor of the Guanellian Institutes. Each one of you here," said Fr. Alfonso, "could share experiences and tell many stories about him, and this heart-felt participation is probably the best tribute to him and the best expression of our thanks to the Lord for this gift, which has enriched us all.

However, there is also his own thanks for what each of us was able to give him, because Fr. Alfredo had a noble spirit and always expressed gratitude to those who loved him.

The Lord has been with us and spoken to us through the simplicity of his life, his serenity and kindness, and his simple, down-to-earth wisdom, which avoided empty words, but expressed the richness of his interior life. Although he often had to live in the midst of difficult situations, he faced them with the serenity of his mystical and poetic soul, for which we all remember him.

I would like to highlight one aspect today, which I am sure will not be lost on any of those who knew Fr. Alfredo: his freedom of spirit, which made him capable of remaining true to himself and to the Lord, without allowing others to influence him.

This inner freedom did not distance him from those around him, but brought him even closer to them and his words and opinions were the result of an accumulation of virtues.”

To conclude, the Superior General summed up Fr. Alfredo’s life and the witness he left us as follows: “I believe that the greatness of a priest lies precisely in this: being able to combine the human with the divine, and nature with grace. This was the mission of Christ and is therefore also the mission of his priests. Today, when we often live surrounded by so many fears or even prejudices, we need people who inspire confidence, and Fr. Alfredo inspired confidence with his entire being. His example is certainly a stimulus and encouragement to us all.”

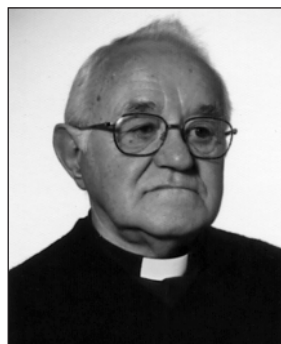
To conclude, we would like to read two of Fr. Alfredo’s many poems, which encapsulate the experience of a man deeply anchored in faith. The first reveals to us how he journeyed through the final part of his life: “*O autumn: what will the coming winter be like? Is it worth waiting for, or better to be without such a season, which is nevertheless expected to be mild? O Lord, I beg you, may life remain filled with you and your love, so I can share it. Let me find something still worth doing.*” The second one shows us the fatherhood he experienced as a priest: “*Now look around you: how many children do you have? A hundred, a thousand, yet you never married. Yes, Christ has made us all brothers and sisters, but we are also fathers and mothers, especially of those in search of affection and love. So you see how great your heart has become?*”

Fr. Alfredo entered the Father’s House on 28 January 2013 in the house in Genoa Sestri, surrounded by many children and young people, whom he always loved and served.

Fr. GIANCARLO SCHIEVANO

2. Fr. Mario Sala

Born in Inzago (Milan) on 8 January 1931
Entered in Fara Novarese on 20 October 1945
Novitiate in Barza d'Ispra, from 12 September 1950
First Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1952
Perpetual Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1958
Ordained priest in Como on 25 June 1961
Died in Castano Primo (Milan) on 9 April 2013
Buried in the monumental cemetery in Como



Fr. Mario Sala was born in Inzago (Milan) on 8 January 1931 to Giovanni Inzago and Maria Granoli. On the same day as his birth, he also received the life of grace at the Parish of Santa Maria Assunta in his hometown.

At six years of age, he received the Sacrament of Confirmation from the hands of Blessed Cardinal Schuster. His parish priest, Fr. Giacomo Passoni, aware of his budding vocation to the priesthood, directed him towards the Guanellians. In fact, Fr. Passoni personally introduced little Mario to the community in Fara Novarese as an “excellent boy.”

Open to the God’s grace, he began his novitiate in Barza, in 1950, and later made his first profession there in 1952, followed by his perpetual vows in 1958.

On 25 June 25 1961, he was ordained a priest of Christ, by prayer and the imposition of the hands of Msgr. Felice Bonomini.

Full of enthusiasm, he was sent to San Gaetano in Milan to begin his priestly ministry as assistant to the boys of the institute. In 1962, he was transferred to the Istituto Sacro Cuore in Fasano, Apulia, where he remained until 1970.

He returned to northern Italy in 1971, assigned to Fara Novarese as an educator until 1985, when he was sent to Albizzate, where he remained for thirteen years before moving to Gatteo in Emilia Romagna.

In 2003, he was transferred to Castano Primo, initially as a collaborator in the ministry to the elderly and then, in 2006, as a councilor.

– What qualities does Fr. Mario leave us, his confreres, as a legacy?

I will highlight two that I noted in his life in the two years we spent together during my Tirocinium in the Collegio San Girolamo in Fara Novarese and then in visits and meetings over the following years:

1) The joy of living. Pope Paul VI said that “Everything in God is joy because everything in God is a gift.” Was this perhaps the secret of Fr. Mario’s serenity? Awareness that everything he was, was the work of God in his life. He possessed nothing of his own, but everything was God’s: received from Him and destined to return to Him. It is the story and the life of everyone

called to follow the Lord: as time went by, in the measure in which he managed to make the necessary shift from himself to God, he developed and transmitted a tremendous force of attraction. This is basically the experience of St. Paul, which also became his experience: it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me! It is also the restlessness of St. Augustine: We were made for you, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

Even in the final years spent in Castano, suffering with the kidney disease that required him to undergo dialysis three times a week, when he ate together with the confreres, often subduing the fatigue and weakness caused by his treatment, he too liked to tease Fr. Mario Gambuti with questions about the Gospel, the writings of Maria Valtorta, and the Church. These were moments of great joyfulness, which helped restore smiles and to resume the journey with more vigour and courage. On my occasional visits there, I found myself thinking: see how little it takes to be serene, like brothers, with passion for the Lord!

