

ANALITA CANDATEN  
MARISSÔNIA DALTOÉ



**IDENTITY OF THE**  
**SCALABRINIAN SISTER**

GOING DEEPER TO GIVE WITNESS



**CONGREGATION OF THE  
MISSIONARY SISTERS OF ST.  
CHARLES BORROMEIO**

**SCALABRINIANS**



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Analita Candaten; Marissônia Daltoé

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# **IDENTITY OF THE SCALABRINIAN SISTER. GOING DEEPER TO GIVE WITNESS**

ANALITA CANDATEN

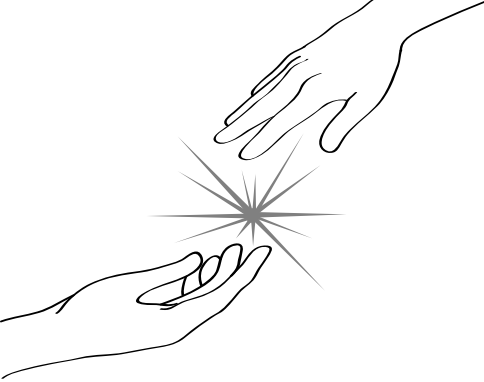
MARISSÔNIA DALTOÉ



**CSEM**  
**Centro Scalabriniano de Estudos Migratórios**  
**Brasília/DF - 2013**

# INDEX

<b>PRESENTATION</b> .....	7
<b>NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CONGREGATION</b> .....	9
1. The constitutions and regulations in the life of an institute .....	9
2. The Nature And Purpose Of An Institute .....	10
3. The charism of a religious institute .....	12
4. The spirituality and mission of an institute .....	16
<b>RELIGIOUS LIFE THE RADICAL FOLLOWING OF JESUS CHRIST</b> .....	19
1. Religious Consecration .....	19
2. Community Life .....	25
3. Liturgical and Prayer Life .....	30
<b>THE FORMATION PROCESS OF THE MSCS SISTER:-</b> An experience which guarantees a fruitful present and builds a hopeful future .....	35
1. Formation in consecrated life .....	35
2. Formation in the institute .....	40
3. The stages of the formation process in the institute .....	43
<b>THE MISSIONARY SENDING TO PROCLAIM AND ESTABLISH</b> - The kingdom of christ among the migrants .....	59
1. The mission in the church .....	59
2. The missionary action in the life of the founder John Baptist Scalabrini and of the Co-Founders, Fr. Joseph Marchetti and mother Assunta Marchetti .....	66
3. The mission of the mscs congregation .....	72
<b>AUTHORITY THE CONGREGATION</b> - A service in support of life and of the mission .....	81
1. Foundations of authority .....	81
2. The exercise of authority in the life of blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, father Joseph and mother Assunta Marchetti .....	92
3. Authority at the service of life and of the mission .....	102
<b>ADMINISTRAÇÃO E ECONOMIA</b> - At the service of the congregational mission .....	119
1- Biblical, theological and doctrinal elements .....	120
2. The goods and charity in the life of john baptist scalabrini, mother assunta marchetti, fr. Joseph marchetti and st. Charles borromeo .....	128
3. The goods at the service of the mission .....	138



## PRESENTATION

We have the joy of offering to the Sisters this text about the “Updating of Proper Law Project”, a project in which all communities were able to participate, since in recent years was part of community reflection, which was enriched with essential topics that relate to Proper Law. The valuable reflection papers, sent to the communities during the process of reflection (2006-2009), effectively enriched the contribution of the Sisters in the updating of our Constitutions and Regulations, permeating them with elements of identity, spirituality and Scalabrinian Missionary spirit.

The elaborated topics that contributed most in the reflection are: Nature and Purpose of the Congregation, Consecrated Life, Formation, Mission, Authority, Administration and Financial Administration. Considering the wealth of the Biblical, theological, doctrinal and charismatic elements that make up the texts, the General Government thought of assembling and publishing them in a single volume. This text might be useful for future reflections on the deepening of Proper Law, to strengthen the identity of the members of the Institute and to enrich the contents that make up the formation program of our candidates.

The constant deepening of the charismatic heritage, which gives us a peculiar Congregational identity in the Church, is a task that we all need to assume with generosity and hope. Hope commits us and makes us always believe (cf. Rm 4:18). The Pope affirms that we need to see the light of hope, to give ourselves hope, to carry the warmth of hope, virtue founded on the rock that is God and that enables us to open up a ray of light in the midst of so many clouds (cf. *Pope Francisco, homily, 19.03.2013*).

We express a vivid thanks to Sr. Analita Candaten and Sr. Marissônia Daltoé for their dedication to the demanding work of elaboration of the topics that form this publication and for the coordination of the various activities inherent in the “Updating of Proper Law Project.”

The updated text of the Constitutions and Regulations will be sent to the communities, after its approval by the XIII General Chapter and the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

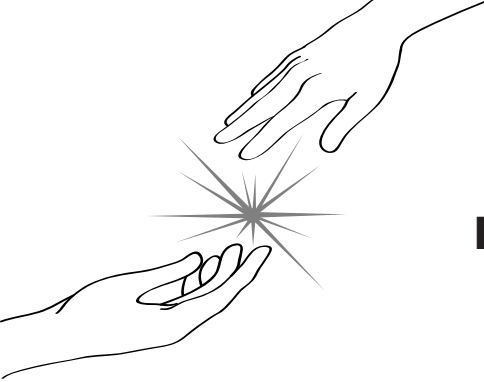
**Sr. Alda Monica Malvessi, mscs**

Superior general

**Rome, June 1st, 2013**

*Feast in heaven of the Blessed*

*John Baptist Scalabrini, our founder.*



# NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CONGREGATION

## 1. *The constitutions and regulations in the life of an institute*<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 The Constitutions

The constitutions are the basic law of a religious institute. In their essence they contain the theological foundation which defines the nature and function of the institutes of consecrated life and the substantial elements of the life and mission of each of them. Moreover, they are the concrete expression of the peculiar manner of following Jesus Christ and establish the elements that must be necessarily clear in the constitutional text: the intentions of the founder; of all that competent ecclesiastical authority has approved concerning the nature, purpose, spirit and character of the institute; and of its sound traditions,<sup>2</sup> which form the patrimony of the institute and are the permanent, dynamic and vital foundation for the juridical standard.

The constitutions have value in the measure in which they clearly reflect the spirituality of the institute, as a valid way of configuration with Jesus Christ. Once the Church approves them, they are elevated to the category of spiritual guide for all the members, guide of unification of the individual charisms and they transform themselves also into a guide for the life of prayer.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the constitutional text must be reviewed and adapted according to the needs of the times and places, because they are at the service of life and need to be open to evolution and progress which allows for the multi-form fulfillment of the life and mission of the institute. In this sense, the

1 *Canon Law and the consulted bibliography, when they speak of Consecrated life, use the term institute and not congregation. The religious institutes are orders or congregations. An Order is the institute where solemn vows are emitted. These vows are made at the perpetual profession (but not all the religious of perpetual vows who belong to an order emit solemn vows – it is the case of the Jesuits). The Institutes in which only simple vows are made are called congregations: J.F. CASTAÑO, Gli istituti di vita consacrata, Millennium, Rome, 1995, p.178.*

2 *The Code of Canon Law (CCL), Collins William B. EEdmans Publishing Company, London –England, 1983.*

3 *AA. RODRIGUEZ – J. CANALS CASAS (EDD) Dicionário Teológico da Vida Consagrada (DTVC), Paulus, 1994, p.294.*

constitutions become the saving will of God for each member, and the application of the Gospel in her/his daily life.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2 The Regulations<sup>5</sup>

The nature of the Regulations is explicitly juridical. They are an applicable and practical code inspired in the constitutional norms, in which the theological and juridical aspects must be in harmony with each other. The constitutions contain only that which constitutes the stable, permanent and universal patrimony of the institute, whereas the regulations contain applicable dispositions which correspond to the present time, places, individual conditions of the members and to the particular circumstances.<sup>6</sup> As supplement of the constitutions, the regulations are the instrument that contains the aspects which are eminently practical and that frequently are subjected to revision, with the purpose of easing the juridical load of the constitutions. The regulations also cannot fail to instrumentally respond to the fidelity and safeguard of the proper charism, in its most peculiar and least uniform aspects.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The nature and purpose of an institute

### 2.1 The Nature

All those who are called to Consecrated Life (CL) have as common denominator the following of Jesus Christ as proposed in the Gospel and expressed in the constitutions of the institute. This following is the ultimate norm of CL, which fulfills itself in the profession of the evangelical counsels. Generally, the element which characterizes CL is the radicality of the consecration which manifests the admirable covenant between God and the person, as sign of the future life<sup>8</sup> and commits this person with the edification and progress of the whole Mystical Body of Christ and with the good of the particular Churches.<sup>9</sup>

The *nature* of the institute signifies its specificity, that is, the fact of being and Order or a Congregation, of contemplative life or active life, religious or secular, clerical or lay, and others.

.....

4 DTVC, 291-292 and CCL, c.

5 The CCL uses the term "statutes" instead of "regulations," terms considered synonyms. In this text the term used is "regulations," for being this the term adopted in our Proper Law.

6 Cf CCL, c.94.

7 DTVC, 85. 387-390. Given that it is proper of the constitutions, by their stable character, to receive the elements which re-defined the identity of the institute, based on the re-reading of the charism, as an objective instrument for the necessary unity of the members, the regulations could contain everything that that in the renewal process may reflect the legitimate margin of the existing pluralism.

8 CCL, c.607,632; Lumen Gentium, n.43; Perfectae Caritatis (PC), n.1-2.

9 Christus Dominus (CD), n.33a. The majority of the authors believe that nature and character signify nearly the same thing.

This nature is given by everything that characterizes the institute of consecrated life in the Church, from a juridical point of view.<sup>10</sup>

Our constitutions, when referring to the nature of the institute, affirm that it is a religious institute of Pontifical Right, approved by the ecclesiastical authority.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2. The purpose

The *purpose* (end) of the institute is what determines the existence of an entity; hence it is called *causa causarum*. The purpose is the reason for which the institute came into existence and was approved, and which proposes itself to do in the Church as the principal apostolic work (teaching, charity, evangelization, etc). The purpose configures the uniqueness, the physiognomy, the identity, the character and the nature of the institute. For this reason it is believed that the purpose, besides configuring the identity of the institute, is one of the constitutive elements of its nature.<sup>12</sup> From the nature and purpose of the institute comes a spirituality also. The purpose remains always the same, even when the means change according to the circumstances of the times and places. Therefore, the purpose of an institute is by its very nature permanent.<sup>13</sup>

In the history of the congregation the purpose “evangelical and missionary service to the migrants” remained unalterable, in spite of the unfavorable circumstances at some times and in some regions.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.3 The spirit, character, the sound traditions and patrimony of the institute

The *spirit* of the institute is part of its nature or character and it does not mean exactly its spirituality, but it refers to the environment, the familiar environment, to the lifestyle, to the physiognomy which exists in each institute; and is the result of a sort of natural crystallization (*ex: lifestyle of the Scalabrinians, the Franciscans, the Jesuits*). Every institute has its own spirit which is like the soul which unifies and inspires everything, although it may be difficult to define it in a precise way.<sup>15</sup> The spirit, the primigenial and original intentions of the founder, all the written or oral traditions which were preserved, enriched and developed from the beginning, are the spiritual heritage of the institute.<sup>16</sup>

.....

10 VELASIO DE PAOLIS, *La vita consacrata nella Chiesa, Dhoniane, Bologna, 1991, p.98; CCL, 170, note 587.*

11 *Constitutional Norms (CN), n.1.*

12 J.F.CASTAÑO, *Gli istituti di vita consacrata, p.99-100; CDC, 170, nota 587.*

13 V. DE PAOLIS, *La vita consacrata nella Chiesa, Dhoniane, Bologna, 1991, p.98.*

14 M. FRANCESCONI, *Il Patrimonio Costituzionale della Congregazione – Lo Spirito e Finalità del Fondatore, Suore Missionarie di San Carlo Borromeo – Scalabriniane, Rome, 1969, p. 2, 6-7.*

15 V. DE PAOLIS, *La vita consacrata nella Chiesa, Dhoniane, p.98- 99; J.F.CASTAÑO, Gli istituti di vita consacrata, p.100.*

16 DTVC, p. 96-97.

The *character* (in our case, an apostolic institute) is the dimension which substantially distinguishes the institute. It does not deal merely with a juridical dimension, but with a component which distinguishes all the other aspects of the institute.<sup>17</sup> This distinctive character also involves a particular style of sanctification and of apostolate, which creates its particular tradition.<sup>18</sup>

The *sound traditions* are comprised of the nature, the purpose, the spirit and the character of the institute and that were approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority. They comprise elements which innovated the patrimony of the institute, without interrupting its continuation with the sources, in the elements which constitute it.<sup>19</sup> Like the spirit, the sound traditions are the result of a long life that went on and gradually shaped itself, until it created a true tradition. The sound traditions include the lifestyle of the religious, the concrete way of living the evangelical counsels, the specific apostolate of every institute, the little things that deposit themselves gradually and go on forming a lifestyle, which at the end become tradition. There are many traditions in every institute, but the patrimony is constituted only of sound and legitimate traditions.<sup>20</sup>

The *patrimony of the institute* is comprised by the spiritual and not by the temporal goods. In particular, the patrimony of the institute is comprised, not by what the founder intended to do, but by what the Church approved of such understanding. *“The whole patrimony of the institute must be faithfully preserved by all. The patrimony is comprised by the intentions of the founders, of all that the competent ecclesiastical authority has approved concerning the nature, purpose, spirit and character of the institute, and of its sound traditions.”*<sup>21</sup> In the course of history, these elements innovate the patrimony of the institute, but always in continuation with the source in the elements that comprise it.<sup>22</sup>

### **3. The charism of a religious institute**

#### **3.1 The charism in the life of the Church**

The root of the word charism (*charis*) means divine grace. The charism is a special and extraordinary grace. It is a gift freely given by the Holy Spirit and that enables the person

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17 V. DE PAOLIS, *La vita consacrata nella Chiesa*, p. 99.

18 *Mutuae Relationis (MR)*, n.11.

19 V. DE PAOLIS, *La vita consacrata nella Chiesa*, p. 99. *The sound traditions have very little reference to the customs and habits which marked periods of time and which characterize the life of the members.*

20 J.F.CASTAÑO, *Gli istituti di vita consacrata*, p.100 - 101; CDC, c. 578

21 CCL c.578.

22 V. DE PAOLIS, *La vita consacrata nella Chiesa*, p. 97 - 99.

who receives it to edify the Church, that in turn recognizes this gift as the appropriate way for the following of Jesus Christ. The objective of the charism is to promote the unity of the ecclesial and social body, preserving and respecting the distinction, the originality and the specificity of the persons who receive it. "There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone" (I Cor 12, 4-6).<sup>23</sup>

### 3.2 The charism of the founder

The original charism, that is, the irruption of the Spirit on the Founder constituted the beginning, the peculiar word, transmitted to his disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them in harmony with the Body of Christ. To this experience of the Spirit, Pope Paul VI is the first to use the terminology "charism of the founders." The meaning of the term charism designates that gift given by God to the founders, men or women, to produce in them certain capacities that render them apt to give life to new communities of CL in the Church.<sup>24</sup> In the first place, this gift is personal in the sense that it transforms the person of the founder, repairing him/her for a vocation and special mission in the Church, showing a particular experience of the mystery of Christ in history. In the second place, it is collective-communitarian, by the fact that it involves other persons in the realization of the same divine project. In the third place, it is ecclesial, because the founder and his disciples offer this original charism to the whole Church for its edification. The entire Church is called to welcome the fruits of this particular charism<sup>25</sup> and hence, fosters and safeguards the character of the various religious institutes.<sup>26</sup>

With reference to our institute, the personal charism of the founder, Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, sprang from an experience in the Spirit, when in the light of faith, he contemplates the human drama caused by the emigration of his fellow countrymen.

Faced with the intense and painful emigration, upon witnessing at the Milan train station hundreds of people who had to abandon their homeland to seek better living conditions, Scalabrini, by his missionary sensitivity, was moved and felt impelled to do something in order to ease this suffering. He takes up the cause of the migrant and commits himself to study, analysis of the reality, to rising awareness of public opinion and other initiatives. This his capacity to see, to feel and to participate in suffering opened Scalabrini to the action of the



23 M. DE LIMA, *Inculturation of the charism, Loyola, S. Paulo 2000, p. 23*; R. RIZZARDO, *O Carisma Scalabriniano na Igreja, Congregação Scalabriniana, Roma, 1991, p.12.*

24 *Evangelica Testification (ET), n.11; MR, n. 11.*

25 *DTVD, pp. 95-98.*

26 *LG, 44; Christus Dominus (CD), n. 33; MR, n. 11.*

Spirit of the Lord who prepared him for a special mission in the Church: to remedy a pastoral problem, to meet a socio-apostolic need,<sup>27</sup> the attention to the needs of the migrants, above all the preoccupation to maintain the faith kindled in them.

### 3.3 The charism of foundation

Theology of CL uses, along with the expression of “charism of the founders” the expression “charism of foundation” also. The latter is approved by the ecclesiastical authority and is part of the patrimony of the institute. The charism of foundation manifests the charism of the founder which includes his personal gifts and collective charism, enriched by the charism of the first group that shares and enriches it with him. Besides, the charism of foundation includes the origin of the institute with its uniaud way of life, *its own style of living* the evangelical counsels and fraternal life; *its nature* as religious institute, *its character* as institute dedicated to the apostolate; *its purpose*, the objective for which the institute was born and its principal apostolic work; and *its spirit*, that is, the environment, the lifestyle, the physiognomy of the institute. All these manifest a concrete aspect of participation in the mystery of Christ and of working for the good of the brethren. All this is already present in the origin of the institute, although it will gradually develop itself in time.<sup>28</sup>

The origin of our congregation springs from the specific pastoral action that Scalabrini carried out in favor of the migrants, by personally committing himself and gathering collaborators and people who would continue his work. He shared his personal charism with his disciples and extended it through the foundation of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles (1887) and of the Society of Saint Raphael (1889). In this social pastoral action carried out on behalf of the migrants, he perceived that the mission he had begun would be completed with the participation of a feminine congregation.

After various attempts to remedy this pastoral necessity, Scalabrini founded the new congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles Borromeo – Scalabrinians, with the admission to the religious vows of the first four missionary women (10/25/1895) who had been prepared and presented to him by Father Joseph Marchetti, a Scalabrinian missionary,<sup>29</sup> co-founder of the congregation, and who contributed to shape the physiognomy of the new Scalabrinian institute of women by the Scalabrinian spirit.<sup>30</sup> And thanks to the charismatic fidelity of Mother Assunta Marchetti, co-foundress, the identity of the congregation

27 Z. DELFORNO, *Identidade Espiritual das Irmãs Missionárias de São Carlos Borromeo-Scalabrinianas*, Loyola, São Paulo, 1990, p.105.

28 G. GHIRLANDA, *Il diritto nella Chiesa mistero di comunione*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo, 1993, p.178-179.

29 XI GENERAL CHAPTER, *Historical synthesis of the Institute*, Rome, 2001, p. 62.

30 L.M. SIGNOR, *Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles Borromeo, Scalabrinians, 1895-1934*, CSEM, Brasília 2005, p.80.

consolidated itself in the Church, culminating with its recognition as religious institute of pontifical right, in 1934.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.4 The charism of an institute

The religious institutes are not defined exhaustively by their initial charism, but by their present-day charism. The present-day charism is the same as the original charism, because it continued to progressively animate and adapt the congregational life and mission in vivid continuation with its origins.

In the Church, the charism of the religious institute is the manner by which the members live the Gospel in a common project of sanctification and apostolate. It is an aspect of Word of God which incarnates itself in life and service, a treasure and a patrimony which belongs to the entire Church but is entrusted to the care of each institute.

For us, MSCS Sisters, the charism is a grace which renders us capable to perceive the migration reality in the eyes of faith, have compassion and commit ourselves with the migrants “especially the poor ones and those in need,”<sup>32</sup> animated by a profound life in the Spirit who makes us live and express a peculiar dimension of the mystery of Christ: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25, 35).

A true updating of the charism entails a dynamic fidelity to its very origins and this requires discernment to review the original patrimony and the spiritual density of the founder, so not to impoverish the identity and the personal vocation of the group itself.<sup>33</sup> A charism becomes increasingly clear and influential in history, in continuation with its original sources. Hence, the renewal of an institute consists of the constant return to the sources and of the spirit of the origins, and at the same time of its adaptation to the changeable conditions of the times.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.5 The Charism of the Members

In the institute, the charism of the members, in its characteristic and original form, must be considered as participation in the common charism and enrichment, on the condition that they are coherent with the collective charism of foundation. Every religious needs to incarnate the charism in his/her soul, feeling responsible for it and looking at the congregation as his/her family, at the members as brothers/sisters, to history and tradition as their history and tradition which support the present and point to the future. The

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31 XI GENERAL CHAPTER, *Historical synthesis of the Institute, Rome, 2001, p. 64.*

32 CN, n.4.

33 DTVC, p. 97-98.

34 G. GHIRLANDA, *Il diritto nella Chiesa mistero di comunione, p.179.*

assimilation of a charism is a task which requires conversion: it is the fruit of the personal effort and of the community's discernment.<sup>35</sup>

## **4. The spirituality and mission of an institute**

### **4.1 The spirituality**

Christian life can be unified around the many mysteries of the Christian faith. The mystery that unifies everything and inspires everything constitutes the spirituality.<sup>36</sup> The spirituality proper of an institute is the complete way of configuration with Christ, that is, the concrete manner of participation in an aspect of the mystery of Christ, of being in relationship with God and working for the good of the brothers and sisters.<sup>37</sup> This experience gives life to the fundamental spiritual lines: to the *proprium* of the congregational life and mission which are to keep themselves always in dynamic continuity with the origins, notwithstanding the times of interruption provoked by the contingent forms: psychological, environmental and theological conditionings, through which it must express itself in history.<sup>38</sup> The spiritual and apostolic life of the institutes require an ever new impetus and openness to the voice of the Spirit, of the Church and of the signs of the times.<sup>39</sup>

For us, MSCS Sisters, spirituality anchors itself in elements which touch the congregational life and mission. Jacob's ladder (Gn 28, 10-22), visible in the Episcopal coat-of-arms of our Founder John Baptist Scalabrini, expresses a spirituality that ascends to heaven to fill itself of God and descends to earth to incarnate Him in persons, events and structures. Jesus reminds us of this ladder (Jn 1, 51), expression that makes us understand that this ladder is He himself, the foundation of a Christ-centered spirituality which is incarnated in the reality of the migrants. Such an experience constantly nourished through the Word and the Eucharist.

This spirituality, lived in a specific historical time and in a community which understands itself as pilgrim, is anchored in the God who prefers the tent over the temple (2Sm 7), became a pilgrim in Jesus Christ (Jn 1, 11), who becomes the way that leads us to the Trinitarian communion, goal of our "missionarity" and spirituality and source of a laborious deaconship. While we journey toward this goal, Mary, Mother of the journey and the "living icon of the migrant woman,"<sup>40</sup> accompanies us. This profound faith experience leads us to re-

35 R. RIZZARDO, *O carisma scalabriniano na Igreja*, p.14-15.

36 V. DE PAOLIS, *La vita consacrata nella Chiesa*, pp. 98-99.

37 G. GHIRLANDA, *Il diritto nella Chiesa mistero di comunione*, p.179.

38 DTVC, p.96 and 294.

39 CCL, c. 663-664.

40 *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi (EMCC)*, n.15.

read history and to understand it as a history guided by divine Providence, and to perceive ourselves as members of a people that experiences the God who journeys with them.

The living of this spirituality provokes us to undertake a lifestyle marked by temporariness and hope, capable of indicating the way of the “promised land” to the migrant, made fruitful by gestures of welcome and opened to the universality of the kingdom, true expression of a new Pentecost.

## 4.2 The mission

The message of the Kingdom is the central proclamation of the mission of Jesus which aims at communion. In this message Jesus announces the great universal reconciliation, the gathering of all the dispersed children of God: <sup>41</sup> *“I come to gather nations of every language.”*

All forms of consecrated life in the Church are a unique manner of the public remembrance of Jesus Christ’s mission, insofar as they manifest the diverse aspects of his mission. The specific mission of the religious institutes is, by their very nature, community, congregational, mission which is carried out through the local communities and persons.<sup>42</sup> The specific mission becomes the key from which the lifestyle of the institute configures itself.

We, Scalabrinian Sisters, through the mission that we have received from the Church, are sent to cooperate in the work initiated by Jesus by announcing the message of the Kingdom to the migrants. Our mission requires apostolic itinerancy, to be “migrant with the migrants,” by being a presence there where they live, work, celebrate and suffer; and by building with them the history of Salvation, experience that makes us feel that Jesus still journeys with us, as he did in times past with the disciples of Emus (Lk 24, 13-35). This incarnation in the reality makes the inculturation of the charism possible in the most different social, cultural and ecclesial contexts.

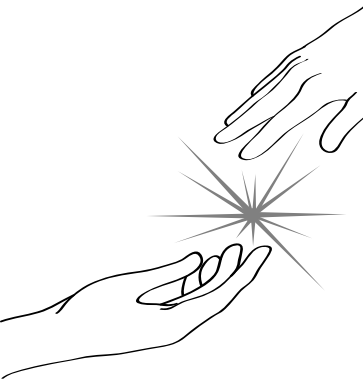
The love for the cause of the poorest and neediest migrants manifests itself in the generosity of heart, in the welcoming dynamism which becomes visible in gestures of compassion and solidarity. Our missionary activity comprehends all the dimensions of the migrant person who searches for bread to satisfy his material needs, for the Word to find the meaning of his existence and for communities which satisfy his needs for love and belonging and in which no one is a stranger.

As Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles Borromeo – Scalabrinians, we live universality and the catholicity which makes possible the harmonious familiarity among the various races, ethnicities, cultures and religions; by being articulators and prophecy of communion among peoples; eliminating frontiers because we know that the world must become “man’s homeland and the land that gives him bread” (Scalabrini).

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<sup>41</sup> DTVC, p. 695-696.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 689-690.





# RELIGIOUS LIFE THE RADICAL FOLLOWING OF JESUS CHRIST

## 1. RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 The Meaning of Consecration

Consecrated Life (CL) manifests its dimension of praise to the Trinity. By its fidelity to the mystery of the cross, it confesses that it believes in and lives of the love of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The initiative of the Father (Jn 15, 16), source of holiness and origin of CL, is seen in the light of the consecration of Jesus who “God anointed with the Holy Spirit and power” (Acts 10, 38). The radical following of Christ is the essential mark of CL which constitutes a living memorial of Jesus’ way of life and doing.<sup>2</sup> To the consecrated persons, Christ asks a total adherence which implies leaving everything behind (Mat 19, 27) in order to live in union with Him. It is the Holy Spirit who persuades the person to feel attracted to such a compromising choice of life and shapes the spirit of those who are called, configuring them to the chaste, poor and obedient Christ. He also impels them to assume their mission in specific tasks, through the charisms proper of the various institutes, in accordance with the needs of the Church and of the world.<sup>3</sup>

CL has been described as a gift of the Spirit, a charism of the Church for the world.<sup>4</sup> It represents, in the Church and in the world, the way of life which Christ embraced when he came to dwell among us. This consecration as total gift of self, places the religious’ entire life before God. He takes possession of the person by a new and special title<sup>5</sup> and confirms



1 This work does not consider all the elements which refer to this topic. The object of its elaboration is merely to offer hints for individual and community reflection. This reflection could be enriched and deepened through other readings, documents of the Church and the Congregation.

2 Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (VC), 1996, n. 14.22.24.

3 VC, Introduction to Chapter, p. 29; n. 17-19.

4 J. M. ARNAIZ, *For a present which may have a future*, Paulinas, S.Paulo, 2005, p. 39.

5 S. ALONSO, *Consecrated life*, Ave Maria, S. Paulo 1991, p. 205.214.227; Decree *Perfactae Caritatis* n.1.

the covenant of love with him/her. By the act of Religious Profession, the religious strives to direct her/his entire life to bring about the Kingdom of God,<sup>6</sup> making it an uninterrupted worship and a pleasing offering to God.

Religious consecration is the baptismal consecration brought to its fullness, hence making more radical the death in Christ, and the configuration with his state of 'kenosis' and with life according to the Spirit of the Resurrected Lord.<sup>7</sup> CL also pre-announces the future resurrection and the glory of the Kingdom of heaven, "new heavens and a new earth" (Apoc. 21, 1). Proclaiming the primacy of God with their life, consecrated persons anticipate the eschatological fulfillment towards which the Church journeys. This tension converts itself into mission and makes the Kingdom of God present "here and now".

A CL with new characteristics is appearing today. Ever more frequently, we feel the need for an intense contemplative experience, lived in the midst of the anguish and the hopes of the people, especially the most fragile and insignificant. This experience of insertion among the poor and excluded has reconfigured consecrated life as Samaritan life (Lk. 10, 29 -37; Jn 4, 1- 42) which announces the Gospel with new expressions.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2. The Religious Vows

### 1.2.1 Theological Dimension of the Vows

CL is called to continually deepen the gift of the evangelical counsels with an ever more sincere and intense love in its Trinitarian dimension: love for Christ who calls to his intimacy; for the Holy Spirit who predisposes the person to receive his inspirations; and for the Father, the primary origin and supreme end of CL. The religious vows of chastity, poverty and obedience are a gift and reflection of Trinitarian life. They constitute a particularly intimate way of configuration with Christ and of participation in his mission at the example of Mary of Nazareth, the first disciple, who placed herself at the service of the divine plan. By practicing them, the consecrated person lives the Trinitarian and Christological dimension which characterizes the whole of Christian life. Together, they are considered as a privileged way to holiness.<sup>9</sup>

By the profession of the evangelical counsels, through a vow which is a commitment recognized and accepted by the Church, the religious offer and consecrate to God not only what they have but the totality of their very person. Through chastity, poverty and

6 ACTS OF CONGRESS ON CONSECRATED LIFE (ACCL), *Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, Paulines Publications of Africa, Kenya 2005, p.178.

7 *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelica Testificatio (ET)*, n. 3; *Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium (LG)* 44; *PC*, 5; *VC*, n. 30.

8 *ACCL, Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, p. 45-46.

9 *VC*, nos.18,21,35.

obedience, transformed into a norm of life and definite commitment for the religious, God takes possession of the person, consecrates and transforms her/him into his property and possession.<sup>10</sup> The vows generate a different world, not just a different way of living in the world.<sup>11</sup> By living them, they are an anticipation of the Kingdom of God which is already present in us and in the community, that is, we are participating in the Trinitarian life. We already have this treasure, although in earthen vessels (2Cor 4, 7).

In past decades, the emphasis of the vows was placed on the ascetical, ethical and behavioral aspect which ignored the important elements of fraternity and of mission. Today, emphasis is placed on the internal, Trinitarian and Christological reality. They are understood as a reality which embraces the totality of the evangelical life and the person's entire horizon. The vows offer an integral project of life and of evangelical radicalism and must be understood as a whole: as response to God's gift, of a single "yes" and as three ways of committing oneself to the three fundamental dimensions of human the existence: the affections, the possession of goods and independence (pleasure, possession and power). These three dynamisms present in every person, in CL, are transformed and lived in a different way: affective life into openness of gratuitous sacrificial love for everyone; the desire to possess into will for austerity, sharing and solidarity; and the instinct for domination into faithful obedience to the divine will and offering of fraternal service.<sup>12</sup>

Today's reflection on the vows is related to the experience of God (mystical experience) and with the way of been present in the world from the perspective of the Kingdom (political dimension). The renunciations which the vows imply are not the departure point of discipleship but are consequences of having discovered the Kingdom- "The Kingdom of God is like a treasure hidden in a field" (Mat 13, 44). The vows qualify the discipleship and mission. Only in this manner they can convert themselves into a way of self-realization and fullness of life.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.2.2. Chastity

Chastity is the manifestation of the surrender to God with an undivided heart (cf I Cor 7:32-34) and constitutes a reflection of the infinite love which binds the three Divine Persons in the mysterious depth of the Trinitarian life.<sup>14</sup> The Magisterium says that the Church always

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10 S. ALONSO, *A vida consagrada*, p. 226-227.  
11 ACCL, *Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, p. 178-179.  
12 F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *Rifondare la vita religiosa*, Paoline, Milano 2001, p. 136-139; A. PINA RIBEIRO, *Vida Consagrada: sinal e serviço*, Paulistas, Lisboa 1980, p. 147.  
13 F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *Rifondare la vita religiosa*, p. 142-146; F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *La frontera actual de la vida religiosa*, San Pablo, Madrid 2000, p. 258.  
14 VC, n. 21.

had a special appreciation for virginity for the sake of the Kingdom which is regarded as sign and motivation of charity and a peculiar source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world.<sup>15</sup> Perfect chastity for the sake of the Kingdom (Mt 19, 22) is considered the “door” of consecrated life<sup>16</sup> and an eschatological sign.<sup>17</sup> It is a way to transcendence because in the total offering of self, the person places herself/himself in the area of the essential and absolute other: in God. The vow of chastity does not reduce the natural dimensions of the person. Rather than renouncing sexuality, it constitutes a special way of living it, where altruism and openness characterize the consecrated person’s relationships.<sup>18</sup> Chastity is a denunciation of the hedonistic culture and perfect chastity witnesses to the power of God’s love manifested in the weakness of the human condition.<sup>19</sup>

Consecrated chastity, immersed in the contemplation of the Trinitarian love that has been revealed in Christ, presents itself as an experience of joy and freedom and offers the person a secure point of reference. In this way, consecrated persons become exemplar people who show balance, self-control, initiative, and psychological and affective maturity.<sup>20</sup> In the community dimension consecrated chastity expresses a great freedom to love God and a total availability to love and serve everyone. Thus, chastity makes the love of Christ a reality.