2) The second quality: he had the heart of a child in the midst of children. Perhaps the fact of being small in stature and having carried out almost all of his mission as an animator in boys' boarding schools helped him to live among them with a simple, sympathetic, helpful and open heart. The brief reports by his educators and formators during his own time of formation also describe the same qualities. These end-of-year or formation-stage reports constantly state that *Mario Sala is a young boy and a simple and generous cleric. His intellectual capacity is perhaps barely sufficient, but he has a heart full of serenity and the desire to give himself.* Thinking about Fr. Mario, it seems natural to refer to the Gospel passage in which Jesus invites us to become like children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The heart of a child is a simple heart, with no evil intentions. It is pure, open, free from malice, sympathetic and, at times, carefree. It seemed that problems were not problems for him, and could be overcome without great effort.

Thank you, Fr. Mario, for the joviality that you shared with us, for your love of life and your capacity to offer God the experience of your suffering in the knowledge that, with Him, nothing is useless or meaningless and everything can become a grace and a blessing. Your life has been lived like this, with this certainty, and today the Lord rewards your loyalty with the gift of everlasting life. Pray for us and for all your boys, who today, as fathers of families, bear great and heavy responsibilities on their shoulders. May everything they received from you and learned to love be able to shine through in their mission.

Fr. UMBERTO BRUGNONI

3. Fr. Pietro Scano

Born in Rome on 15 June 1929

Entered in Ferentino (Frosinone) on 12 October 1940

Novitiate in Barza d'Ispra, from 12 September 1945

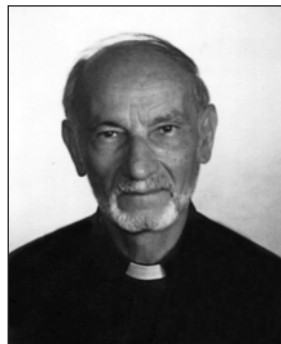
First Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1947

Perpetual Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 12 September 1953

Ordained priest in Milan on 26 June 1955

Died in Naples on 1 June 2013

Buried in Prima Porta cemetery in Rome



The last months of Fr. Pietro's life, despite the sickness that left him weaker each day, had become an almost continuous "pilgrimage" from his room to the parish church of Santa Maria della Provvidenza in Miano, Naples. After prayers with his confreres in the early morning, in the hours before lunchtime, as well as in the afternoon, despite cold and rain, and whether or not anyone was waiting for him, Fr. Pietro would instinctively set off and make his way to the church. He would say a short prayer, more with his eyes than his mouth. Then he would wander around the pews, perhaps in search of old faces and memories. Finally, he would pass through the sacristy, the courtyard, the corridor and the refectory, and then climb the stairs to return to his room, which was bare and austere, like that of a Carthusian.

Only when Fr. Pietro stopped making his rounds, towards the end of May, did his confreres, who assisted him with great love and the necessary discretion, realise at once that his strength was gone and he was now preparing for a different journey. However, other journeys immediately began, this time from the parish to his room. As the news gradually spread, beginning with the devout nurses that had cared for him up to then, people of all kinds and from all walks of life began to arrive. They came to see him and to thank him in silence. In that neighbourhood, named after Fr. Guanella and bordering on the infamous Scampia suburb, Fr. Pietro had gone from house to house during 25 years of ministry in various periods. So he was known to the young, the less young and the elderly.

People die as they have lived. For Fr. Pietro, life was a continual search for others, to bring them to the Lord and his Church. The people were now repaying what he had done for them.

Birth in Rome (1929)

Fr. Pietro was born in Rome on 15 June 1929, in Via Santa Maura in the Trionfale district. Giuseppe, his father, who had been a member of the Guardia

di Finanza Corps during the First World War, worked as a clerk in a large fabric store. His mother, Vincenzina Cipriani, was a housewife. When Pietro was born, he shared his home with his brother Tommaso, who had arrived four years earlier, in 1925. He was followed by Carla, in 1931, and then Giovanna. His family was therefore full of life, but also rich in faith, praying together each day (the family Rosary), participating in parish activities (in San Giuseppe al Trionfale), measuring time by the rhythm of the liturgical year and understanding the events of life in the light of God's will.

Pietro was almost one month old when he received Baptism, on 14 July 1929. This was unusual in those days, as was the fact that the celebration was not held in his parish, but in the church of Santi Marcellino e Pietro, in via Merulana, near St. John Lateran. However, it was in his own parish of San Giuseppe (entrusted by Pope Pius X to Fr. Luigi Guanella in 1908) that he received the Sacrament of Confirmation, on 1 October 1938, when he was nine years old.

Aside from these three dates, nothing else from Pietro's childhood has so far come to light. Perhaps the only available source is Pietro himself in later years. As a priest, he would often enjoy reminiscing about that outstanding place of recreation, friendship, Christian initiation and catechism: the Oratory of San Giuseppe al Trionfale. He praised it as being renowned throughout all of Rome. He described it as a gathering point and place of formation for children and young people in a neighbourhood that, only a few decades previously, had been a troubled and violent part of the city's outskirts, even though it was only a few hundred metres from the Vatican walls. The memory of the priest, Fr. Giovanni Battista Colombo (1881-1974), who was assistant to the Oratory from 1919-1923 and then from 1925 until his death, remained particularly dear to his heart. The boys regarded him as a legendary figure: he would "harangue them with his loud voice and a large bell, and once he had gathered them for instructions, he would captivate them with his eloquent speech, full of anecdotes and stories, and enhanced by abundant use of imagination and gestures." Could it perhaps have been the example of this priest, with his great dedication, that enkindled within Pietro the desire to also become a priest for young people?

The years of formation

Ferentino (1940-1942)

At 11 years of age, Pietro entered the Aspirancy in Ferentino (Frosinone), which had only been opened by the Superiors of the Servants of Charity a few years earlier, to receive vocations from central and southern Italy. On 12 Oc-

tober 1940, in the house named after “Divine Providence,” Pietro found 20 classmates (first year middle school) and a Guanellian community still in the classic format: directed by priests, with professed religious studying philosophy and theology and preparing for ordination, religious brothers attending to the needs of the house, the family of boys in need, elderly and sick, a printing press and a propaganda office.

This impact with such a varied “family” certainly must have created some difficulties for him, as he was a rather shy person. However, the newness of the meetings, the tasks of school and studies, and the presence of a great educator in the person of Fr. Rosolino Puzzi soon helped him to open up and display those initial qualities that would allow him to enter the Congregation’s house of studies in Fara Novarese (Novara), which was then a compulsory step before starting any process of formation to the Guanellian religious life.