Therefore, chastity is not a renunciation of the affective life and love. It is a vow of reciprocity and radical love without the mediation of the “genitality”.<sup>21</sup> It is not an exclusive and possessive love but a love open to universality and self-sacrificing. Before the relevant character of other human values, consecrated persons by their lifestyle affirm the absolute value of the Kingdom of God. A chastity that is not founded on the theological experience may collapse into the existential failure; and on this rests the justification of many frustrations, aggressions, loneliness and sadness found in religious communities.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.2.3. Poverty

The vow of poverty confesses that God is the human heart’s only real treasure. After the example of Christ who “though rich made himself poor” (2Cor 8, 9), many consecrated



15 LG, n. 42.

16 VC, n. 32.

17 PC, n. 12.

18 J. M. ALDAY, *La vocazione consacrata, Claretianum, Roma 1994, p. 76-77.*

19 F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *La frontera actual de la vida religiosa, San Pablo, Madrid 2000, p. 231; VC, 88.*

20 VC, n. 8.

21 F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *Rifondare la vita religiosa, p. 215-218.*

22 *Ibidem, p 220-225.*

persons fully live their life “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3, 3) for the salvation of the world, also in causes little recognized and even less applauded.<sup>23</sup> The ultimate motivation of the voluntary poverty of the religious is to witness the absolute primacy of the Kingdom’s goods, by being a sign of its eschatological presence and of fraternal charity.<sup>24</sup> The vow of poverty is not about renouncing the Institute’s material goods but about establishing a Gospel relationship to them and placing them at the service of the mission. This helps constitute an alternate world of the gift economy [that is, material goods are received freely and therefore are to be shared with others), which is material basis for the radically egalitarian community of Jesus’ disciples.<sup>25</sup>

John Paul II when commenting on the phrase, “Whoever wants to save his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 16, 25), affirmed that “to be poor means to become a distributor of good in humankind. Evangelically rich is not the one who possesses but one who is capable of giving. Poverty, which is part of the internal structure of Christ’s redemptive grace, creates in man a source which enriches others with goods which are far superior to the material goods.”<sup>26</sup>

Religious poverty is an invitation to solidarity and charity, and it denounces the materialistic culture which hungers for power. This poverty is concretized in the preferential love for the poor; it announces that the goods of this world are for the service of the person and are to be shared with those for whom poverty is not a virtue but a vital situation and an imposition. This solidarity witnesses that, in the Kingdom of God, it is absolutely abnormal that some live in abundance and others are in need.<sup>27</sup>

The Church asks of the consecrated persons a renewed and vigorous evangelical witness of self-denial and sobriety, in a style of fraternal life inspired by criteria of simplicity and hospitality, of compassion and sharing. In this manner they are an example for those who remain indifferent before the needy neighbor.<sup>28</sup> The very spirituality of the beatitudes and of confidence in divine Providence is possible only in a poverty context.<sup>29</sup>

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23 VC, n. 90.  
24 A. PINA RIBEIRO, *Vida consagrada: sinal e serviço*, p. 211-214. *As it was true at Jesus’ time, in today’s world there is much involuntary poverty which many people suffer. This is not evangelical poverty.*  
25 ACCL, *Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, p. 181.184.186.  
26 *Apostolic Exhortation Redemptionis Donum (RD)*, 5 and 12.  
27 F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *La frontera actual de la vida religiosa*, p. 231; A. PINA RIBEIRO, *Vida Consagrada: sinal e serviço*, p. 218-219; VC, 89 and 90.  
28 VC, n. 90.  
29 F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *Rifondare la vita religiosa*, p. 186.

## 1.2.4 Obedience

The core of religious obedience is to do God's will. Obedience is an invitation of God the Father to enter into the participative dynamics of salvation history. And, hence, it requires listening to the intimate voice of God in order to know his will. Obedience seriously taken up continues Christ's salvation of humanity. It begins and ends in the contemplation of the person of Christ who was obedient to death on the cross (Phil 2, 6-11).<sup>30</sup> To continue through obedience this gesture of love and *kenosis* of Jesus is worship, adoration and holocaust. In the heart of obedience is the love for God, love for the sisters of the community, and love for the Church and for the world.<sup>31</sup>

Practiced in the imitation of Christ whose food was to do the Father's will (Jn 4, 34), this obedience is discovered through the mediations. It is lived in a prayerful, fraternal and apostolic community in harmony with the institute's charism. In this community, authority, as expression of the Father's paternity and exercise of the authority received from him, places itself at the service of discernment and of communion. The community is the place of the articulation and unification of different mediations of the divine will which is perceived in the Word, in prayer, in dialogue, in study, in planning and evaluation of commitments, and in listening to the People of God in view of the spreading of the Kingdom.<sup>32</sup>

The community discernment is exercised in an atmosphere of equality and freedom, even though different members have different roles in the process at different points in time. We must attend to the signs of the times and discern what fosters life in Christ and the mission. The discernment of divine will must go beyond the congregational limits. Prophetic obedience characterizes every moment of every day in the life of the vowed Religious because they live with the heart ever disposed to embody that will in one's life.<sup>33</sup>

Mission is an essential dimension of religious obedience and places the community at the disposition of the Congregation and the Church, in accord with the different needs. Obedience unifies the members of an Institute, although in the diversity of gifts and with respect of each one's individuality.<sup>34</sup>

## 1.3 The following of Jesus Christ in the life of the founder, Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, and of the co-Founders, Mother Assunta Marchetti and Fr. Joseph Marchetti

30 R. CANTALAMESSA, *O mistério da Páscoa, Santuário, Aparecida 1994*, p.27.

31 L. Kearns, *Teologia da Obediência religiosa, Santuário, Aparecida (S.D.)*, p.52-58; F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *Rifondare la vita religiosa*, p. 260.

32 A. PINA RIBEIRO, *Vida Consagrada: sinal e serviço*, p. 259-260; VC, 92.

33 ACCL *Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, p. 190.193.

34 J.M. ALDAY, *La vocazione consacrata*, p. 57-58; VC, n. 92.

The radical following of Jesus Christ which happens by the religious consecration, we see it expressed, in an exemplar way, in the life of the Founder and of the co-Founders. They placed Jesus Christ at the center of their lives and this centrality allowed them to recognize the signs of presence of God’s mystery in migration and in the migrant.

Scalabrini’s life was a progressive configuration with Jesus Christ, founded in a profound life of faith, of righteousness of heart, of constant and total orientation to God which was the soul of his exterior life. He affirmed, “ *We do exteriorly that which is lived interiorly*”. He believed that the way to holiness is achieved, not through extraordinary things, but through virtue which reveals itself in daily attitudes of humility, meekness, a heart filled with charity towards neighbor and total love for God.<sup>35</sup>

Jesus Christ was the sole reason of Mother Assunta’s life and untireless self-giving. She would not distract herself but lived anchored on God, even in her multiple occupations because everything was for the glory of God – as she always said, “*Let us do everything for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls*”. To do God’s will was the constant orientation of her spiritual life and the quality of her correspondence to God’s grace was such that it became a heroic one.<sup>36</sup>

Father Joseph Marchetti allowed himself to be shaped by the divine potter. He allowed God to mold him, to leave him ready for what He wanted him in this world, in his salvation plan.<sup>37</sup> He would say, “*I feel that it is not I in my head, but the will of God who uses me without my becoming aware of it*.”<sup>38</sup>

This centrality on Jesus Christ in the life of the Founder and co-Founders manifested itself in a significant way through the living of the evangelical counsels which they expressed in an unconditional love for God and neighbor. This lifestyle led them to a constant search for God’s will and to trust divine Providence. The interior self-emptiness, total detachment from riches and personal goods and a filial obedience to the Superiors and the Church were the characteristic marks of their lives.

## **2. Community Life**

### **2.1 Theological Bases**

Since Vatican II and in later Church documents, the religious community is seen as participation and qualified witness of the Church, insofar as it is a living expression and a

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35 M. FRANCESCONI, *João Batista Scalabrini – A Espiritualidade da Encarnação, Congregações Scalabrinianas, Roma 1991*, p. 32-33.36-37.

36 L. BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti, Loyola, S. Paulo 2004*, p. 16. 225.

37 Z. ORNAGHI, *Pe. José Marchetti – O martir da caridade, EDUCS, Caxias do Sul 1997*, p.15.

38 LAURA BONDI, *Father Joseph Marchetti*, p. 17.

special fulfillment of the latter's peculiar communion, that is, of the great Trinitarian *koinonia* which the Father wanted to make humankind participate in the Son and in the Holy Spirit.<sup>39</sup>

The mystery of the Trinity is considered the primary theological bases of the religious community and the source and model of community life. Fraternal life, in virtue of which consecrated persons strive to live in Christ with "only one heart and one soul" (At 4, 32), presents itself as an eloquent confession of the Trinity: it confesses the Father who wants to form only one family of all peoples; it confesses the incarnate Son who gathers the redeemed into unity; and it confesses the Holy Spirit, as the principle of unity of the Church in which he does not cease to cause the rising of spiritual families and fraternal communities. The ultimate model of the community is the Trinity which is communion in altruism, in respect for the differences and of personal independence. This communion is fulfilled in mutual knowledge and love among peoples, and hence, it generates an authentic circulation of life. These interpersonal relations of knowledge and love are at the basis of the Trinitarian community.<sup>40</sup>

The second theological basis of the religious community is Jesus' call. He called those he wanted to be with him (Mk 3, 13-15) and to send them out to preach. The awareness of a call and of a common faith in the same Lord is what guarantees the formation of the community based, not on blood ties, but on the new condition of children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ.<sup>41</sup> What made the discipline in the communities of the past; today must have shared theological experiences as its basis. Faith in Jesus is the center of the discipleship and the union with Him is the foundation of the community.<sup>42</sup>

The third theological basis of the religious community is the Holy Spirit. It is from the love of God, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit that the religious community originates and is built as a true family gathered together in the Lord's name. As a result of the gift of the Spirit, a fraternal community formed around the Apostles and is structured around three axes: communion with the Lord, fraternal communion, and the spreading of the Gospel. This community has always been a reference and the model to which the Church has looked for the founding and re-founding of the religious community.<sup>43</sup>

A community is a human space dwelt by the Trinity. It is necessary to live community experiences which guarantee this theological conscience: a love nourished by the Word and

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39 Document *Fraternal Life in Common (FLC)*, n. 2.

40 VC, n.21; A. PINA RIBEIRO, *Vida Consagrada: sinal e serviço*, p. 305; MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *Rifondare la vita religiosa*, p. 290.

41 VC 21; A. PINA RIBEIRO, *Vida Consagrada: sinal e serviço*, p 297. *Although called by the same Lord and united in the same faith, there are differences. Each individual carries with himself his own origin, his history, his character and culture.*

42 A. PINA RIBEIRO, *Vida Consagrada: sinal e serviço*, p 294-295.305; MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *Rifondare la vita religiosa*, p.289.

43 A. PINA RIBEIRO, *Vida Consagrada: sinal e serviço*, p. 312-314; VC, n. 41.

the Eucharist, purified in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, sustained by unity and guided by the Spirit for the realization of the mission according to the congregational charism. The very service of authority turns to the community that must fulfill a special mission, received and qualified by the Institute and its charism. The primary task of this service is to be a spiritual authority and a promoter of unity.<sup>44</sup>

## 2.2. Community Prophecy of Communion

Fraternal life, understood as life shared in love, is an eloquent sign of the ecclesial communion which goes beyond any difference of race, origin, language and culture. Described as a school of faith, the religious community is a laboratory of study, dialogue and culture; and where gestures of service, welcoming, forgiveness and sharing of goods are appreciated. The exhortation VC insists on some attitudes and gestures which are essential for every Christian community especially for the formation of the religious community. These are: promptness to welcome the others as they are and without judging them (Mat 7,1-2); availability to serve without reservations; the ability to forgive up to seventy times seven (Mat 18, 22); and the generosity to place everything in common: material goods, spiritual experiences, talents, inspirations, apostolic ideals and services of charity.<sup>45</sup>

The whole Church expects much of the witness of communities that are “full of joy and the Holy Spirit (Acts 13, 52). To the world, she wishes to offer the example of communities where reciprocal attention helps overcome loneliness, communication drives everyone to co-responsibility and forgiveness heals the scars, hence, re-enforcing a purpose for communion in each. Amidst a divided and unjust world, the community is presented as a visible sign of fraternity and reconciliation, of a dialogue which is always possible and of a communion capable of harmonizing the differences. The Church is in urgent need of fraternal communities whose existence has already contributed to the new evangelization because they concretely show the fruits of the new commandment.<sup>46</sup>

Pope John Paul II affirmed that the great challenge of this new millennium is to make the Church *the house and school of communion*. Consecrated persons are asked to be experts in communion, as witnesses and builders of that project of communion desired by God and which is at the apex of the humankind’s history. From fraternal life in community arises the need to live a spirituality of communion, first in its heart, then in the ecclesial community and beyond its limits. In this manner, the life of communion becomes a sign for the world and an attracting force which draws to faith in Jesus Christ. All consecrated persons are called to be leaven of missionary communion in the Church. Hence communion transforms itself

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44 VC, n. 42; FLC, n. 8.50.

45 VC, n. 6.41-42.92.

46 F.MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *La frontera actual de la vida religiosa*, p. 231; VC, n. 45.51.

into mission.<sup>47</sup> The effectiveness of the apostolic activity of CL depends on the quality of fraternal life in common.<sup>48</sup> *"It takes effort to live it well and it looks for "new communities."*<sup>49</sup>

Our founder John Baptist Scalabrini was a man who unceasingly sought to live communion with the Church, manifesting it also through his obedience to the Pope and in his unity with the other bishops. To his missionaries he recommended unity in charity. And said: *"no category of men, for as rich as it may be in individual strength if not subjected to the great law of unity, will ever do great things and even less will the missionaries. Therefore, I beg you; I implore you for the love of Jesus Christ and for the good of our brethren, do not waste your energies, using them each on his own account. Be united as one. United in thought, affections and aspirations, as you are united for the same purpose."*<sup>50</sup>

Mother Assunta affirmed that without unity and charity it is impossible to do any good whatsoever for others. She wished that the sisters of the Congregation be as united as rings of a chain, and exhorted them to work for unity and form only one body.<sup>51</sup>

Fr. Joseph Marchetti, as his correspondence attests, at every moment of his life strove to live in communion with his superiors, with his confreres, with the migrants and with other people with whom he associated with.

### 2.3. The Missionary community with the migrants

The consecrated person is in mission in virtue of her consecration and in accord with the project of the Institute.<sup>52</sup> The mission vivifies CL and becomes the religious community's greater strength. This missionary dimension does not reduce itself to mere apostolic activities. The primary apostolic commitment of the religious community is to live the evangelical fraternity fully and to become a laboratory of just and fraternal living together for society.<sup>53</sup> A community that lives the communion in diversity possesses a strong missionary character, contributes to the universal fraternity and becomes a missionary sign *par excellence*. But, for this, a strong contemplative experience is needed. Only in this manner the existence of religious life will convert itself into true mission,<sup>54</sup> cooperating efficaciously in Christ's

47 VC, n. 46-47.51; Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (NMI), n.43.

48 FLC, n. 54.

49 ACCL, *Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, p.53.

50 M. FRANCESCONI, *Spirituality of the Incarnation*, p.111.

51 M. FRANCESCONI, *Mother Assunta – A Brave Woman*, Italy 1974, p. 41. 55-5a8.

52 VC, n. 18.67.

53 F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *Rifondare la vita religiosa*, p. 306.

54 F. MARTINEZ DÍEZ, *La frontera actual de la vida religiosa*, p. 225-226.

mission. Whoever, at the example of Jesus, does not feel compassion and tenderness for the multitudes will not evangelize as He did.

The true mission has the strength to continue only through mysticism. Works, if done without life, passion and intensity, could be the mere result of a sort of professionalism.<sup>55</sup> And only a profound spirituality, both personal and communitarian, enables us to overcome the great missionary challenges of the contemporary world and particularly, for us, of the phenomenon of the people on the move. Strengthened by faith in Jesus Christ the Scalabrinian missionary sister, sent to the different cultures, expresses the feminine face of the Church by revealing her compassionate and maternal attitude. Therefore, she generates life among the migrants.

Our Founder, John Baptist Scalabrini, suggests attitudes for the daily behavior of the members of the missionary community: *"let the manner of speaking, the look and meekness be those of Jesus; Let Jesus be the mirror, the model. Let him be the one to pronounce the sentences, to pave the way, to decide the choices; He to govern, to guide and to control our life."*<sup>56</sup>

Each in his way, our co-founders also teach us the secret of their successful apostolic activity. *Mother Assunta* loved the brothers and sisters intensely with a sacrificing and universal love and remained always in "dominion of self." Her extraordinary capacity for love and service resulted from her union with God.<sup>57</sup> *Fr. Joseph Marchetti* manifested the wish to be able to live in community, because he believed that the success of the mission depended on the strength and unity of its members. In his correspondence to Scalabrini, he insistently expressed that the bishop should send other missionaries and suggested the formation of a single community, a compact and organized body, of a great moral and physical strength. He also said: *"the good of the Congregation requires that we be united and not dispersed."*<sup>58</sup>

#### 2.4. Sense of belonging to the congregation

To live in community is to live the will of God together in accord with the orientation of the charismatic gift which the Founder received from the Holy Spirit and transmitted to his disciples and continuators. Reference to the Founder and the charism he lived, and was communicated, preserved, deepened and developed throughout the Institute's life, appears as a fundamental component for the unity of the community.<sup>59</sup> The community is a bearer of this very gift, which shared among the members, enriches the Church. A deeper understanding of the charism leads to a clearer vision of one's own

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55 J.M. ARNAIZ, *Por um presente que tenha futuro*, p. 125-126.

56 M. FRANCESCONI, *Scalabrini-A Living Voice, Scalabrinian Congregations*, 1989, p.16.

57 L. BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti*, p.197.

58 L. BONDI, *Fr. Joseph Marchetti*, p. 45-46.

59 *Document Mutuae Relationis (MR)*, n. 11.

charismatic identity around which it is easier to create unity and communion<sup>60</sup> that embraces all the areas of life.