Fara Novarese (1942-1945)

This took place two years later, while the Second World War (1939-1945) was raging in Italy, and therefore in very difficult circumstances. Besides the discomfort of the climate, Pietro must have felt the distance from home and the lack of the safeguards needed at his age, including food, which was scarce for all. Also here, settling in was not easy. The institute was very large. At that time it housed almost 150 aspirants in the five years of middle school, eight teachers, eight professed theology students and six religious brothers. However, there was never a single complaint regarding these or other difficulties encountered. If anyone brought them up, he would immediately change the subject with that characteristically simple and blunt tone of his: “Everything in life serves a purpose.”

In Fara, together with the difficulties, he also received the right stimulus to understand the essence of the Guanellian vocation, starting from his arrival. It was October 1942, and in the coming December, the centenary of the birth of Fr. Guanella (19 December 1842) was to be celebrated. According to the records, the celebrations could not extend to many places, due to the war which was in progress. They were mostly confined to the house of studies in Fara, where they were celebrated with great enthusiasm and feeling.

Fara was also the house of Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi, Fr. Guanella’s second successor, who was in his third term as superior general of the Congregation. He was a man who never came alone whenever he arrived. He would bring special “baggage” with him, which contained all that he had seen, heard and experienced with Fr. Luigi Guanella since his childhood. He knew his “life and miracles” and spoke about them frequently, often daily, when the community would gather for morning meditation. There he would open his “baggage” and reveal new and old facts about “Fr. Guanella, our father” to all who were present, nat-

urally inviting his listeners to admire and treasure them in their lives. By all accounts, he was the living image of Fr. Guanella and a formator par excellence, who influenced and guided at least four generations of Guanellians towards their religious life. Our young Pietro was certainly one of these, and not only in the three years he spent completing his middle school studies in Fara (1942-1945).

Barza d'Ispra (1945-1949)

With middle school, Pietro also concluded the first stage of his vocational journey, that of discernment. He then submitted his request for admission to next stage, formation in the proper sense, which would last 10 years and include the novitiate, the period of temporary vows and the years of theological studies. He left on 12 September 1945 and entered the Novitiate house in Barza d'Ispra, in the province of Varese.

“Casa Don Guanella” was a beautiful villa that had been purchased by the Congregation ten years previously. In that year, it housed 103 people, most of whom were young men in formation. The Novitiate alone, from the first to the second year, had 45 members. Pietro’s life there was patterned on the monastic lifestyle, composed of long silences, frequent prayer and much hard work. From the start, his superior and novice master was Fr. Remo Baccetti, a Guanellian who was personally austere but kind hearted to all. He had him for only one year. Due to the esteem in which he was held, he was elected councillor general in the General Chapter, held in Barza during the summer of 1946, and was assigned to the Mother House in Como, as his headquarters.

For Pietro, the change of guide must have entailed some disturbance. However, he had little difficulty adapting to the new one, in the person of his confrere Fr. Armando Budino. He too was a Guanellian of deep spirituality, kind and approachable, yet as demanding as necessary, in the midst of gifted young adolescents seeking space to express themselves. These were Pietro’s companions, a lively, creative and cheerful group, capable of loyal and deep bonds, which, over time would produce several formators. Without doubt, the activities of the Novice Master and the group helped Pietro overcome his natural shyness and develop firm self-mastery, a committed and desired relationship with God and a sound capacity for sacrifice, all signs of the necessary maturity for entering the second stage of formation. He was officially admitted on 12 September 1947, with his religious profession. He was 18 years old, and one of the youngest religious in the Servants of Charity.

Despite his progress, Pietro had to remain in Barza to finish high school, which he had already begun in the second year of novitiate. Formation was resumed, in addition to school and studies. He had some of the most qualified teachers in Congregation at that time for his schooling: Fr. Olimpio Giampe-draglia, Fr. Giuseppe Gatti, Fr. Giovanni Rigamonti and Fr. Luigi Ragazzoni.

The studies called for the utmost concentration; there were tests and assignments every day and the subjects were very demanding: Italian literature, Latin, Greek, Philosophy, Mathematics, Physics... There were also quarterly examinations, in February and June. Pietro performed well, and earned a secondary school diploma in classical studies, proving to have one of the best minds in his group. In the meantime, alongside his efforts at school, he had also cultivated other “interests”: singing, drama, catechesis for the children in the Oratory in Ispra, tending to the garden and the fields, and cleaning the house, in a sort of conventual autarchy based on the classic monastic model. Four years like those in Barza would leave their mark on anyone’s personality. It was enough to recall them to instinctively become conscious of the values and style of the Guanellian vocation.

Lecco (1949-1951)

After spirituality, study, and community life, the formation programme now required the candidate to have a real experience of the Guanellian mission, by moving to one of the many houses in which the Congregation ministered to the poor. Pietro was assigned to the house in *Lecco*, a town on Lake Como, where for some time the Alessandro Manzoni Boys’ Orphanage had been caring for around a hundred boys, both orphans and workers’ children, providing them with an upbringing and elementary school education.

Pietro was given the youngest class, for whom he was like an elder brother, helped by his simple, patient manner and his playful and humorous banter. He felt esteemed by his new superior, Fr. Luigi Marnati. He could also count on the collaboration of other companions, who came with him from Barza for this experience of “full immersion” in the mission. At the end of the two-year period, they were all highly commended and, as a result, were considered ready for definitive incardination in the Congregation. All of them were admitted to perpetual profession, which they made in Barza on 12 September 1951. For Pietro, this was one of the most important, if not greatest, moments of his young life, in which, with total consecration to God and complete willingness to follow Christ, he kept note of resolutions and considerations that were to motivate his life from that time onwards.