The belonging to a religious family takes every member to assume the charism in an affective and effective way. The charism is codified in a rule of life, is visible in the existence of many persons who recognized the project God thought for them and was confirmed by the Church; and, it is rich of a history and tradition which reveal its vitality. The sense of belonging to the Institute is authentic when it is the reflection of the sense of belonging to the charism and when it arises in the heart the love for the institute, for the community and for the people that form it with all their gifts and limitations.<sup>61</sup>

The awareness of belonging to the charism qualified our first sisters in the spirit and activities. Mother Assunta showed this sense of belonging in a powerful way when she noticed that the Institute's charism was endangered. She committed herself to safeguard a way of living an experience which united them into a family chosen by God. She dedicated all her energies in order to preserve this gift of the Spirit alive, dynamic and fruitful.<sup>62</sup>

### **3. LITURGICAL AND PRAYER LIFE**

#### **3.1 The Liturgy in the life of the Church**

Vatican II Council affirms that the liturgy is the summit toward which the Church's activities are directed and, at the same time, is the fount from which all the Church's strength flows.<sup>63</sup> It is primarily an event of grace in the proclamation of the divine message as well as in the sacraments that represent the paschal mystery of Christ. Therefore, the liturgy is Word and Sacrament, and its aim is the sanctification of the person. It expresses the Church's communion with the Trinity and elevates us to the encounter with the mystery which is our origin and source of life. God is the principal actor of the liturgical function. The availability to hear, believe, listen and obey is asked of the Church (of every person). The praise of the whole Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, is a response to the saving action of God. Hence, the liturgy has also been designated as a dialogue between God and the people.<sup>64</sup> Like the first community of Jerusalem (Acts 2, 42), the Word, the Eucharist, common prayer, diligence and fidelity to the teachings received place us in touch with God's marvelous deeds.<sup>65</sup>

60 FLC, n. 45.

61 A. CENCINI, *Conference on "Sense of identity and belonging in the initial and on-going formation," Rome 2006.*

62 ZELIA ORNAGHI, *Madre Assunta Marchetti – Vivência de um Carisma, Província Imaculada Conceição, p. 727-30-33.*

63 *Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium, n.10.*

64 AADAM, *Corso di Liturgia, Queriniana, Brescia 1988, p. 13-14.*

65 FLC, n. 14.

In response to the appeals of the Church and of the world, CL seeks to be a sign of transparency and of prophetic witness. This requires giving priority to the quality of liturgical prayer, community life, hospitality, the wise discernment of history, openness to the different cultures and other religions. For many the challenge seems to be the developing and living an intense spirituality, characterized by a radical following of Jesus, by a profound experience of God, by a new passion for humanity.<sup>66</sup>

### 3.2. The Eucharist, the center of spiritual and community life

At the center of the liturgy is the Eucharist, as saving representation of the paschal mystery of Christ, and around it the other sacraments. As sacrifice and sacrament which extends and expresses the very sacrifice of Christ, the Eucharist is the living center and the very heart of a community and of every person who would like to live committed with her entire Christian and spiritual life.<sup>67</sup> Being the extension of the presence of Christ in one's life and in the world, the Eucharist is a continuous incarnation which creates a spirituality intimately united with humanity and with its history.

The Eucharist is the heart of the life of the Church and also the nucleus of CL. And it fashions the person, the project of community life and the apostolic mission. It is considered the daily viaticum and source of the spiritual life for the individual and for the religious Institute. By means of the Eucharist all consecrated persons are called to live Christ's Paschal Mystery, uniting oneself to him by offering one's life to the Father through the Holy Spirit.<sup>68</sup> The Eucharist, inexhaustible spring of grace and "summit and source" of the Church's activity, builds the communion of hearts by opening them up to catholicity, and to the welcoming of all diversities by experiencing them as a treasure for everyone. This relationship witnesses to and makes the Trinitarian communion present.<sup>69</sup>

No Christian community is formed, unless it has its root and center in the Eucharistic celebration, in which the formation of the community's spirit has its beginning.<sup>70</sup> Around the table of the Lord, apostolic guidance will better guarantee faithfulness to his spirit and the ability to accomplish the right choices will be strengthened.<sup>71</sup>

66 ACCL, *Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, p.66.

67 S.M. ALONSO, "Proyecto personal de vida espiritual," in B. FERNÁNDEZ – F. TORRES, EDD, *Recrear nuestra espiritualidad*, Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2001, p. 246-247.

68 VC, n. 45. 92. 95.

69 I. ZIZIOLAS, *Il creato come Eucaristia*, Qiqajon, Magnano 1992, p. 74-79.

70 Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis (PO)*, n. 6.

71 ACCL, *Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity*, p.199-201.

### 3.3. The Eucharist in the life of the Founder and the Co-Founders

The witnesses of the life and writings of Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini reveal that the Eucharist occupied a central place on his way to holiness, and this was one of the most profound aspects of his spirituality. *“Enamoured for the Eucharist, Scalabrini is in constant contemplation of the Son of God who became man to reveal the Father’s love and to hand back to Him a renewed human family.”*<sup>72</sup> He was convinced that the Eucharistic communion is the source from which the soul absorbs the water that flows to eternal life; it is the place where scars are healed; the beginning and the end of that union with God elevated to the ultimate degree of perfection which is reachable in the present order. For Scalabrini, the Eucharist is the heart of the Church, sacrament of unity, extension of the Incarnation and it elevates the person to configuration with Christ. He believed that this sacrament is in the spiritual world what the sun is in the physical world, whose heat spreads fertility and life. In the Eucharist Christ becomes accessible to all and dwells indifferently in the basilicas of the great cities, as well as in the rustic church that the poor farmer offers him.<sup>73</sup>

Pope John Paul II, in the homily of beatification, said: *“he was a man profoundly enamoured for God and extraordinarily devout to the Eucharist.”* Scalabrini transformed the encounter with the Eucharistic Lord into service. The more he loved the Eucharist, the more he served.

For *Mother Assunta*, the Eucharist was the center of her spiritual life. She lived a special union with the Eucharistic Lord. Witnesses affirm that she transfigured herself before the Blessed Sacrament and remained in his presence for long hours. She insistently said that the Eucharist was everything in her life and the strength of her extraordinary missionary activity.<sup>74</sup>

In *Fr. Joseph Marchetti*, we see the love for the Eucharist expressed in his zeal to celebrate it with the migrants in remote places, in his preoccupation of being unable to celebrate it more frequently for the sisters and the orphans, and in the contemplation of the Lord. Witnesses affirm that when they saw him praying, an interior light shown on his face. He had the beauty of the divine virtues sculptured on his face. Consequently, it was Jesus who acted in him and did not mind the thirst, tiredness, insomnias and other difficulties.<sup>75</sup>

### 3.4. The Word nourishes the life and mission

The Word of God is the first pure and perennial source of Christian spiritual life. It sustains the personal relationship with the living God and with his saving and sanctifying will. Vatican

72 *Traditio Scalabriniana*, n.1 June 2005, p.12.

73 O. SARTORI (ed), *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini – Pastoral Letters (1876-1905)*, SEI, Torino 1994. *Lettera Pastorale* (1902), p. 639.641.648.650.655.

74 L. BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti*, p.60-64.

75 Z. ORNAGHI, *o Mártir da caridade*, p. 61; L. BONDI, *Fr. Joseph Marchetti*, p.45.

It vividly exhorts the religious to have the Word of God in their hands daily, and through its reading and meditation experience Christ without whom CL loses its meaning.<sup>76</sup> Hence, it mentions the *Lectio Divina*, as well as the sharing of meditation and common prayer as fruitful exercises for community life.<sup>77</sup>

When read and meditated in community, the Word enlightens the discernment of the signs of the times; nourishes personal and community prayer; edifies the members of the community by helping them contemplate their personal history as a journey guided by God. The Word keeps on re-creating us, transforming us inwardly and it penetrates into the innermost depths of our lives.<sup>78</sup>

The vision of faith which guided the interior and exterior life of Scalabrini grew from his diligent meditation on the Word of God and familiar conversation with Christ in the Eucharistic adoration. Through the Word, he came to know himself and others, and became a spiritual man.<sup>79</sup> He said that we should listen to it because it is unchangeable, supreme and absolute truth. From all eternity God pronounces a Word and the Word came to communicate this word to humankind. It is the soul's spiritual bread that arises, nourishes and causes the birth of a new life in the person, and opens up our looks to new and unveiled horizons. The good deeds are the evident sign that the Word has produced fruit in us.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.5. The Liturgy of the Hours and other forms of prayer

Prayer in common has always been considered the basis of community life and in later years it has been enriched by diverse forms of expression and of participation. Common prayer achieves its effectiveness when intimately bound to personal prayer. The consecrated person who lives in community nourishes her consecration, both through the constant personal dialogue with God and the community praise and intercession. The religious community must be vigilant and use the time necessary to care for the quality of its life.<sup>81</sup>

The Liturgy of the Hours, whose purpose is the sanctification of the entire course of the day, extends the praises, intercessions, thanksgivings, and the mysteries of salvation to the different times of the day. In the Liturgy of the Hours the sanctification of the person takes place and the divine worship is exercised in such a way that a sort of interchange or dialogue



76 PC, 6; Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* (DV), n. 25.  
77 VC, n. 42.94; VFC, n.26.  
78 Cf GARCIA PAREDES, *Jose Cristo Rey, Prayer in Religious Life, Claretian Publications, Philippines 1995, pp.14-16.*  
79 M. FRANCESCONI, *Spirituality of the Incarnation, p. 119.*  
80 Pastoral Letter (1897), p. 592.596.606.  
81 FLC, n.12:15-16.

between God and the persons is established. Through this dialogue God speaks to his people and the people in turn responds to God with canticles and prayers.<sup>82</sup> In the Liturgy of the Hours, we proclaim our faith, express and nourish our hope and, in a way, already participate of that happiness of perpetual praise and of the day which knows no twilight.

In communion with the Church's prayer, the common celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours or, at least of some of its parts, revitalizes prayer in the community, which is brought into more lively contact with the word of God and the prayer of the Church.<sup>83</sup>

Our Founder considered prayer as a loving dialogue of the person with God. He affirmed: "*as a car; for as beautify as it may be, if it lacks the power of the motor, it does not move; likewise our heart, if it lacks the animating blow of the Spirit of God which may come to us only in prayer, it will not be able to do anything truly great, noble and lasting.*"<sup>84</sup> For him, "*prayer is the light, the heat, the nourishment, the comfort and the life of the human soul; the source of the good and, at times, of the great thoughts: ask those who believe, it is there that they find the light of faith, ask the saints, it is there that they find the help of grace; ask the genius, it is there that they find the light of science. Prayer transfigures, elevates and divinizes the person. Before prayer God cannot resist for a long time.*" Hence, Scalabrini affirmed with conviction: "*he who does not pray lacks a soul. Or does not understand, or does not hear or does not love.*"<sup>85</sup>

As we see in the course of the history of the Congregation, the Marian devotion occupied a privileged place in the life of the Founder, co-Founders and Sisters who preceded us. Mary has always been felt as the compassionate Mother, a fellow sojourner, a mother who is near, a generator of grace, and a teacher of wisdom and simplicity. One re-acquires life and hope with her because she awakes the fraternal and filial heart, inspires our way of being and helps us be Christ like. The authentic devotion to Mary opens us to authentic human relationships.<sup>86</sup>



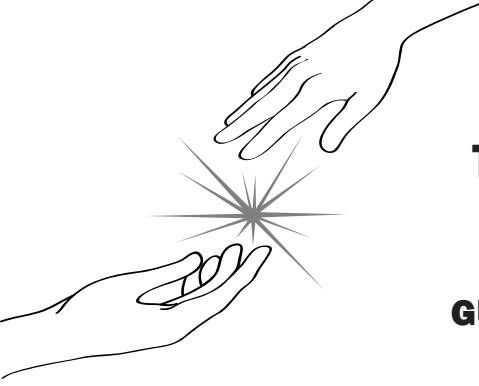
82 SC, n.33.

83 FLC, n.14; VC, n.95.

84 Pastoral Letter (1896), p. 392.

85 Pastoral Letter (1905), p. 698.700.

86 J.M. ARNAIZ, *Por um presente que tenha futuro*, p. 227.



# THE FORMATION PROCESS OF THE MSCS SISTER: AN EXPERIENCE WHICH GUARANTEES A FRUITFUL PRESENT AND BUILDS A HOPEFUL FUTURE

The proper renewal of religious institutes depends chiefly on the formation of their members. The formation of candidates, which has as its immediate end that of introducing them to religious life and making them aware of its specific character within the Church, will primarily aim at assisting men and women religious realize their unity of life in Christ through the Spirit by means of the harmonious fusion of its spiritual, apostolic, doctrinal and practical elements.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Formation in consecrated life

### 1.1 The core of religious formation

Formation in Consecrated Life originates in the mystery of the Incarnation and leads to a contemplation of this mystery. The core of all religious formation is the path or the itinerary of vocational development which sustains a decisive choice for Christ, identification with Him, which leads to a gradual process of conversion and an increasing radical commitment to the Gospel. All this moves us to take up Jesus' fundamental choices and works in agreement with His style. Formation must be adequate and coherent with today's challenges of Consecrated Life in which it is necessary to recognize "the seeds of the Word" and the presence of the Resurrected Lord and of his Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.2 Initial and ongoing formation

Formation for the religious values which ultimately are the person of Jesus Christ means to help the young ladies discover, interpret and identify the footprints of Jesus in their life and follow them. It also means: to awaken in the young women the meaning of existing for something very important, for a greater reality – God; to help them discover and identify

1 CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes (Potissimum Institutioni)*, St. Paul Book Media, Boston-MA, 1990.

2 E. Arango, *Formação Inicial na Vida Religiosa*, S. Paulo 1997, p. 41- 42.

the profound and authentic desires; and to propose the radicality of Christ's values to them.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it is indispensable to help the candidates elaborate and deepen the criteria for their solid and effective development, proper to this vocation.

Initial formation is understood as an integral process that contemplates different levels (human, psychological, biblical, spiritual, and missionary and others) in which the candidate discovers, deepens and assimilates the religious identity in a congregation, in the Church and in a specific charism. This process is lived in the community, beginning from and in the mission, in view of the proclamation and building of the Kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup> Integral formation must qualify the person for a critical conscience before the reality, but also enable for an open dialogue with the surrounding culture.<sup>5</sup>

In all the stages of formation, authentic fidelity depends on the person's daily renewal of the will to remain faithful to what she has promised, that is, faithful love for the Lord in the total surrender to the brothers and sisters. Only a solid faith, a lively hope and a concrete and unconditional love for God and for the brothers and sisters can sustain fidelity in Consecrated Life. Both the initial and ongoing formation itineraries must seriously intervene in the human, Christian and vocational levels of maturity in order to guarantee a dynamic and creative fidelity. To penetrate the mystery of the person, formation goes through three ways: the way of revelation, the way of science and the way of experience.<sup>6</sup>

Ongoing formation is a process that extends initial formation through time. It must remain the perspective of all formation. Only if we begin from this originally broad idea it will be possible to subdivide the times of such formation into periods, each with its special characteristics. The ongoing formation follows the initial formation, but – as ironic as it may seem – it precedes it and makes it possible. It is the originating idea, or the generating bosom which preserves and identifies it. It can be said that the initial formation prepares for the consecration, but the ongoing formation forms the consecrated person who is constantly invited to give an attentive, new and responsible reply.<sup>7</sup>

The Church affirms that the formation of the religious has the primary purpose of helping them become aware of their identity as persons consecrated through the profession of the

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3 F. IMODA, *Olhou para ele com amor*, S. Paulo 1997, p. 9-16.

4 *Ibidem*, p. 42.

5 A. CENCINI, *I sentimenti del Figlio – Il cammino formativo nella vita consacrata*, Bologna 1998, p. 8.

6 A. ARRIGHINI, "In formazione per tutta la Vita", in *Testimoni* n. 11, 2006, p. 1-3; A. CENCINI, *Formación Permanente*, Madrid 2002, p. 35.41; S. BISIGNANO, *La formazione che investe il cuore e tutte le dimensioni della vita: Formazione integrale*, Seminario Intercongregazionale, Roma 2002, Roma 2002, p. 94, 97 - 98.

7 A. CENCINI, *O respiro da vida – A graça da formação permanente*, S. Paulo, p. 28-35; *Pl*, n. 29.

evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience in a religious institute.<sup>8</sup> Ongoing formation can be understood as the constant availability to learn which expresses itself in a set of ordinary and extraordinary activities: vigilance and discernment, asceticism and prayer, study and apostolate, and a personal and communitarian evaluation. These help the growth in the identity and creative fidelity to one's vocation, in the diverse circumstances and phases of life.<sup>9</sup>

Particularly, ongoing formation leads to the unification and progressive re-elaboration of one's identity, seeking to reread the personal and community history in the light of Christ's mystery, of the Church journey and of the social cultural challenges of our times. The Institutes and the communities should invest more in this stage of formation, both in resources and concrete projects.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.3. The formation plan

Formation is essentially the future of Consecrated life. It is necessary to qualify formation and render it a way for building the vocational and charismatic identity. There is today a growing awareness that education, formation and evangelization itself, to achieve the fixed objectives, are in need of a clear intention, a project and a thrust. In times of transition such as ours, the formation plan can become the suitable place where the perennial values of the charism can dialogue.<sup>11</sup>

The formation plan springs from an exigency for quality and fidelity to the people, to society and Church. To give life to this process means to create the conditions so that both the person and the community fulfill God's plan, in fidelity to the call received. Such conditions must be projected and organized in developmental terms rather than in terms of content.<sup>12</sup>

Formation is to be projected in correlation with history, with the concrete reality of the people and the diverse cultural situations. But it also needs passion, fantasy, hope and utopia. While the plan aims at the ideal, to be practical and cause the rise of innovating motivations and impulses, it must keep in mind the present concrete situation in which it is introduced.<sup>13</sup>

First of all, the formation plan of an Institute must clearly express the fundamental vision- the cultural, especially, the charismatic and pedagogic perspectives- which underlie formation.<sup>14</sup>

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8 *Pl*, n. 110.

9 A CENCINI, *Formación Permanente*, p. 45-46.

10 P. DEL CORE, "Costruire il futuro. Il progetto formativo", in AA.VV., *Prevedere e provvedere*, Milano 2004, p. 103-104.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 92-97.

12 *Ibidem*, p. 98.

13 *Ibidem*, p.112.

14 *Ibidem*, p. 118.

The *Ratio Formationis* responds to an authentic urgency: on one hand, it shows how to transmit the spirit of the Institute and, on the other, it indicates to the consecrated persons the means for living the same spirit through out their existence, while they move towards full maturity of faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>15</sup>

#### 1.4 Formation as a process

Our times live call for a general rethinking of the formation of consecrated men and women which is no longer limited to one phase of life.<sup>16</sup> Hence, formation must be considered in terms of a process: an evolving and vital process which goes through the individual, psychological, spiritual, theological and pastoral levels of maturity. In shaping an identity, this process of personal integration has a relationship with oneself, with others, with the world, with history and with God.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, formation is a lifelong journey which brings about the maturity of the person and leads her/him to a gradual assimilation of the sentiments of Christ towards the Father and to total self giving. The formation process should be able to propose a method characterized by spiritual and pedagogical wisdom, capable of gradually leading the person who wishes to consecrate herself to put on the mind of Christ the Lord.<sup>18</sup>

This pedagogical permanent process is based on the person and is required by the historical, social, personal, ecclesial and congregational contexts. The pedagogy used in formation is founded on the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus (Jn 1, 14), in which the mystery of man reveals itself (GS 22). This event is read in the Trinitarian perspective: the Father comes to meet the person and draws her to Himself with bonds of love (Hosea 11). In the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Trinitarian love reveals itself and we participate of this love by the action of the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup>

We find ourselves before new generations that are notably different from the preceding ones, and the demand for new formation needs grows. Among the signs of novelties are these: the maturation of a critical freedom; a new way of understanding life; the search for strong experiences which cause emotional impacts; a strong need for identity, belonging and communion; the exigency for interior peace and unity; and the need to learn to administer time and to balance who we are with what we do.<sup>20</sup>

15 VC, 68. For our Institute, the *Ratio Formationis* is called, *Principles and Guidelines for Formation*, a document which will be cited innumerable times.

16 *Starting Afresh from Christ (SAC)*, n. 15.

17 P. DEL CORE, "Costruire il futuro. Il progetto formativo," p. 101-106.

18 *Vita Consacrata*, n. 65, 68.

19 S. BISIGNANO, *La formazione che invest il cuore*, p. 98.

20 P. DEL CORE, "Costruire il futuro. Il progetto formativo," p. 110-111.

### 1.5. The charismatic identity

The configuration with Jesus Christ and the vocational and charismatic identity are at the center of every formation process. It is essential to place at the basis of the entire formation itinerary a new way of viewing the charism, the charismatic inspiration of the origin, the vocational values of the spirituality lived by the founder and co-founders and transmitted from generation to generation.<sup>21</sup>

For us, the Scalabrinian charism is the source of our spirituality and mission of continuing the Incarnation of the Word through the service rendered to the migrant, in view of building of the Kingdom of God. The suffering and abandonment of the migrants caused a profound sadness in Scalabrini, but this experience gave him the universal “gift” of service to the migrant and later moved him to mission man and women who accepted his charism and made it their own. The charism is always reinterpreted in the new culture in which it is introduced. Immutable, instead, is our mission of evangelical and missionary service to the migrants.<sup>22</sup>

For us the MSCS Sisters, the spirituality which revitalizes the mission emerges from our experience with the migrants, the providential builders of the great universal civilization in which it is marvelous to be different together. In Jesus Christ is the way that leads to the Trinitarian communion, goal of the missionary life and spirituality. As we journey towards this goal a profound faith, nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, leads every Sister to re-read history and interpret it as a series of events guided by Divine Providence, and to feel that she belongs to a people experiencing God journeying with them.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.6 The formation community

The formation community which is a principal issue in the formation process must consider all formation aspects, to build a developmental itinerary capable of uniting the evangelical and charismatic demands with the concrete reality of the people. The sense of responsibility for the candidate’s formation expresses the religious family’s care and attention towards the young lady who asks to become part of it. But the formation environment, the first with which the person comes into contact, at times constitutes an obstacle to the personal growth, to the development of the sense of belonging and to the consolidation of the vocational and charismatic identity.<sup>24</sup>

A formation community is formed by relationships with people and among persons, and also by relations with the values in which we believe and the values of the charism lived by

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21 *Ibidem*, p. 120.

22 *CESM, Expressão de um carisma de serviço dos migrantes, Brasília 2006, p. 399.*

23 *Ibidem*, p. 399- 400.

24 *P. DEL CORE, “Persona e comunità nel percorso formativo,” in AA.VV, Educarsi per Educare, Milano 2002, p.123-124.*

the members and transmitted in a dynamic rotation. The community is always considered the place *par excellence* for the formation experience, the privileged place of ongoing formation.<sup>25</sup> It is built daily basis until it becomes a school of shared spirituality. Conscious or not, the youth seek God. Hence, the need for welcoming communities that are capable of sharing their life's ideal and the experience of God with the young ladies who seek Consecrated Life, allowing them to be interpellated by the demands of authenticity and been ready to walk with them.<sup>26</sup>

While it becomes the space for every Sister's vocational growth, the community becomes the place of a vocational proposal that will become more efficacious and attractive, in the measure in which the inter-human and spiritual surroundings become ever more permeated with enthusiasm, coherence and fidelity to the vocational gift received. In the measure in which it is capable of vocational contamination, it will have the courage to propose the "*come, and see*" (Jn 1,39) and guide the new vocations in their growth process. An authentic formation community is capable of life giving and making its future grow, starting from the witness of communion and fraternity, in the dialogue among the diverse phases of life, in fidelity to the multiple potentialities and in the possibilities of formation interaction with the laity.<sup>27</sup>

Another important task of the formation community is the ability to conciliate the stability and creativity aspects, that is, to conjugate fidelity to the charism and to the institutional model with the capacity to welcome and provoke, if necessary, the natural tension of the young lady, her willingness to dream and seek the ideal. This equilibrium between structural stability and the subjective energizing force and flexibility is not always easy.<sup>28</sup>

## 2. Formation in the institute

### 2.1 The preoccupation of the Founder, co-Founders and the Institute with the formation of the members

Since its early days, the Institute has always taken care over formation and over constantly refreshing and updating of its members, stressing it as a necessary condition for the growth of the Sisters in their vocational identity and guaranteeing unity in fidelity to the spirit of the Founder, co-Founders and first Sisters. This has kept it attentive to the constant challenges coming from the world of human mobility as present in the Church and society.<sup>29</sup>

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25 *Ibidem*, p. 142.

26 *Testimoni*, n. 4, 2005, p.8-10.

27 PINA DEL CORE, "*Persona e comunità nel percorso formative*," p. 143-144.

28 A. CENCINI, *I sentimenti del Figlio*, p.54.

29 CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF ST. CHARLES BORROMEO-SCALABRINIANS, *Principles and Guidelines for Formation*, Rome 2002, p.25-26.

The formation that Scalabrini gave to his missionaries, which was then continued by the first followers, was marked by migrants' needs and focused on their salvation and integral promotion, keeping the Catholic faith alive in their hearts, and so far as possible helping them achieve moral, civil and economic well-being. Scalabrini forms his followers through example, and through the conviction, resoluteness and creativity with which he proposes the elements of formation.

Scalabrini, the co-Founders and the first Sisters carried out a formation activity also with their lives and their burning missionary charity, translating their own passion for souls into action and winning over hearts. It is a formation method that springs from the love of migrants and is at the service of their salvation.<sup>30</sup> In this sense formation has always been one of the Founder's great preoccupations. To the clergy he recommended the annual practice of the spiritual exercises because these allow for a profound examination of life, a renewal of their vocation and a concrete planning of the future; be it the study of theology, the reading of the lives of the holy Fathers, good books and as well as the contacts with the faithful in the mission.<sup>31</sup> In the blessing of the "missioning" of the first four missionary Sisters to Brazil, Scalabrini manifested his preoccupation for their formation.

The lives of the Founder and co-Founders are examples for us. Both Congregations for the migrants, of men and women, have a school of living formation in their pioneers, through their evangelical witness, humility and simplicity of life. Their boldness and courage are a constant challenge for us to vitally incarnate the Scalabrinian charism in history and in the cultures of different peoples; with renewed missionary ardor, and new methods and new expressions.

For such an experience, a strong commitment that expresses love for Christ in the evangelical and missionary service to the migrants is needed in all stages of formation. In our progressive Configuration with Christ, we share with Him his total gift of self to the Father and fraternal service of the human family, in keeping with the special charism of the Institute. This process brings us, both as individuals and as a community, to constantly accept, deepen and reinforce our special vocation in the Church and to grasp and to assume the features of our charismatic identity- to be missionaries in the evangelical service to the migrants.<sup>32</sup>

Our formation aims at preparing us to assume the Scalabrinian mysticism - that of continuing Christ's Incarnation among the migrants. This formation process is guided by the fidelity to Christ, to the Church and to the Scalabrinian charism, which means fidelity to the signs of the times and to the cries of the migrant men and women.<sup>33</sup>

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30 *Ibidem*, p.26.  
31 O. SARTORI, ed, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, Lettere Pastorali*, Torino 1994, p.44-52.  
32 *Principles and Guidelines for Formation*, Rome 2002, p.27-28.  
33 *Ibidem*, p. 37-38.

## 2.2. Enlightening ideas of the Founder and co-Founders about the formation process

- The first sisters left for a strange country where they overcame the difficulties of lack of resources and the adverse conditions. There, they lived profoundly the sense of belonging to a small community committed to the orphans and abandoned ones, qualifying themselves in the spirit and growing in a common awareness of a mission entrusted them. What helped them overcome themselves were the words of the promise they heard from Scalabrini, in his message of their “being sent”. These words made their awareness of belonging to a group more convincing and eased their identification with it: “Go, confidently, my daughters, later, I will send you other fellow sisters, and you will return to form and strengthen yourselves in the religious spirit.”<sup>34</sup>
- In *John Baptist Scalabrini* we have the example of a man who lived ongoing formation. During his entire life, as a man of God with a pastor’s heart and an updated, intelligent and active attitude; he was a constant reader of the signs of the times and of the migration, pastoral, social, political and ecclesial situations. What characterizes Scalabrini is his great capacity of giving to his experience, his activities, a broad content of scientific research, that is, of theoretical analysis of the problems [ ] which he had to face in his time.<sup>35</sup> “Deepen ever more your understanding of the revealed truths and of every field of knowledge. The world marches on. Let us not stand back.”<sup>36</sup>

Scalabrini’s considerations with regards to human mobility resulted from the reflections and research that he made with the purpose of gathering the statistical data and facts that served as the basis for his writing – *The Italian emigration in America*. The objective of this text was not to prevent emigration but to help and guide it through action and advice, to render it advantageous for the emigrants and in honor for Italy.<sup>37</sup>

With reference to the Sisters, Scalabrini wrote to Fr. Faustino Consoni: “It is necessary to form also the good daughters who, already for sometime, work assiduously for the little orphans. I know their good spirit and vibrant desire to serve Jesus Christ the best way possible. They will dedicate themselves particularly to the exercises of piety and religious perfection.”<sup>38</sup>

- In *Father Joseph Marchetti* we have the example of an excellent vocational promoter, as his pastoral work shows. In his correspondence to Scalabrini he reveals his

34 L. SIGNOR, *Irmãs Missionárias de S. Carlos Borromeo-Scalabrinianas (1895-1934)*, Brasília 2005, p. 166-167.

35 A. PEROTTI, “IL Pensiero sociale del Vescovo Scalabrini,” talk at the meeting of Loretto, 2 August 2002.

36 *Scalabrinian Congregations, A Living Voice*, Rome, 1989, p. 183 and 325.

37 L. SIGNOR, *Irmãs Missionárias de S. Carlos Borromeo-Scalabrinianas (1895-1934)*, Brasília 2005, p.39.

38 MARIO FRANCESCONI, *Madre Assunta*, S. Paulo, 1974, p. 23-24.

conviction that a well directed and solid formation could help to awaken missionary religious vocations among the orphans of the Orphanage.<sup>39</sup>

On April 4, 1895, he wrote to Scalabrini: *“two novices are in Florence preparing themselves in the spirit of sacrifice and of the love of God. Two are here and, hence, we will have seven or eight of them. Deo Gratias!”*<sup>40</sup>

One of his later letter to Scalabrini offers us an expression that shows how Fr. Marchetti valued everything that daily life offered him for his formation: *“by force of experience I feel to be really growing.”*<sup>41</sup>

- From the start of her religious life, *Mother Assunta Marchetti* showed qualities that made possible the unity among the Sisters, her conviction and clear sightedness about the definition and safeguarding of the congregational identity. Later, she revealed concern for their basic formation. She did her best so that they would have an *“adequate preparation to work in the schools.”*<sup>42</sup> A Sister witnesses while Mother Assunta was in the Orphanage of Villa Prudente, she did not teach any school subject to the children, *“but her examples were a true school of life.”* She wanted the Sisters to study organ, learn to embroider and paint in order to be well prepared for the things of God.” Besides, *“she had and wanted that everyone would have a profound spiritual life.”*<sup>43</sup>

Mother Assunta was extraordinarily prudent. Graphological experts offer elements which justify this: she had *“capacity for concentration, high level of reflective and deliberating awareness; she didn’t run the risk of mental dispersion and wondering, less yet of easily making judgments and decisions. Before making a decision she pondered everything carefully.”* These attitudes reveal self formation and are a witness to the other Sisters.<sup>44</sup>

### **3. The stages of the formation process in the institute**

#### **3.1 Pastoral care of Vocations**

##### **3.1.1 The changes of the II Vatican Council**

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39 *Ibidem*, 4 de abril de 1895.

40 L. BONDI, *Padre Jose Marchetti- Alguns escritos inéditos, Carta de Pe. José Marchetti enviada a Dom Scalabrini, Ipiranga, S.P, 4 de abril de 1895.*

41 *Ibidem*, 17 de março de 1896.

42 L. BONDI, *Biografia - Madre Assunta Marchetti*, Roma 2003, p. 130-131.

43 L. BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti*, ed. Loyola, S. Paulo 2005, p. 18, 78, 127.

44 *Ibidem*, p. 104.

Vatican Council II showed the intimate bond that exists between the mystery of the Church and the mystery of the Trinity and recuperated the image of the Church "People of God." This view of "People of God," convoked and gathered by the Trinity, was very important for the Pastoral Care of Vocations. The new concept makes us see the Church as a body in which every member has a specific function. Therefore, the Council gave a new awareness of the Church in which all the baptized are called to holiness because all participate of the threefold mission of Christ (prophetic, priestly and royal), showing in this way every member's responsibility in the proclamation of the Gospel. From all this, there slowly rises in the Church a true spirit of communion and participation. From the view of a common priesthood, new charisms flourish within the Church in which there is room for new ways of living the Baptism and, consequently, new ministries. This doctrine created a new mentality which gave birth to a specific and, at the same time, diversified Pastoral Care of Vocations: not merely turned to the priesthood as it had been before, but to the formation of the entire People of God.<sup>45</sup>

The Church of the Third Millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church's life. Therefore, all active members of the communities, all the baptized are vocation promoters.<sup>46</sup>

### **3.1.2 Nature and purpose of the Pastoral Care of Vocations**

The first great vocation of the human person is the call to life (Gn 1, 28) and to life in abundance (Jn 10, 10). The fundamental Christian vocation consists above all in growing in faith and in continuing the Lord's mission by living our Baptism. This requires that the person be guided in her life, in the fulfillment of her choice and in building the project to which God has called her.<sup>47</sup> Only a person of faith, one who participates of a Church community, has the conditions to hear the call and to respond.

Vocational Promotion is defined as the mediating action of the entire Christian community between God who calls and those who are called, so that the hierarchical and charismatic gifts given by the Spirit may be generously received. Such pastoral originates in the Church's mystery and places itself at its service; to promote the variety of the charisms, ministries and, therefore, the different vocations. These rise and grow in the life and prayer of the entire Church animated by the Spirit. High points of the Vocational Promotion are the intense moments of personal and communitarian prayer, and the Word of God. The vocations are an inestimable gift of God to a prayerful community. Without prayer, we cannot do any apostolate because the Kingdom of

45 *Estudos da CNBB*, n. 50, p. 26-28

46 *John Paul II, Nuovo Millennium Ineunte*, n.46.