Anzano del Parco (1951-1953)

Meanwhile, the formation process resumed its relentless course towards the final stage, priesthood. But where and how was he to prepare for it? At that time, the congregation had no house where confreres, like Pietro, could live together and devote themselves to the study of theology. This problem was overcome through a solution adopted by the superiors in the summer of

1951. A “Provisional School of Theology” was established in *Anzano del Parco*, in the province of Como, where the entire “legendary” house of studies that had operated in Fara Novarese for over 30 years had already transferred two years previously (1949). It seemed like a hybrid solution, because it meant putting different stages of formation together in the same house. In reality, it was the most practical solution at the time in response to the insistence of the Holy See, which required every religious institute to establish its own Theologate. Moreover, contrary to all expectations, the solution proved to be a great investment, at least for the house of studies.

The “theologian” confreres arrived in Anzano in September 1951. There were seven of them, including Pietro. They were to have lectures and studies in the required subjects, time for formation and their own spaces for common life, as well as tasks of teaching or assisting the aspirants. Those chosen for the latter included Pietro, who was assigned to second year middle school, with 31 students; Felice Frontini, to fourth year, with 19; and Lino Della Morte to fifth, with 20. The effect of their presence was soon noticed. Thanks to their animation, the environment, composed of boys and youths, was able to achieve its full potential in all areas, from the playground to prayer. This resolved the risk of overcrowding, which was always a threat in rooms burdened by the numbers (the house of studies then numbered 151 students). A lively atmosphere was maintained, through initiatives organised at times by individual classes, and at others by the entire community. Pietro excelled in this. Even today, some of his former students still praise his creativity, remembering how he managed to involve boys of 13-14 years of age in the not-so-simple tasks of the *Legion of Mary*. A satisfied witness of these results was Fr. Antonio Fontana, overall superior of both the middle school students and their theological confreres, who was already on the eve of his departure for Paraguay as a missionary of charity.

Chiavenna (1953-1954)

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1953, the Superiors had managed to solve the problem of the Theologate. The Guanellian Theological Seminary would be based in Chiavenna, the Congregation’s northernmost house in Italy, close to the Guanellian places and known until then as the “Istituto Don Guanella”, as in previous years it had housed poor children from the Valley and, more recently, the students of a vocational guidance school. Pietro and 18 other confreres (6 from third year theology, 8 from second year and 5 from the first) were housed in a very simple building, with essential furnishing. It spoke “Guanellian” by itself, because everyone could experience there the proverbial four F’s invented by the Founder. By way of compensation, they would receive great motivation to help them prepare as well as possible for their ultimate desired goal. In fact, it changed their lifestyle. Greatest emphasis was

placed on formation, study and prayer, with opportunities to devote themselves to pastoral duties only in small doses. This was precisely what had been requested by the first qualified rector, Fr. Vito Zollini: that the “theologians” would be ensured a good standard of teaching and that they would be formed into a community united around the bond of charity and open to the demands of a solid priestly spirituality.

Cassago Brianza (1954-1955)

Pietro, however, did not have much time to enjoy the full benefits of this new situation, even if during that first year in the Seminary (1953-1954), as in the entire Congregation, the Marian Year proclaimed by Pope Pius XII for the centenary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated with extraordinary fervour.

Pietro’s stay in the Theological Seminary lasted a little more than nine months, and concluded with reception of the Holy Order of Subdiaconate from Msgr. Felice Bonomini in Como Cathedral on 27 June 1954.

The following year, although it was his last year in formation, he had to leave for the Istituto Sant’Antonio in Cassago Brianza (then in the province of Como). He returned there, together with two of his classmates, Maurizio Bianchi and the inseparable Felice Frontini, to serve as an educator to the boys of the Institute, who came from working class families in the neighbouring towns. It was a very intense year, in which he had to combine his immediate preparation for the priesthood with the final courses of Theology and the respective examinations, as well as with daily assistance and animation for the boys. So it was with genuine delight that he enjoyed the short break immediately before Christmas, when, on 18 December 1954, he was ordained deacon by Msgr. Domenico Bernareggi in the Church of San Bernardino alle Ossa, in Milan.

Aside from the required days of spiritual exercises, we have no information on how he lived the period leading up to his priestly ordination, or how he celebrated the great day *of his priestly ordination and first Mass* with the family of the Institute and his own family in his parish in Rome. There is only a single item of news and a prayer in our internal magazine, “Charitas” no. 115, on page 11. The news item: “On 26 June 1955, H.E. Msgr. G.B. Montini, Archbishop of Milan conferred the Holy Order of Priesthood on the deacons Maurizio Bianchi, Felice Frontini and Pietro Scano in the Cathedral.” The prayer: “Almighty and everlasting God, whose Spirit sanctifies the whole body of the Church, listen to the prayers of your faithful on behalf of those who have received Holy Orders so that, with the help of your grace, they may serve you faithfully.” Faithfulness to the gift received from God was Fr. Pietro’s most genuine desire in those days of celebration. It then became a constant prayer and resolution throughout his priestly ministry, which he would exercise for 58 years.

His Ministry

In Italy (1955-1983)

The first 28 years of Fr. Pietro's priesthood were spent in Italy, in charge of a wide variety of ministries.

After ordination, he returned on two occasions to the Minor Seminary in **Anzano**, first as a teacher and then as an educator (1955-1958 and 1960-1964). In the intervening period (1958-1960) he returned to **Lecco**, to perform the role of second councillor and the much more demanding one of formator (pre-cept of students) in the community. *These first nine years of his priesthood* were thus spent in places where he had already been previously assigned, probably due to the particular abilities he had shown there.

The move to a new ministry, which perhaps Fr. Pietro desired, coincided with the Founder's beatification, on 25 October 1964. This event brought thousands of pilgrims to **Rome**, linked in various ways to the new Blessed and his Work. Fr. Pietro also came, but had to remain there, as he received a new appointment as "parish assistant" in our parish of San Giuseppe al Trionfale. It was a true homecoming, exactly 25 years since his departure for the seminary, even if he found himself in a totally different context.

In Christian Rome, the third session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (October-December 1964) has just concluded and preparations were underway for the final session (October-December 1965). The city of Rome, however, was witnessing, to its astonishment, the rising tide of youth protest, crudely known as "*il sessantotto*", which was so turbulent that soon the entire western world was caught up in its vortex. For Fr Pietro, the impact was not easy.

Parish ministry was also something new for him. He had never had any pastoral responsibility before then, except for occasional help in celebrating the Eucharist, hearing confessions and preaching in the parishes of Brianza in the Diocese of Milan! He received encouragement in this apprenticeship, in the springtime of 1965, from the timely "Lenten Visit" of Paul VI to the parish on 19 March. He felt that the person and words of the Pope revived the grace of his priesthood, which he had received from Montini himself, 10 years previously, when he was Archbishop of Milan. He felt that the time for getting himself organised was over and he now had to give the best of himself, especially as Providence had placed him together with experienced confreres who were an inspiration him: Fr. Antonio Turri, Fr. Luigi Lanzi and Fr. Carlo Ferrario. Over the next four years, he became known for his interior life, his austere sobriety and his continuous attention in his ministry to the social and spiritual difficulties of young people and families. This was a style to which he would remain faithful all his life.

It is difficult to say now, with no information, how Fr. Pietro received his superiors' decision (in July 1968) to move him from Rome to the parish of

San Gaetano in **Milan**, but it must have caused him some suffering. If it were up to him, he would never have left “his” Rome and “his” parish. In addition to his old ties, many others now bound him to his roots. But the message of the superiors was final: he was needed in Milan.

He only understood the reasons afterwards. Since 1958, Fr. Remo Baccchi had been parish priest in Milan. He was a confrere who worked assiduously and tirelessly, and, among other things, had provided the parish with large spaces for the activities of the oratory and the parish associations. Now, however, his health had substantially deteriorated. He needed someone to help him, and certainly not without experience. Fr. Pietro was a guarantee. He came from a successful experience. As “assistant parish priest”, he could ensure the rhythm and continuity of the Parish.

In reality, the experience in Milan, which lasted three years, gave him scope to develop in other areas beyond the strictly parochial. While organising catechesis and making the oratory the key meeting place for the youth, he became somewhat involved in what was happening in the Congregation.

In obedience to the directives of the Council, work had begun for the spiritual and apostolic renewal of the Institute’s religious life and the revision of its Constitutions. For this purpose, eight commissions had been established in January 1967 to focus on problems and suggest possible solutions. The outcome of this community development was the Special General Chapter, which was to establish the guidelines for renewal.

Fr. Pietro followed everything with great interest. Milan, due to its frequent visits from Superiors and confreres, was a strategic observation point with a continuous flow of news and comments. Above all, what was of most interest and aroused great anticipation was the celebration of the General Chapter, which was expected to be convened imminently. It came, in fact, through the resolution of the General Council on 15 March 1969, scheduling the start of work for 6 October, at the Higher Institute of Religious Studies in Villa Cagnola, Gazzada (Varese). Publication of the names of those who were to participate in the Chapter was postponed until after the Delegation chapters in June.

However, Fr. Pietro never imagined the possibility of his own involvement. So it came as a great surprise and intense thrill when he saw his name on the official list of chosen participants. What had prompted the confreres of the Northern Italy and Switzerland Delegation to support his candidacy? He was well acquainted with at least two areas of our activities, both from past and present work: formation and parish ministry. In addition, he was an inspiring figure. He could offer the Chapter the contribution of his maturity (he was exactly 40 years old), with his experience of faith and fidelity, and could also represent and explain the hopes and suggestions of so many young and not so young confreres, all of whom were interested in further enhancing the features of the Congregation.

He had three months for his immediate preparation. Then the Chapter arrived and, like all the other participants, he was caught up in the work in the conference hall and in the commissions. In the first session, his commission was that on the apostolate; in the second, which began on 18 August 1970 in the Spanish College on via Torre Tossa in Rome, he was in the commission appointed to revise the texts of the Constitutions and the Rule of Life.

Fr. Pietro had many intense experiences during these months dedicated to the Chapter, but there were two that he would particularly remember: the death of his parish priest, Fr. Remo Baccetti, on 3 March 1970, and the election of the new General Council on 7-8 September. The two events aroused very different feelings. With the death of his parish priest, he lost the workmate who had introduced him to the parish and, without hesitation, had placed it in his hands in the later stages of his sickness. The loss was very painful. With the election of the new Council, however, and the programme produced by the Chapter, he felt as if the Congregation had opened itself to a new era of vitality and development. He rejoiced greatly in the success of the endeavour and was among the first to offer his full cooperation.

The first significant gesture came a year later, in September 1971, when he immediately said yes to his transfer (the sixth) from Milan to **Naples**, bearing in his hand the appointment as local superior, and this time also with the support of his mother, Vincenzina (as seen in one of the very few autobiographical documents jealously preserved by Fr. Pietro). The exact address was: "Fondazione Fernandes", Miano, Naples; a house that had been built and donated to the Congregation only six years before that, to house more than 100 boys in the outskirts of Naples. This was to be a new and strong experience for him, which he would share with the six other confreres of the community.

When he arrived in Naples, however, he found that the scope of work, which until then was limited to within the house, had now been extended by a resolution of the General Council dated July 1971:

"The Episcopal Curia of Naples has offered us the Parish of Miano. The Council is prepared to assume responsibility for the care of souls... but not for the construction of the church and the connected buildings. In regard to this, negotiations with the Diocese have begun."

On the letter of appointment, Fr. Pietro also saw the name of the confrere appointed to this ministry, Fr. Salvatore Guida, who had just returned from Argentina. He had to adapt to the situation. He did so wisely: he certainly did not forget that he had to act as Superior of an educational community, but decided to dedicate preferential attention to that portion of the people of God, which he immediately saw as being like a flock without a shepherd. The choice ended up by being confirmed from above. In fact, even before he completed his term as Superior, in September 1976, he was appointed as first parish priest of the Parish of Santa Maria della Provvidenza in Miano, Naples.

These were the years in which the Italian Church began to speak of “itinerant ministry.” Fr. Pietro assumed this as his programme, perhaps his only one, since he did not have suitable premises in which to gather his parishioners. So he went from house to house. In those days he looked like an icon of the missionaries sent out by Jesus in the Gospel. He had let his beard grow, he still wore his cassock, which was becoming increasingly faded and worn, and was never without his hunter’s knapsack. He was very thin, always smiling and instantly recognisable, known to everyone as “Don Pietro.”