47 *A. LONDOÑO, Acompanhamento Vocacional, S. Paulo 1992*, p.56.

God is not built with human energies but with divine energies: “If the Lord does not build his house, in vain do the builders labor” (Ps.127, 1).<sup>48</sup>

Generally, the Pastoral care of Vocations consists in awakening and animating an action which mobilizes the different vocations that the Spirit gives rise and gathers in the Church and society. This pastoral must be incorporated into the other pastorals, making them aware of their duty to be responsible for the promotion of vocations and ministries for the Church. It is the articulation of a systematic work that has the objective of helping the people recognize their vocation, a service as lay person, priest, religious and missionary; in order to respond to the needs of the Church and the world, starting from the personal gifts and charisms.<sup>49</sup> The integration in the local Church must be in consonance with one’s charism.

Normally, the vocational discernment is done in the Church community setting, in the family, in the school, in the youth group and others. Incorporation in it is an important factor in the vocational decision of the young woman. This experience offers multiple stimuli and aids for the discernment of the personal vocation.<sup>50</sup>

The goals of the Pastoral Care of Vocations in our Institute are as follows: to participate actively as an MSCS Sister in the Church’s animation of vocations, to identify young women who feel the call of the Scalabrinian vocation, to propose the following of Jesus Christ to them with conviction and courage, and to guide and watch over them in their discernment of and care for the gift of vocation, so that they recognize the signs of the call to the particular Scalabrinian style of consecration and mission, and offer a free, informed response to God.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.1.3. The itinerary of the Pastoral Care of Vocations

The departing point of the vocational pedagogy is ordinarily found in the Christian communities that are moved by the Word of God, the sacraments, prayer and apostolic commitment. In the community, the witness of consecrated persons and others who are responsible and active in the community manifests itself. They are the mediations that respond to Divine Providence’s plans. What constitutes the next step is the direct proposal, the individualized call to follow Jesus Christ in Consecrated Life.<sup>52</sup>

The persons responsible for the pastoral care of vocations have the primary duty to be credible witnesses of their proposal. The first witness of any vocational animator is a life totally

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48 V. MAGNO, *Pastorale delle Vocazioni – storia, esperienze, prospettive*, Roma 1993, 74, 89 - 92.  
49 A PIGHETI.J.DUTRA PESSOA, *Curso para orientadores vocacionais*, S. Paulo 1991, p. 25-26.  
50 CNBB, *Guia Pedagógico da Pastoral Vocacional*, n.36, p. 44-45.  
51 *Principles and Guidelines for Formation*, p. 67.  
52 V. MAGNO, *Pastorale delle vocazioni – storia, esperienze, prospettive*, Roma 1993, p. 93.

fulfilled within one's charism. The credibility and proposal constitute the proof bank of the strength and effectiveness of the vocational proposal. Therefore, it is necessary to make this witness known in the best way possible, through the use of the means of communication, particularly through those intended for a specific vocational animation.<sup>53</sup>

In response to and in keeping with their vocation in the Church, the religious community and each MSCS Sister commit themselves to the animation of new vocations through unceasing prayer; witnesses of fraternal love and simplicity of life; expression of the Trinitarian communion and of the mystery of the Church and, of the fidelity to our vocation in the service of our migrant brothers and sisters.<sup>54</sup> It is also necessary to insist in the vocational animation through catechesis, witness of life and pastoral care of the youth.<sup>55</sup>

## 3.2 Aspirancy

### 3.2.1 Nature and purpose

Initial formation has the mission of offering concrete models, true and appropriate formation dynamisms through which the good is no longer property of a single person but becomes a gift for everyone, for the edification of the community. It is important that the young woman experiences her community as the place of her growth, the daily gifts that God grants her. The Lord gathered the members of the community and sustains them in a common consecration, for a common mission in the Church.<sup>56</sup>

The aspirancy stage is a time in which the young woman demonstrates attraction toward religious life and has the first contacts with the Congregation in her own setting. The aim of this period is to achieve a mutual knowledge, aspirant-Congregation through guidance, and to prove and/or obtain the motivations and necessary preparation to enter postulancy.<sup>57</sup> Generally, this stage aims at giving the young lady the possibility and the effective capacity to freely choose consecrated life as her personal ideal.

### 3.2.2 Objectives

The Institute proposes objectives to the candidate who begins the formation journey towards the vocational choice of the Scalabrinian religious life. Some of them are: to cultivate the

.....  
53 V. MAGNO, *Pastorale delle vocazioni – storia, esperienze, prospettive*, Roma 1993, p. 100; A CENCINI, *Vocações da nostalgia à profecia*, Lisboa 1992, p. 133-135.

54 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 70.

55 F. M. DIEZ, *La frontera actual de la vida religiosa*, Madrid 2000, p. 239; *Starting Afresh from Christ*, n. 16.

56 A. CENCINI, "Dinamismi educativi e formativi alla comunità", in AA.VV., *Vivere insieme*, Roma 1999, p. 78-81.

57 E. ARANGO, *Formação Inicial na Vida Religiosa*, p.63; *Princípios e Orientações para a Formação*, p.76.

gift of vocation through ongoing discernment; to obtain adequate human formation, using the means that help her to know her own potential, values, limitations and conditioning; to develop capacities for living with others and for integration into a group; to acquire the basic elements of Christian formation through study and reflection; to deepen her understanding of the value of baptismal consecration; to have an experience of God through personal and group prayer, listening to the Word of God, sacramental life and knowledge of the elements of spirituality; to know elements of the history of the Congregation, the Scalabrinian charism, and the lives and works of the Patron saint, Founder and Cofounders; and to have apostolic-missionary experiences with migrants.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.2.3 Co-responsibility of the formation community

The new vocations require renewed communities that are sure of their identity and happy to express their charism with new vigor in the service of God, the Church and humanity. The new generations of consecrated persons will come from the places where there will be communities formed by opened and available hearts, where they are able to find a setting which encourages responses to the question repeated through the centuries: *“Master, where do you live?”* (Jn 1, 38).

The aspirancy community is marked above all as a formation place and strives to have the necessary clarity about the purpose of the aspirancy and meaning that it has for aspirants, so that each member may collaborate responsibly in her particular role.

The Sisters must be familiar with the world of today’s young people in order to welcome them with a Scalabrinian spirit and accept them and their way of expressing themselves. It is important to bear in mind that changes take place to the extent that the person internalizes the values proposed during the formation journey. This means that if we demand immediate changes from these young women, there is a risk that such changes are simply the results of an outward adaptation to the new environment. All the Sisters should help the young women in their vocational process through the personal and community witness of consecrated life, prayer, and by fostering dynamics of sharing, planning and verification<sup>59</sup>.

For the community to be educational-formative, some internal conditions are indispensable: the coherence between the implicit or explicit educational messages and the reality of concrete life; the beauty of a life totally consecrated to the Lord; the ability to challenge, to make the young woman go beyond, or, to overcome herself and to seek more; the sense of responsibility which forms adult and responsible persons in the community.<sup>60</sup>

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58 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 76.

59 *Ibidem*, p. 78.

60 *A CENCINI, I sentimenti del Figlio*, p. 69-70.

An adequate community environment encourages the young women to acquire self knowledge and know the requirements of the Congregation, the gift received from the Spirit and the spirit of the Institute. The educational environment must encourage freedom of choice through personal guidance and the coherence of the environmental motivation. Such experience will also allow the Institute to verify the authenticity of the call which comes from God and the young woman's adequate capacity to respond.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.3. Postulancy

#### 3.3.1. Nature and purpose

Postulancy is a period of specific preparation during which it is necessary to secure assurance that the candidate for religious life be endowed with such elements of human and Christian maturity as will afford grounds for hope that she is capable of undertaking properly the requirements of the novitiate, she will be able to progress toward a fuller maturity.<sup>62</sup> This probationary period aims at motivating the candidate to achieve the maturity and the effective capacity to freely choose consecrated life as a personal ideal. The Congregation, in turn, can assure the authenticity of the call and the maturity in the young lady of a new and efficacious disposition of spirit, in harmony with the dynamism of the "following of Christ" within the Institute. It can be said that it is the time of the first experience.<sup>63</sup>

The goals of this period are: to offer the postulants the opportunity to deepen their discernment of the call and to bring their response to maturity through the experience of God, greater knowledge of the Institute and integration into pastoral activities in order to prepare themselves to enter the novitiate and gradually move from lay to religious life; to allow the Institute to work with the young woman in verifying her faith life, her motivations for following Jesus Christ and her capacities for the MSCS style of life.<sup>64</sup>

#### 3.3.2 Objectives

The Church affirms that Postulancy has the purpose not merely to formulate a tentative judgment on the aptitudes and vocation of the candidate, but also to verify the extent of her knowledge of religious subjects and of sufficient basic general knowledge, acquired within her culture, and if needed, complete it to the degree judged necessary; and, lastly, to permit a gradual transition from lay life to the life proper to the novitiate.<sup>65</sup>

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61 *Ibidem*, p. 70.

62 *Renovationis Causam (RC)*, n.11; PI n.33.

63 A. CENCINI, *I sentimenti del Figlio*, p. 69-70.

64 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 83.

65 *Renovationis Causam (RC)*, n.11

In the Institute, the following objectives are proposed for the postulant: to experience Jesus Christ as the center of her life; to intensify the process of self-knowledge and integration of her own personality; gradually and in an evangelical spirit to make the detachments entailed in the MSCS vocation; to acquire a deeper and fuller knowledge of Christian doctrine and the Word of God; to grow in the spiritual life, knowing and cultivating the Christian values and virtues contained in Scalabrinian spirituality; to deepen her knowledge of the history of the Institute, the lives and works of the Founder, Cofounders and first Sisters, and the phenomenon of migration; to acquire elements regarding the planning and organization of the specific pastoral activity of the Institute.<sup>66</sup>

It is important in this formation period to evaluate the postulant's ability to live in community and her openness to interpersonal relationships, in order to offer assurance in the hope of growing in fraternal life. An adequate environment will sustain living with the group and with a community.<sup>67</sup> The acquisition of disciplinary, communitarian and study habits is also necessary, so that the postulant may train herself in a rational formation that prepares her to accept a new lifestyle.

### 3.3.3. Knowledge of the Congregation and gradual identification with the charism

An approximation to the charismatic roots is important in postulancy. In fact, in this formation period the aspects of the charism must be present in such a qualified way as to be able to provoke the freedom of choice in the young women. This approximation to the works of the institute and also to the person, who guides them, must become identification with the spirit of the Congregation, through the successive contacts with the writings and the bibliography of the Founder and co-Founders, in order to understand the founding charism and acquire a brief knowledge of the history of the Institute.<sup>68</sup> It would not be respectful, nor intelligent to admit to the novitiate people who have not sufficiently experience, on their own skin, the convergence between the personal ideal and the institutional ideal.<sup>69</sup>

The renunciation of habits of the preceding state of life and the adoption of a new lifestyle, from a vocational point of view and effective availability, are a sign of a mature attitude of the young woman. This availability can also be provoked by the environment that receives her. The experience must be such as to confirm a prudent judgment on the candidate's suitability, already verified in the preceding stage but which will continue to be the object of future formation. The environment cannot impose anything but encourage the freedom of choice.<sup>70</sup>

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66 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 83.

67 BENITO GOYA, *Formazione Integrale alla Vita Consacrata*, p. 193-203.

68 *Ibidem*, p. 198-199.

69 A. CENCINI, *I sentimenti del Figlio*, p. 69.

70 *Ibidem*, p.69-70.

Therefore, *Potissimum Institutioni* recommends that the postulants be received into a community of the institute without sharing all its life and they do not have the impression that they have already become members of the institute.<sup>71</sup>

The clear awareness of making a free and personal choice will be an extraordinary means through which all the candidate's efforts can be channeled towards the achievement of her ideal. A choice which commits the future, in order to be authentic, needs a broad sense of responsibility and freedom. It is the task of the director, with respect to the individuality of the person and with patience, to contribute towards the expansion of the candidate's spaces. A personalized style of intervention will complete the educational guidance.<sup>72</sup> This period of formation, well done by the candidate and well guided by the person-in-charge of formation and formation community, may revert into a sure path leading to the novitiate.

### 3.4 The Novitiate

#### 3.4.1 Nature and purpose

The novitiate is the period of initiation into consecrated religious life in the Institute as an MSCS Sister. It helps the novice gain a deeper knowledge of the specific divine vocation and mission of the Institute, to experience its particular style of life and shape her mind and heart according to the spirit of the Institute.<sup>73</sup> Such an experience takes place primarily through the living of the charism and patrimony of the Institute. This formation period renders possible the fulfillment of God's project for the person called to make an experience in the spirit of the Founder and co-Founders and update and develop it in this moment of history. Simultaneously, it permits the Institute to verify the suitability and intentions of the novice.<sup>74</sup>

The purpose of the novitiate can be defined as the period of the integral initiation into the form of life the Son of God chose and proposed by the charism of the Institute. It is the beginning of the process of assimilation of the sentiments of the Son (Phil. 2,5), the arrival point of the entire formation process. The possibility to establish a new and unique relationship with the person of Jesus Christ, contemplated in accordance with the aspect highlighted by the charism, is the central and peculiar element of the novitiate.<sup>75</sup>

Besides, the Institute has as the goals of this formation period: to help the novice to obtain

.....  
71 *Potissimum Institutioni*, n. 44.

72 B. GOYA, *Formazione Integrale all Vita Consacrata*, p. 200.

73 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 89

74 J. BEYER, *Il diritto della Vita Consacrata*, Milano 1989, p. 293-301; E. ARANGO, *Formação Inicial na Vida Religiosa*, p. 81; B. GOYA, *Formazione Integrale alla Vita Consacrata*, p. 193-203.

75 A. CENCINI, *I sentimenti del Figlio*, p. 65-69.

deeper knowledge of the vocation and an experience of the specific lifestyle of the Institute, through a significant experience of God, community life and participation in the mission, so that she can choose and undertake the following of Jesus Christ in freedom through the profession of temporary vows as an MSCS Sisters; to allow the Institute to evaluate, with the young woman, the authenticity of her vocation, and to have sufficient certainty about the qualities and maturity needed to undertake commitment of the life of the MSCS Sister.<sup>76</sup>

Currently, the Church asks that the novitiate be conducted within the milieu of the novice's culture and that it uses pedagogy adequate to every cultural and individual reality of the candidates. The reasons are clear: the cultural differences and the limited knowledge of the language in a foreign culture block the possibility for an authentic personal communication, making the empathic comprehension difficult, risking to accept false vocations and of not perceiving eventual false motivations.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.4.2. Objectives

In the Institute, the following objectives are proposed for the novice in pursuit of the goals of the novitiate: to live Christ's paschal mystery in detachment from self and in the evangelical practice of poverty, chastity and obedience, configuring herself to Jesus Christ in the Scalabrinian charism; to intensify her experience of God through prayer, meditation and contemplation on the Word of God, love of the Eucharist, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the practice of the theological virtues and asceticism; to live fraternal life in community, taking on its values and the demands flowing from these; to acquire theoretical and practical knowledge of the heritage of the Institute, developing her identification with the charism; to continue the process of self knowledge and integration of her own personality, building her new identity as an MSCS Sister; to take on the formation process, making herself the subject of her own formation.<sup>78</sup>

During the novitiate period, initiation into the particular mission of the Institute is also necessary because the awareness of belonging to it extends itself to the internalization of the ecclesial meaning. This means the awareness of belonging to Christ and His Church and of having a pastoral commitment to fulfill in it.<sup>79</sup> In this manner the novices can come up face-to-face with the lived values of the charism and have a realistic view of the commitments and responsibilities which they will have with the temporary profession.<sup>80</sup>

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76 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 89-90.

77 B. GOYA, *Formazione Integrale alla Vita Consacrata*, p. 193-209; Pl, n. 47.

78 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 90.

79 *Canon Law of the Church*, can.648, 2.

80 B. GOYA, *Formazione Integrale alla Vita Consacrata*, p. 207.

### 3.4.3 The experience of Jesus Christ's way of life proposed by the scalabrinian charism

It is in prayerful silence that the awareness of the presence of God and of the theological character of consecrated life is created in the person. And it is also through prayer that we create a profound friendship with the Lord. The deep encounter with the Lord through the *Lectio Divina*, the listening and the personal and communitarian participation of the biblical readings, causes in the novice the growth of faith and hope for the encounter with the Lord and forms in her the habit of contemplation and filial surrendering to the action of the Sanctifying Spirit in her history of salvation. Vocational discernment and personal guidance support the subjective maturity of the vocational response. Thus, the candidate becomes aware of being loved by the Lord and an ever more lively and personal relationship with Christ, with the Sisters and with the Institute will begin in her.<sup>81</sup>

Human mediations are needed for such an experience and the external atmosphere is one of these mediations. The environment is important and must comply with the experience of silence, of the desire for an indispensable search for God, for the Transfiguration. This experience consists of the practice of a prolonged prayer, the courage to leave the noisy world and the effort to remain before God also when we are tempted to occupy the time in more productive apostolic activities. If the relationship with God does not put its profound roots in the novitiate, the full fruit of divine intimacy will never mature and we will have perpetually unsatisfied and bitter consecrated people.<sup>82</sup>

## 3.5. Juniorate

### 3.5.1. Nature and purpose

The period after the first profession is the time in which the dynamism of the "following" initiates two fundamental processes in the consecrated young woman: the integral personalization of the charism and the expansion of the new identity to all areas of her personality. This period requires that the young woman increasingly accepts the charism as her own identity, as God's project to which she conforms herself and respond with the coherent and total global but courageous and creative practice of following the Lord, wherever He may call her.<sup>83</sup>

The Church prescribes that after first profession the formation of all the members is to be continued so that they may lead the proper life of the institute more fully and realize its mission more suitably. Juniorate is an important period dedicated to the increasing

81 *Ibidem*, p. 209; A BARUFFO, "Formazione al discernimento spirituale personale e in comune, in *Formazione al discernimento nella vita religiosa*, Roma 1988, p. 95-10.