“You never forget your first love.” For Fr. Pietro, after this experience, which lasted for 12 years (from 1971 to 1977 as superior, and from 1976 to 1983 as parish priest), to mention Naples was to remind him of the dearest thing he had received in life, after his priesthood. Not even Rome meant as much to him as Naples did. This is why, in later years, when the superiors suggested that he return there or left him free to choose his destination, he would instinctively turn around and, if possible, set off the very same day. He returned there for another 10 years (from 2003 to 2010 as superior and parochial vicar and from 2011 to 2013 and as parish assistant). On this last occasion, he went there despite not being in full health, perhaps because he desired to die in Naples.

In Mexico (1983-1987 and 1989-1996)

1983. This will be remembered in the history of the Congregation as the year that it resumed its expansion, which had been at a standstill for more than a decade since its arrival in Spain and Israel. It will also be remembered for the noble and generous gestures of the confreres who make this possible. Fr. Pietro should be one of the first on the list.

In that year, after the visit of Pope John Paul II to our Casa San Giuseppe in Rome (28 March 1982), the Congregation received an invitation from an association of parents with disabled children in Mexico City to cross the ocean and open one of our works in the land of the Aztecs.

The response from the Superiors was affirmative and very rapid in terms of organisation: in little more than four months, the “expedition”, its members and the date of departure had all be set. It was to be under the guidance of Fr. Pietro Scano, who did not need to be asked twice. It was sufficient that the “mission” came under the broader framework of the development of the Congregation and its charity. He left for the **Mexican capital** with a confrere, Fr Giacomo Panaro, on 3 December 1983. He had just celebrated his 54th birthday.

It was not very easy in the beginning. Before anything else, a clear agreement had to be established among the various parties involved: the Association that had invited us, which insisted that the confreres dedicate themselves to assisting their disabled children; the Archdiocese, which in the meantime was requesting their availability for pastoral work on the city’s outskirts, which were

continually expanding; and the confreres themselves, who, just like their Founder, asked to have essential autonomy in whatever field they worked in.

In the end, it was this that prevailed. The Archdiocese gave them a part of the suburbs of **Calzada Ermita Iztapalapa**, to the south of the city. In pre-historic times, an enormous volcano had been active in the area, but it was now swamped by internal migration, as more and more people, arriving from all parts of the country, set up camp there every day, with no law except survival of the fittest. It was agreed with the Association that, once roots had been established, i.e. as soon as possible, we would build a structure together where their children could be housed. The confreres were left with the seemingly impossible task of finding a small house on the side of the “volcano” and making their presence known, so they requested the parish priest’s permission to conduct pastoral work in some small chapels belonging to the parish.

Today, after 30 years, the title given to our presence in Mexico, on page 30 of the *Personnel Situation* of 1984-85, seems quite optimistic. It says: “Vocational ministry centre.” Fr. Pietro and Fr. Giacomo had started at a much more basic level. They began by cleaning the streets and teaching people how to maintain hygiene in their homes and protect their children from disease. Then, they naturally began to teach them the most basic elements of Christian Doctrine, to pray with small communities, to befriend the youth and interest them in the needs of others, to bring comfort and hope to the sick and to bless death, which often arrived in a violent manner.

It was the work of brave men! However, it could not continue forever. Especially for those who were over fifty years of age. After his fourth year of true mission, in 1987, Fr. Pietro felt the need for a break. On his return to Italy, he withdrew to **Valle Aurelia, Rome** (1987-1989), a parish with the atmosphere of the outskirts, so as not to be too far removed from the environment to which he wanted and had to return.

In 1989, he was back in Mexico, once more as a pioneer. There was a need to develop an adequate vocational ministry, to ensure the presence of indigenous Guanellian confreres in Central America. The task was entrusted to him, and he dedicated seven years of his life to it. This time he was far from the vast metropolis of Mexico City, in a region rich in vocations because of its rich faith, the area of Puebla, 150 km south of the capital.

He set up camp on the outskirts of the city, first of all in **Amozoc**, among simple people, who immediately offered their services for initial support. He then created a more stable base in **Tepeaca**, as the nerve centre of the ministry for which he was responsible. The setting was ideal, neither too close nor too far from the city, with large spaces, vegetation and a farmhouse, which was converted into a house for the confreres and boys in the stage of discernment. However, it was the presence of Fr. Pietro that made the difference. The people were fascinated by his simplicity, his faith and the way he lived his relationship with

God. They were also struck by the fervour with which he expressed his religious interests, which had been growing throughout his life and could now be expressed with the maturity of his 60 years: *his love for the Church and the Eucharist, and his devotion to the Virgin Mary and to the Founder.*

The community grew, welcoming the first boys, for whom a larger structure was already prepared a few years later, in a place nearer to the diocesan seminary so that they could attend classes. It was a return to **Amozoc**. Fr. Pietro guided the entire project, but after the inauguration (April 1995), he felt it would be better to leave the direction of “Nostra Signora di Guadalupe”, the first Guanellian seminary in Mexico, to others and he returned to Italy.

However, much more was achieved in those years in Tepeaca than vocational ministry alone. Evangelisation had been conducted at all levels. He loved to stir up the surrounding population by organising compelling initiatives: Eucharistic-Marian conferences, spiritual exercises, retreats, days of formation for young people and adults, liturgical prayer and weekly adoration in the houses. There was also evangelisation among groups of Indians. These lived in settlements on the mountainous ridge that rises from Puebla to a height of 3,000 metres and overlooks the beautiful Gulf of Mexico, with its tourist gem, the city of Cancun. This activity was conducted every year.

A special group of lay people was formed in Tepeaca in the autumn of 1994, which Fr. Pietro introduced to the Superior General at the time with a few remarks:

“After attending the Marian Congress in Cancun (7-9 October 1994) and some formational retreats in the Marian Community here, they (five married couples) felt a desire to form themselves into a **Guanellian community**, and the bishop has already granted his permission. Our Founder has made a strong impression on this community, which wants to live and work within our Charism. It is up to us to guide them.” (Tepeaca, 30 March 1995).