82 A. CENCINI, *I sentimenti del Figlio*, p. 71-72.

83 *Ibidem*, p.73.

vocational maturity and to prepare for perpetual vows through the experience of fraternal life in community, theological training and the completion of the Scalabrinian formation.<sup>84</sup>

Juniorate is a time for discernment and maturing the awareness of the charism and for living it, in order to arrive at a free, responsible and perpetual choice. It is a time in which the young woman reaps the fruits of the preceding stages and pursues her human and spiritual growth through the lifestyle to which she committed herself. This stage is characterized by the apostolic responsibilities taken up in the name of the community. It is an appropriate time to dedicate oneself to prepare for the mission in the Church and in the world.<sup>85</sup>

The Juniorate formation stage has as its purposes: to furnish the young religious with favorable conditions for a real increase in their donation to the Lord; to offer the Junior Sister an opportunity to consolidate her vocational choice by deepening it, living it out and verifying it in experiences of daily life, in order to give a definite response to God in the MSCS Institute, carrying out its specific mission with creative fidelity; to give the institute the opportunity to verify the junior's suitability for the renewal of temporary vows, and even more so in the case of profession of perpetual vows.<sup>86</sup>

### 3.5.2. Objectives

The following objectives are proposed for the junior Sister: to enable the Sister to make her definite choice for Jesus Christ, to grow in the configuration with Him, in constant docility to the Spirit;<sup>87</sup> to integrate herself into one of the Institute's communities in an active and responsible way, living its riches and demands in daily life; to continue the process of self knowledge and personal integration with suitable means, consolidating her vocational identity; to grow in union with God through fidelity in cultivation of the spiritual life; to deepen her theological understanding of the religious vows and their practice as a means of consolidating her own consecration to God; to develop her capacity for apostolic work in keeping with the charism, through study and experience; to give a solid foundation for the apostolic-missionary work of the Church-mystery of communion; to practice integrating the demands of community life, spiritual life, study, apostolic activities and work.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.5.3 Professional preparation and pastoral commitment

This formation period is really the time of cultural and pastoral preparation, of the different contacts and of apostolic experiences, of openness to the problems of people and society.

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84 Pl, n. 58; *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 97.

85 B. GOYA, *Formazione Integrale alla Vita Consacrata*, p. 205-210.

86 Pl n.60; *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 97-98.

87 E. ARANGO, *Formação Inicial na Vida Religiosa*, p. 98.

88 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p.98, Pl 62, 65.

At this stage the young woman learns the difficult spiritual art of seeking and finding God in work, in apostolate, in contacts with the people and in study; not merely experiencing that prayer is the soul of the apostolate, but that the apostolate is the soul of prayer.<sup>89</sup>

In the Juniorate, formation must be systematic and contemplate the doctrinal, spiritual, apostolic and professional dimensions, giving special attention to the deepening of consecrated life and the charism of the Institute. Formation is profoundly vital; it commits the whole person in her peculiarities, with the grace, gifts, limits of her human nature and the experiences accumulated in the family and in society. This formation is given with a universal awareness and heart, preferably in the junior Sister's culture and opened to other cultures. During this stage, the mission entrusted to the junior Sisters may not hinder the development of the formation program.<sup>90</sup>

Although professional preparation is not a priority of this stage, it is part of the juniorate formation program. Before the contemporary challenges it is necessary "to balance professional knowledge and ongoing formation."<sup>91</sup> To meet the expectations of the contemporary world, professional preparation constitutes an objective of the integral development of the junior Sister.<sup>92</sup>

### 3.5.4 The responsibility of the community in the formation process of the Junior Sister

The communities in which the junior Sisters are integrated create an appropriate environment which allows for dialogue, to permit the junior Sisters to express themselves with freedom and simplicity.<sup>93</sup> In the community the young religious must make efforts to better understand the practical importance of community life in keeping with the vocation proper to their Institute; to accept the reality of this life; to respect others in their differences; and to feel personal responsibility within this community. The community, in turn, encourages the Junior Sister to develop the capacity to integrate the commitments of the pastoral ministry, the community, work, spiritual life, formation and study.<sup>94</sup>

Some strategies for formation are needed to realize this in an effective manner: a vigorous formation community which vibrates for the charism and leads an exemplar fraternal life; an evangelical environment which faces the challenges of fraternity and mission with simplicity;<sup>95</sup>

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89 . A. CENCINI, *I sentimenti del Figlio*, p. 74 - 75.

90 . E. ARANGO, *Formação Inicial na Vida Religiosa*, p. 74 -75; Pl. n.58.

91 . Various Authors, *Passion for Christ, passion for humanity*, p. 103.

92 . Pl, n. 61-62; VC, n. 58.

93 . E. ARANGO, *Formação Inicial na Vida Religiosa*, p. 102.

94 . Pl, n. 60; *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 99.

95 . J. BEYER, "La Formazione dei religiosi", in *Il diritto della Vita Consacrata*, Milano 1989, p. 334-342.

a spiritual direction that guides the young religious to a harmonious and integral maturity; an experience of God and the listening to the signs of His presence in history; a real awareness of the assimilation of the values and contents of the Institute; community meetings, sharing and dialogue which help the junior Sister evaluate herself in her formation journey.<sup>96</sup>

### 3.6. The Ongoing Formation

#### 3.6.1. Nature and Purpose

Ongoing formation, a gift of the Father, is a human-divine process in action. It is justified in the plan of the normal and profound evolution of the person and of consecrated individual. It is a patient development of the Son in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>97</sup> In all its forms, it always has the function of supporting the gift of vocation in its different dimensions: personal, communitarian, institutional and pastoral.<sup>98</sup>

Ongoing formation is a process which extends the initial formation through time and is a process of constant conversion. In this itinerancy every event or reality can convert itself into a providential instrument, through which the Father shapes the sentiments of the Son in the disciple who in turn allows himself to be shaped by Him and his mediations.<sup>99</sup>

The purpose of ongoing formation is motivated by the need to continue the growth process in the configuration to Jesus Christ; to better understand the nature of the religious consecration; to offer each Sister and community the opportunity and means to fulfill her vocational identity; in dynamic fidelity and in response to urgent appeals coming from migration in the Church and society; to help live the human person's mystery so that she may be able to face the problems of the contemporary world with confidence and creativity; live the personal and institutional charism in a creative and dynamic way; to allow the institute to express its particular charism in carrying out the apostolate in the Church and society.<sup>100</sup>

#### 3.6.2 Objectives

Objectives proposed for the Sister at this stage are: to deepen the process of unification of life in Christ through corresponding choices and means; to improve interpersonal relations through human and affective integration of her personality; to collaborate in building up a fraternal community capable of living community in difference, acceptance, free giving

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96 . R. RECCHI, "Formazione dei religiosi e carisma dell'istituto", in *Vita Consacrata* 11 (1991), p. 844-851.  
97 . A. CENCINI, *Formación Permanente*, Madrid, 2002, p. 14-31; 113-114.  
98 . B.GOYA, *Formación Integral a la Vida Consagrada a la Luz de la exhortación posinodal*, 1998, p. 13-14.  
99 . *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 41.  
100 . *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 107; S. BISIGNANO, *La formazione che investe il cuore*, p. 94.

and co-responsibility in the Scalabrinian spirit; constantly revitalize her own identity as a Scalabrinian Sister; through the gift of self in community life, spiritual life and the mission; to offer evangelically dynamic and adequate responses to the challenges of human mobility. It is crucial that the religious family have an ongoing formation project which is suitable for all its members and leads them to a progressive living of the dimension of the charism, of the human and spiritual growth in the succeeding phases of life and considers the local contexts where the Sisters mark presence.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.6.3 Responsibility for the Ongoing Formation

The concept of ongoing formation suggests a complex and articulated reality, and a united and joint participation within the religious institution. It is envisioned in the different levels of intervention: institutional, provincial, community and personal.<sup>102</sup>

The normal place for the formation of the consecrated person is the religious family where God continues to transmit His gifts to her. It is the task of the highest authority of the Institute to promote a favorable attitude towards ongoing formation, so that all the Sisters may commit themselves to it and there may be the basis for a harmonious development, in the dynamic and creative fidelity to the charism and with respect of the laws of the human and spiritual growth.<sup>103</sup>

The community is the privileged place for formation, a place of a profound experience of communion which allows each of its members to grow in fidelity to the Lord in line with the charism of the Institute. Authority in the community strives so that the latter exercises its formation role by involving all of its members. The prayerful community increases in the person the ability to respond and the sense of belonging to the Institute.<sup>104</sup>

Ongoing formation is a right and a duty of every consecrated person. The individual who throughout her life is always ready to learn and search for the help needed to make her formation journey, in all of its areas, progresses in the formation process, and adheres actively and responsibly to the community initiatives. The consecrated person preoccupies herself with her formation because she is also responsible for the formation of the people she serves. Maintaining this awareness, the religious family will be faithful to the original charism and to the exigencies of the present moment.<sup>105</sup>

101 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 107; A. CENCINI, *Formación Permanente*, p. 43; B.GOYA, *Formación Integral a la Vida Consagrada*, p. 252-253.

102 A. CENCINI, *Formación Permanente*, p. 46.

103 *Ibidem*, p. 47- 48.

104 B.GOYA, *Formación Integral a la Vida Consagrada*, p.253; A. CENCINI, *Formación Permanente*, p. 50.

105 A. CENCINI, *Formación Permanente*, p. 54.

### 3.6.4 Ongoing Formation in the community

Common life especially the interpersonal relationships constitute the normal context in which consecrated women learn the art of growing together daily, allowing themselves to be formed and shaped by the fellow sister who becomes an instrument of the forming action of God.<sup>106</sup> Through this learning we arrive at knowing the will and love of God which manifests itself in events and human mediations.<sup>107</sup>

Ongoing formation nourishes itself by the great opportunities and provocations of daily life, especially by the Eucharist and the Word of God, sharing of life- participation of the positive and negative events and in the communication of apostolic experiences. Daily life becomes a sacred place of the transforming presence of God. Hence, ongoing formation is grace which encompasses the normal course of life.<sup>108</sup>

In daily life, ongoing formation requires the capacity to find the just balance between relevant aspects: apostolate and prayer, work and rest, and interior growth and general balance. The experience of reciprocity between prayer and action is ongoing formation since the apostolate educates for the search and encounter of God in history and neighbor.<sup>109</sup>

To the elderly and sick Sisters is presented a spiritual support program which helps them have an active role in their preparation for the definite encounter with God. Formation objectives for this stage of life could be: to participate of the paschal mystery of Christ; to help them accept patiently their existential reality; to serve the Church with solicitude, by the witness of life, availability for the service of spiritual direction and by apostolate of prayer.<sup>110</sup>

Sisters, let us live the Scalabrinian missionary vocation, with all the wealth of our femininity, the life-generating force, because as Scalabrini said, "*there are things in which only you can succeed. God has infused into women's heart a very special attraction with which they exercise a divine power over minds and hearts.*"<sup>111</sup>

Migrants in the new millennium, whose situation is the result of globalized and conflicting socio-cultural circumstances, are for us a challenge to dedicate our whole life to them with apostolic ardor, skill and creativity.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, we pray the Spirit of the Lord "*who makes all*

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106 *Ibidem*, p. 98.

107 *Ibidem*, p. 108-114.

108 *Ibidem*, p. 108-114.

109 *Ibidem*, p. 122-125, 138-140.

110 B. GOYA, *Formación Integral a la Vida Consagrada*, p. 273-278.

111 *Principles and Orientations for Formation*, p. 29.

112 *Ibidem*, p. 21.

*things new*" (Apoc. 21, 5) to keep our minds and hearts opened to this reality and that through the formation process, we may become a qualified presence of the Scalabrinian charism in the Church and in the world.



# THE MISSIONARY SENDING TO PROCLAIM AND ESTABLISH THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AMONG THE MIGRANTS

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28, 19).

The missionary mandate that we receive impels us to look at the center of the Gospel, to the person of Jesus Christ and to portray him alive in our preaching and catechesis, in our liturgy and prayer, in gestures of justice and of fraternal charity, and in the missionary initiatives. The daily life of the Church, of the ecclesial communities and realities, must be saturated by missionary enthusiasm and maintain the gaze fixed on Jesus, revealer of the Father and giver of the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The mission in the church

### 1.1 Origen, concept and content of the mission

The word “mission” does not exist in the NT, but its meaning has a broad horizon. Mission means to send forth. The Church, continuation of the people of the old Covenant, is a community that God the Father chose through the Word – that is his Son Jesus Christ - he consecrated and dwelt in it for the mission by sending the Holy Spirit upon it. In Theology, “mission” refers to the mystery of the divine missions, that is, of each of the persons of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, the Trinity is the source of mission. The Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son to guide the world to the Kingdom. Under this Trinitarian aspect the entire activity of the Church is justified. It can be affirmed that the mission of the Church has roots in the project of the Creator God; in the election of the people of Israel; in the mission of Jesus and in the missionary consciousness of the very Church.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental mission of the people of God is to continue the mission of Jesus and of the apostolic Church. This mission consists in announcing and establishing the Kingdom of God, through the proclamation and teaching of the Gospel to all persons, communities,



1 D. TETAMANZI, “Comunione fondamento e dimensione della missione,” in *Comunione e corresponsabilità per la missione*, Editrice Missionaria Italiana, Bologna 2006, pp.48-50.

2 LA. CASTRO, *Didattica Missionaria – Elementi Teologici per una crescita missionaria*, Elle Di Ci, Leumann 1986, p. 117-118; G.BARBAGLIO – S. DIANICH, *Dizionario di Teologia*, Paoline, Torino 1988, p.2017-2018.

peoples and cultures, with special preference for the poorest – among the migrants – so that everyone may welcome through faith, revelation and the grace of God and this world may become in conformity with the project of creation.<sup>3</sup>

The Apostle Paul resumes his mission in a word: “to proclaim the Gospel” (Rm, 1, 1) and for him, the Gospel is not merely a message, “it is the power of God leading everyone who believes in it to salvation” (Rm 1, 16). Pope John Paul II said that a mission is the exact manifestation of our faith in Jesus Christ and in his love for us.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus is the One sent, he who comes to fulfill the Father’s plan. His mission consists in “gathering into one all the dispersed children of God” (Jn 11, 52), establishing a lasting covenant between God and the human being. Since the resurrection of Jesus, the community of the apostles became aware of been a messianic community. First, it addressed itself to the children of Israel, offering them an opportunity to convert themselves to the Gospel; and, with the passing of time, it addressed itself to all nations. The early church was profoundly marked by the conviction of been a community for the mission. And this awareness inspired the most diverse missionary projects though out its history.<sup>5</sup>

The pathway of the Church is a pathway which moves on toward the fulfillment of hope: the Kingdom of God. This is a Kingdom that comes, must be implored, prepared and hoped for. The virtue of hope encompasses the entire historical existence of the Church and the messianic dynamism is its law. This hope is a first element which determines the mission of the Church, because it places itself in history with the perspective of a future for the person and the world.<sup>6</sup>

The Church, by its very nature pilgrim and missionary, is totally at the service of the Kingdom. Its mission is characterized by universality, she is sent to all peoples, also to those whom the proclamation of the Gospel has not yet reached. The mission *ad gentes* is a paradigm of the evangelizing missionary activity of every ecclesial community. Only within the missionary perspective, with a constant reference to the mission “*ad gentes*,” the Church finds its most intimate nature, its essential features. And, thus, it can place itself in every culture. This is the way: starting from the mission *ad gentes*, to re-think the profoundly communal nature of the Church, its essential elements - Word, sacraments, charisms.<sup>7</sup>



3 JESUS CRISTO REYES G. PAREDES, “Missione,” in A.A. RODRIGUEZ, - J. M. C. CASAS, *Dizionario Teologico della Vita Consacrata (DTVC)*.