Historically, the first *Guanellian-Marian lay community* had been established. It was later understood that it would have to distinguish itself from “The Association of “Guanellian Cooperators”, as it was to include married and unmarried members, bound by a promise, with strictly Guanellian apostolic objectives, including arousing and encouraging devotion to the Virgin Mary, vocational promotion and its own expansion. Fr. Pietro, who had been nurturing it for some time and had pushed for its approval by his Provincial in Rome, even before it was officially established, hailed it as a grace for the nascent Guanellian Delegation in Central America:

“We feel that this presence of the laity, in such a promising geographical location, will be a blessing from God for the establishment of the Delegation” (*ib.*).

In Guatemala (1997-2001)

Then, in February 1996, Fr. Pietro returned to Italy. He was about to turn 67 and had asked, in his typical style, to be immediately given a new field of work. Thus he was added to the team of confreres who had gone to **San Ferdinando**, in September 1995, to run the first Guanellian parish in Calabria.

He worked there from February to August, perhaps not even long enough to settle down. Rumour had spread that the General Council had accepted the invitation of the Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala (Fr. Antonio Bernasconi, an Italian, who was the brother of one of our sisters) to include Guatemala within the boundaries of our expansion. It was also known that the Council was looking for missionaries to make our presence operational. Unbelievably, as soon as he was asked, Fr. Pietro offered himself once more as a trail blazer and, after a brief visit to our houses in Mexico, he set foot in this new Latin American country on 3 March 1997.

He was welcomed by Msgr. Julio Amílcar Bethancourt, bishop of the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima, which had been established just a year earlier (27 April 1996) beside the Archdiocese of Guatemala City, the capital. He presented Fr. Pietro with the presbytery of the “Immaculada Concepcion” church in **Chapas-Nueva Santa Rosa**, a very poor population that survived on its earnings from coffee growing.

After a very brief settling-in period, Fr. Pietro immediately resumed the constant pace he always set for his missionary ministry, certainly with much more difficulty now, due to his age (he was almost 70) and the climate. Providence inspired his superiors to provide him with the support of a young confrere, Fr. Enrico Colafemina, to whom Fr. Pietro was able to entrust the care of the population scattered across the surrounding hills, which could not be reached by road but only along channels carved out by water during the rainy season. There was also a married couple, Manuel and Moncha, who helped make this beginning considerably easier: at first they housed the missionaries in their home; then, since they had no children, they continued to care for them and see to their needs. Just recently, before they died, they left all their assets (large coffee plantations) to the Congregation, ensuring the economic independence of our activities.

Fr. Pietro was in Chapas long enough to celebrate the transition of the care of souls from a chapel to a sub-parish. He also had the satisfaction of seeing the foundation and launching of the fraternal TECHO, to accommodate disabled children from the area, a work that he strongly supported as a sign of Guanellian charity in the parish.

However, by the end of the Holy Year, two and a half years after his arrival, he began to show signs of great fatigue, to the point of requesting a decision from the Superiors regarding his fairly rapid return to Italy.

“You did not have to wait for us to decide”, the Superior General prompt-

ly replied. "It would have been sufficient to let us know your wishes... Nevertheless, I feel the time has come to call it a day. I will leave you to communicate your decision to the Superior of the Delegation and arrange the date of your return" (Rome, 31 May 2001).

"I thank you for your kindness to the Confreres", answered Fr. Pietro. "I am preparing for my return, which I expect to be in early August, once the most important things have been settled" (Chapas, 25 June 2001).

The final years (2001-2013)

Life was to grant Fr. Pietro another 12 years, most of which, as noted, were in **Naples** (7 years), as local superior. He also spent time in **Naro** (2001-2003) and the **Provincial House in Rome** (2010-2011). His batteries were now running low. He was well aware of this. He did what he could. One thing he never neglected was his punctual attendance of Community meetings. He would always arrive early, as a sign and reminder of respect and regularity.

In those years he frequently recalled a dream he had shared with another confrere, like him, with a missionary spirit and devotion to the Virgin in his blood, Fr. Domenico Saginario (1930-2011).

In the summer of 1995, Fr. Domenico, who was then director and secretary general, wrote to him in Amozoc, telling him that if he wished to return, he would be given a responsibility that would suit him perfectly: to go to Medjugorje to open and run a home to accommodate and feed the disabled brought on a pilgrimage to this place where the presence of Mary is greatly felt, as a result of miracles and conversions that frequently occur there.

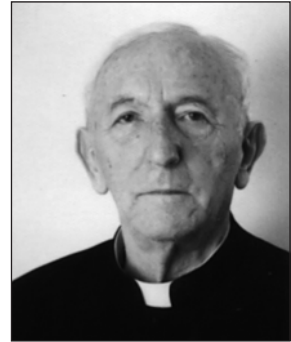
"I received your letter with joy", answered Fr. Pietro. "I saw it as a gift from our Blessed Mother. I have become aware, in these last years of my activities, that she wants me to become closer to her. In fact, this has always been my desire, especially recently, because we know how she desires to make use of her priests, no matter how weak... The Medjugorje initiative is beautiful: it is quite clear that from there our Holy Mother is preparing for the genuine unity and service to which the Church is called. *I would be happy to contribute in my own small way.* Now that Fr. Umberto Brugnoli and Fr. Battista Omodei are coming, the idea you described to me can be made more concrete. In the meantime, infinite thanks to the Lord!" Amozoc, 7 June 1995).

All that remained of that dream was simply this act of abandonment and thanksgiving to the Lord, which he repeated every day until his death. It was an earthly "*Magnificat*" that ended in **Naples** on 2 June 2013, to begin that which is eternal.

Fr. NINO MINETTI

4. Fr. Luigi Romanò

Born in Novedrate on 9 March 1916
Entered in Fara Novarese on 10 October 1927
Novitiate in Fara Novarese, from 5 September 1931
First Profession in Fara Novarese on 18 September 1933
Perpetual Profession in Barza d'Ispra on 18 September 1937
Ordained priest in Como on 24 September 1938
Died in Como on 28 August 2013
Buried in Novedrate cemetery



Fr. Luigi Romano was born in Novedrate, in the province of Como, on 9 March 1916, to Francis Romano and Angela Caimi, who had a large patriarchal family.

Although he soon left his birthplace, he always remained a son of Novedrate, maintaining continuous and strong ties with it. This was confirmed by the joint manifesto of the Parish and Town Council to mark the 70th anniversary of his ordination: *“This happy occasion fills us all with joy for the great gift of this citizen and priest who has always cherished our town and its parish in his heart. He has always commended his town for its economic and social growth, venerated its patron saints, Donatus and Carpophorus, with excellent homilies and acclaimed the artistic beauty of the church he loves so much. Fr. Luigi Romano has honoured Novedrate with his regular presence, with his affection towards all his fellow townspeople and with the example of a life shared in the joy of love and loyalty to God.”*

At 11 years of age, on 10 October 1927, he entered the Seminary of San Girolamo in Fara Novarese to begin his middle school studies. In September 1932 he entered the novitiate, which at the time was conducted in the same Institute.

On 18 September 1934 he made his first religious vows, which he renewed over the following three years in the house in Roveredo, where he continued his studies and helped as an assistant to the boys in Collegio Sant'Anna.

He made his perpetual profession in Barza d'Ispra on 18 September 1937, at the age of 21, and was ordained deacon in Lugano in 1938. On 24 September of the same year, at 22 years of age, he was ordained to the priesthood by Msgr. Archi, in the Shrine of the Sacred Heart in Como. Thus began a long and fruitful life of priestly ministry, which brought him to several places where the Congregation is present throughout Italy.

His ministerial career began in the Don Ghinelli Institute in Gatteo, where for one year, from 1938 to 1939, he took his first steps as a young priest, exercising his ministry among the boys of the Institute. This brief “training” in

Gatteo prepared him for the first great and challenging experience of his ministerial life: eight years spent at the Istituto San Gaetano in Milan, as prefect of discipline, with responsibility for the Santo Spirito chapel in Ghisolfia. In the organisation of our Institutes at that time, the role of prefect was of fundamental and decisive importance to the life of a House, and Fr. Luigi performed it with determination, but also with his characteristic cheerfulness and friendliness. These were the years of the Second World War, a difficult period, with hardships of all sorts. Due to the bombing in the last years of the war, Fr. Luigi underwent the trying experience of evacuation from Milan, together with the boys of the Institute, and remained in Cassago until the end of the conflict.

After a final year in Milan, in 1947, Fr. Luigino began what he would always recall as the best time of his life, when, for almost twenty years, from 1947 to 1966, he was assigned to Ferentino. At that time, Ferentino was one of many places that had suffered devastating bombing during the war, and the Institute and the adjacent church of Sant'Agata had been razed to the ground. The Bishop decided to build a new parish in 1947 and Fr. Luigi became its first parish priest. He spent 19 years as the esteemed parish priest, or "Abbot", of the new parish of Sant'Agata. For Fr. Luigi, these were years of intense pastoral commitment, of great economic difficulties and, at times, of struggle, in which his helpfulness and dedication to the people there were beyond measure. These were the years of reconstruction and Fr. Luigi had to deal with truly great poverty. The "Abbot", as he was called, left a great impression and was long remembered by the people, and Fr. Luigi also preserved fond memories and nostalgia for those years. He would often recall them with insightful stories, often full of humour and self-deprecation.

In the two years following his experience in Ferentino, he had two brief pastoral experiences in which he probably had difficulty finding his bearings: as parochial vicar in the parish of San Gaetano in Milan, in 1966-67, and as parish priest of the Parish of the Vergine della Providence in Agrigento, in 1967-68.

In 1968, he began the long period of his life devoted to pastoral ministry to the Guanellian sisters. He served as chaplain to our sisters for 41 years: 14 as resident chaplain in Santa Maria di Lora (1968-1973 and 2000-2009) and 27 in Saronno, as resident chaplain at the Istituto Sant'Agnese (1973-2000). Mariolina described her memory of him with the following words: "*Simplicity, poverty and humility were the qualities he loved most. His homilies were all delivered off the cuff: there was never a piece of paper on the lectern! How many beautiful celebrations we had, which our girls in Sant'Agnese sorely miss!*" He lived these long years with commitment to his preaching, which was always well prepared and full of content, to his joyful and faith-filled hospitality towards with guests, and to study and intense prayer. He was also involved in teaching in the Institute's school, where he was very popular because "he

was a humorous person in the classroom: he would tell jokes, make lessons livelier, play games and carry out friendly pranks...” He was well able to combine his simple manner and great sense of humour with profound study and preaching. Over these long years he also offered his talents as a columnist for the magazine “La Voce”, to which he became an esteemed and regular contributor. The editorial staff recall him as follows: *“For decades he wrote the editorial page of our magazine, together with other articles that were requested of him... Fr. Luigi wrote well, with an appealing style. His content was always very faithful to the Gospel and Church doctrine, and he had extensive knowledge of the founder, St. Luigi Guanella, and his Work.”*

In 2009, he accepted his declining strength with sacrifice as well as realism and retired to rest at the Mother House in Como, at the age of ninety three. He did not lose his sense of humour or his characteristic friendliness and, above all, gave a witness of constant and assiduous prayer. He departed from us on the morning of 28 August 2013. He had expressed a wish to be buried in his hometown and it was there that he was laid to rest. The final words of his testament are an example of his humility and restraint: *“I request you not to make any speeches at my funeral, and I commend myself to the intercession of the confreres and sisters.”*

He also left a written request that the images of the saints to whom he was devoted be placed on his body in the coffin, together with the Crucifix. These saints, we are sure, have welcomed him into Paradise.

Fr. MARCO GREGA

Fotocomposizione di
3F PHOTOPRESS
Viale di Valle Aurelia, 105
00167 Roma - Tel. 06.3972.4606
E-mail: tipo@3fphotopress.it