4 JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio (RM)*, n.11.

5 J.C.R.G. PAREDES, “Missione,” p. 1040-1046.

6 G. BARBAGLIO – S. DIANICH, *Dizionario di Teologia*, p. 2021-2022.

7 D. TETTAMAZI, “Comunione fondamento e dimensione della missione,” p. 38.

The mission *ad gentes* must be understood in the light of *Lumen Gentium*, which speaks of the Church “sacrament of salvation,” “a messianic people” or of the *Gaudium et Spes*, that proclaims the united character of the Christian community with the world and with its problems.<sup>8</sup> The document *Ad Gentes* admits that God can lead to faith those who are ignorant of the Gospel, but sustains that the Church has the obligation to evangelize. This necessity springs from the closed connection between communion and mission and from the duty to make oneself co-responsible for the realization of the divine plan.<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2 Dimensions of the Mission

The mission has a variety of dimensions and among which the three principal ones stand out:

*The Christological dimension:* The mission has an essentially christological dimension, in so far as Christ is the first and greatest evangelizer. And, as such, he is the prototype of every bearer of the Good News, the foundational principle of the true evangelization, and its essential contents and principal agent. In the practice of the Jesus of Nazareth’s evangelizing mission, there are some fundamental characteristics which are essential in every missionary activity of the Church.<sup>10</sup>

Christ, sent by the Father and the missionary of the Father, dwelt among us, “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1, 14). He presented himself poor (Mt 8, 20) and was obedient till death. He loved all people and invited them to communion with Him. As evangelizer, he was faithful to the universal message which he received from the Father, to announce salvation to “all the nations” (Mt 28, 19), “even to the ends of the earth” (At 1, 8).<sup>11</sup> To do the will of the Father and to fulfill his mission was the core of Jesus’ life. This was his daily food (Jn 4, 34). “On coming into the world, Jesus said, I have come to do your will, O God” (Heb 10, 5.7). In leaving the world, he made the examination and says, “Now it is finished” (Jn 19, 30).<sup>12</sup>

In this fidelity to the Father we find the root of the ecclesiality and of mission because whoever obeys does not speak in his own name, but in the name of the one who sent him. In Jesus, the obedience is not a simple virtue beside other virtues. It leads him to become entirely transparent, radically free, pure reference. “He learned obedience from what he suffered; and when perfected he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Heb. 5, 8). By his obedience unto death, Jesus emptied himself and allowed the Father to take care of him. For this very reason, everything that Jesus does is revelation of the Father: “whoever looks on me is

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8 *Ibidem*, p. 45; *Ad Gentes* (AG) n. 2.

9 AG, n. 7.

10 J.S.MARTINS, *Andate e Annunciate*, Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2005, p.17.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 32-40; *Dei Verbum*, n.2; *Redemptoris Hominis*, n. 12; AG, n.3.

12 C.MESTERS, *Ecclesialidade e Missão*, CRB, Rio de Janeiro 1992, p.8.

seeing him who sent me" (Jn. 12, 45).<sup>13</sup> Walking the real way of the Incarnation, He came to serve and to give his life for the salvation of all (Mk 10, 45).

*The pneumatological dimension:* the mystery hidden for centuries, the saving plan of God, as Paul affirms, was "revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets" (Eph 3, 5). It is his real and powerful presence that preserves the received words in the messenger of the Gospel and makes their meaning known to the addressees. Everyone, the ones and the others, act under the irresistible invasion of the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

As *Redemptoris Missio* emphasizes, the Spirit is the protagonist of the mission. It is he who was at work in the Incarnation and life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and who is at work in the Church. Whatever the Spirit brings about in the human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions can only be understood in reference to Christ, the Word made flesh, perfectly human who saved all human beings and sums up all things.<sup>15</sup> It is always the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies the entire people of God, gives life to the Church and impels her to proclaim Christ. It is he who imparts and develops his gifts in all individuals and peoples, guiding the Church to discover these gifts, to foster them and to receive them through dialogue.<sup>16</sup>

Today also, the Spirit maintains the missionary character of the Church. It is the Spirit who opens the ecclesial community to the missionary dynamism. The Spirit is present and works actively in the missionaries, impelling them always to proclaim the mystery of Christ. This is the characteristic fruit of the work of the Spirit in the mission.<sup>17</sup>

*The ecclesiological dimension:* The Church, as a community of faith, hope and love, is essentially a missionary reality. Such is the biblical, patristic, conciliar and synod's conception of the Church, taken up again by Paul VI in the *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, as well as by Pope Paul II, whenever he dealt with this topic.<sup>18</sup>

Divinely sent to the nations that she might be the universal sacrament of salvation, the Church, in obedience to the command of Jesus and because it is demanded by its own essential universality strives to preach the Gospel to all peoples.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p.8.

<sup>14</sup> J.S.MARTINS, *Andate e Annunciate*, p. 46-4760.

<sup>15</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *RMi*, n.29; *AG*, n.4; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n.2.

<sup>16</sup> J.S.MARTINS, *Andate e Annunciate*, p. 80-81.

<sup>17</sup> E.G. JAVIER, "Mission in a Cross-Cultural Setting," in *SEDOS* n.7/8, 2006, p. 197.

<sup>18</sup> J.S.MARTINS, *Andate e Annunciate*, p. 82-83; *AG*, n.9.

<sup>19</sup> *AG*, 1; *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, n. 849.

The Church's maternity comes particularly from the experience of having been generated in Christ, of belonging to the Lord in discipleship, of being able to generate children in faith and brothers and sisters in charity, and to build a place of communion among all the nations. The Church is a builder of evangelization because it is, above all, a place of communion. All nations are the addressees of the Church's maternity. Her missionary impetus makes her universal because it is her vocation to place herself among the peoples and to value the wealth of every nation's peculiar identity. The local Church is the place where every community forms its identity.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.3. The specific mission of Consecrated Life in the Church

In reference to the religious in the proclamation of the Gospel, it is necessary to affirm the essentially missionary nature of Consecrated Life. All the institutes should share of the life of the Church, according to their own proper characters, and to promote to the best of their ability, the Church's initiatives and undertakings in the various fields particularly in the missionary and ecumenical matters. For a religious, it would not be a consecrated life to Christ (missionary of the Father), and to the Church (missionary of Christ), without a vivid participation of the missionary vigor of Christ and of the Church.<sup>21</sup>

Mission is an essential dimension of the charism of Consecrated Life which is essentially missionary. There are no forms of CL which are not missionary. The fundamental Christian vocation and the vocation to Consecrated Life, which gives it a particular form, are a call to follow Jesus Christ in filial communion with God, in fraternity with people, in the service of the Kingdom and in the dominion over creation. Like the Church, Consecrated Life also rises by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the service of the Kingdom, to occupy a place in the Church's single mission. All forms of Consecrated life are a special way of publicly remembering the mission of Jesus, in so far as they manifest the different aspects of his mission.<sup>22</sup>

The charismatic mission of the religious Institutes was authorized by the Church, along with their approval. Therefore, the mission has a public character which was entrusted by the Church and must be carried out in her name. It is an authentic sacred ministry at the service of the great mission of the people of God. The institutes of active life have great opportunities for works of charity, for the proclamation of the Gospel, for Christian education, cultural endeavors and solidarity with the poor, the abandoned and oppressed persons.<sup>23</sup>

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20 D. TETTAMANZI, *"Comunione fondamento e dimensione della missione,"* p.50-52.

21 J.S. MARTINS, *Andate e Annunciate*, p. 109; *Perfectae Caritatis (PC)*, n.2.

22 J.C.R.G. PAREDES, *"Missione,"* p. 1048-1049.

23 *Ibidem*, p. 1049-1050; *RMi*, n. 69; *CCC*, n. 791.

The Church must make known the great evangelical values which she bears. No one can witness to them more efficiently than he who makes profession of consecrated life in chastity, poverty and obedience, in total self-giving to God and in total availability to serve people and society. The Good News must be proclaimed above all, by witness. Consequently, the religious, by their witnesses of life are evangelizers, in the full sense of the word.

Mission and lifestyle are strongly bonded in Consecrated Life. The charismatic mission of an Institute is the key, the foundation, in which its lifestyle is configured. And lifestyle is, at the same time, the key, the foundation on which the style of doing mission is configured. The vows and community life, receive a particular characterization from the missionary activity of the Institute.

The specific mission of the religious institutes is by its nature a community mission. The subject of the mission is not so much the person but it is the congregational community that acts through the local communities and persons. Consecrated Life offers a communitarian contribution to the mission of the universal Church. Its audacity and its creativity also characterize the charismatic mission of Consecrated Life: the religious are daring and their apostolate is often marked by originality, a geniality which leads to their admiration. The apostolic dimension of Religious Life is a demand of charity which the religious are called to practice in a more perfect way than the other members of the faithful. The religious will be missionaries in the measure in which they live the evangelical radical demands of the Beatitudes in a profound way.<sup>24</sup>

#### 1.4. What do we understand by apostolate?

“Apostolate” is a term very much used in the mission of the religious institutes. What do we mean when we do use this term?

The word apostolate comes from “apostles.” The notion of apostolic life, in contrast with the contemplative life, has its origin in the XIV century. The apostolic term makes reference, first of all, to the true and proper preaching (missions) and later goes on to indicate the characteristics which are to mark the life of the would be missionary. Eventually the term “apostolate” was applied to all types of activities: preaching, care of the sick, education of the youth, work in the orphanages, care of the elderly, social works and others. In this way a contrast between contemplative and apostolic life was created, the latter was identified with active life. The term no longer indicates a type of life, but every activity which contributes towards the building of the Kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

The Vatican II Council applied the term *apostolate* to any form of activity and, at the same time, to the different types of life. The contemplative life resumes again the qualification of

24 J.S.MARTINS, *Andate e Annunciate*, p. 112-113; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n.69; *Lumen Gentium*, n. 44; *AG*, n.40.

25 G. PELLICIA – G. ROCCA, *edd.*, *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione (DIP)*, Paoline, Roma, 735.

apostolic, in so far as it also contributes to the edification of the Body of Christ, but in a small scale. The distinctions and the contrasts disappear with this broad coverage of the term. If, on the one hand, the value of contemplative life is discovered, on the other hand, the term apostolate expands so far as to indicate the type of life lead by the Christian, which is almost synonym of Christian life. This generalization impoverished the term "apostolate".<sup>26</sup>

In the Council's documents, the concept of "apostolate" appears intrinsically related to the ultimate purpose of the Church which is that of making all men partakers in the redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ. The whole Church is apostolic, insofar as she remains in communion of faith and of life with its origin: and in the fact that she is "sent out" into the whole world. All the members of the Church share in this mission, though in different ways. The Christian vocation is also, by its nature, a vocation to the apostolate. Indeed, we call an apostolate "every activity of the Mystical Body" that aims to spread the Kingdom of Christ throughout the earth. Therefore, every activity carried out for this purpose is called apostolate, and the Church exercises it in different ways through all its members. All the members of the Church have the noble obligation to work so that the message of salvation may be known and accepted by all peoples.<sup>27</sup>

Apostolic praxis is the term which is often used in the apostolic field. This is the set of practices which tend toward the evangelical transformation of society and persons, aiming at the establishing of the Kingdom in history, as continuation of Jesus' missionary praxis. The Church carries out its mission through the evangelical activity, of the proclamation of the Gospel, of the dialogue with the cultures, of human promotion and of the liberation of the poor and oppressed. In the Church, there are many religious institutes dedicated to this apostolic praxis, in harmony with their proper charisms. In these institutes, apostolic and charitable activity is inherent to the very nature of religious life. The apostolic activity is not a secondary or juxtaposed element: it is something constitutive. It is a particular way of participating of the mission of Christ and of the Church. Hence, the apostolic activity is a human activity penetrated by the dynamism of God, of the strength of the Holy Spirit who acts in the person.<sup>28</sup> Consecrated life is essentially apostolic and every type of initiative is worthless without charity.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.5. The missionary vocation in the Church

The missionary vocation implies an itinerant dimension: *"Let us move on to the neighboring villages so that I may proclaim the good news there also. That is what I have come to do"* (Mk 1, 38). The universal mission is movement, displacement from one place to another, leaving behind, as

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26 DIP, p. 735-736.

27 *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA), n.2-3; LG, n.1734; CIC, n. 863.

28 DIP, p. 1052-1053.

sign and instrument of the Kingdom, formed communities. It is a movement which requires the sense of the provisional; not that of the tourist, but that of John the Baptist who says: “*He must increase, while I must decrease*” (Jn 3, 30). It is a provisional that demands the emptiness of oneself, of ones own personal projects, as well as the trust in the other, in his/her abilities to update creation, to sow generously and to build the future.<sup>30</sup>

Nowadays, the mission accomplishes its service only if it contaminates people with hope, with a missionary activity aiming at the transformation of the world. This praxis of the transforming mission requires a perspective of the world, confidence and hope in it. The missionary is a living prophet who supports life in all his/her experiences and is a witness of the resurrection, of the new life in Easter communities gathered around the Eucharist that makes them capable to launch themselves into mission.<sup>31</sup>

## **2. The missionary action in the life of the founder John Baptist Scalabrini and of the Co-Founders, Fr. Joseph Marchetti and mother Assunta Marchetti**

### **2.1 The missionary spirit of John Baptist Scalabrini**

Scalabrini missionary vocation, first shown in his early priesthood when he applied for admission to the *Foreign Missions Institute* of Milan, remained strong and characterized his entire life. He revealed his missionary spirit in his involvement with other Missionary Institutes and their founders.<sup>32</sup> He never hesitated to recognize the strong missionary dimension of the proclamation of Jesus Christ’s Gospel and of the commitment of the Church with the migrants, in the context of the great migrations which marked his times and episcopacy. He saw migration as an occasion and a grace to grow in universal human solidarity and in this manner fulfill Jesus’ ideal “*that all may be one*” (Jn 17, 21).

Scalabrini recounts the scene that moved him and was certainly crucial in the beginning of his missionary activity on behalf of the migrants: “*Quite a few years ago, in Milan, I witnessed a scene that left me with profound sadness.*

*As I walked through the station, I saw the vast waiting room, the side porticoes and the adjacent piazza filled with three or four hundred poorly clad people, separated into different groups. Their faces bronzed by the sun and furrowed by the premature wrinkles of deprivation, reflected the inner turmoil convulsing their hearts at the moment [.] they were migrants. They had come from the various provinces of Northern Italy*

30 LA. CASTRO, *Didattica Missionaria-Elementi teologici per una crescita missionaria*, p. 208-209.

31 *Ibidem*, p. 209.

32 M.FRANCESCONI, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini – vescovo di Piacenza e degli emigrati*, Città Nuova, Roma, 1985, p.57-58.443.

and were waiting with trepidation for the train that would take them to the shores of the Mediterranean, whence the steamer would carry them to the far-off America [ ] I left there deeply moved. A flood of melancholy thoughts brought a lump in my throat.<sup>33</sup>

Scalabrini saw and felt that the migrations were a missionary challenge to the Church. He decided to dedicate all his energies to make the Church aware she needed to commit herself to the cause of the migrants. His social-pastoral project reveals his transforming action and his desire to be a missionary for the migrants. His nostalgia for the missions keeps surfacing in his addresses to the departing missionaries. Among other words, he expresses, "As I clasp to myself the golden cross of the bishop, I gently complain, almost, to Jesus because he denied me the wooden cross of the missionary, and I cannot refrain from expressing to you, my young apostles of Christ, my deepest respect and I cannot help feeling a holy envy of you." He also said, "Every sending off of missionaries is nothing else than the renewal, or better the continuation, of what the Divine Master did when he said to his Apostles: 'Go, and teach all nations!'"<sup>34</sup>

In another sending of missionaries (12.27.1888), Scalabrini expressed, "Oh, go forth, new apostles of Jesus Christ: 'Go forth, O you swift angels to a people that is awaiting you' Infinitely vast is the field that opens up to your zeal. There you will have to build churches, open schools, erect hospitals, and set up hospices. You will have to look after the worship of the Lord Go, go forth! Divine Providence, who watches with a mother's tenderness over undertakings begun by it, will resolve the difficult problem. Just make sure you respond to God's loving plans."<sup>35</sup>

During his last trip to Brazil (1904), while sailing along the African coast, again he manifested his wish to be missionary in Africa and moved to tears he thought and said: "Oh, why do we priests not run to evangelize these peoples and to sow with our blood the fertile seed of Christianity!" In September of the same year, Scalabrini wrote to the Bishop of San Paulo telling of his disposition to resume the evangelization of the Indians of Paraná by providing good missionaries for this purpose.<sup>36</sup>

The missionary urge leads Scalabrini to be open to history in the making. He is open to the new and the diverse, to the point of being considered a pioneer in the field of pastoral and social commitment. Proof of this is his concept of religious life for his missionary priests and sisters for migrants: it is a concept free from the rigidity of the traditional forms which creates space for the freedom of movement needed for the missions. The same can be said about

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33 M.FRANCESCONI, *Scalabrini a Living Voice, Scalabrinian Congregations, Rome 1989, p. 375-376.*  
34 M.FRANCESCONI, *The Spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini (Spirituality of the Incarnation), Trans. Martino Bortolazzo and Ezio Marchetto, Scalabrinian Congregations, New York, 1992, p. 44-46, 63-69.*  
35 M.FRANCESCONI, *Scalabrini a Living Voice, Scalabrinian Congregations, p. 456-457.*  
36 M.FRANCESCONI, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini – vescovo di Piacenza e degli emigrati, Città Nuova, Roma, 1985, p. 1168-1169.1173-1174.*

his concept of the pastoral care of migrants that bears clear signs of novelty and openness in overcoming not only linguistic and cultural barriers, but also the rigidity of certain local ecclesiastical structures. More significant is his interpretation of history in the light of faith took him to perceive immigration as an instrument for the spreading of the Gospel and for sowing the seed of the Word. His concern to keep pace with 'the world on the move' lead him to consider the irreversible events of history, ever evolving and therefore ever changing, and to instill in them the leaven of the Gospel.<sup>37</sup>

In his mission, the criteria for analysis and the ultimate references for interpretation were always theological and ecclesial. He read the findings of human research in the light of faith and of the Church's mission. From this interpretation, which is the interpretation of faith, he drew his choices, operative interventions, and actions. He did not see any separation between evangelization and the promotion of justice in the world of migration. He placed "final goal" of migration under this very concept – "*migration is preordained by God for the perfecting of man on earth*" and "*for the glory of God in heaven.*"<sup>38</sup>

Bishop Scalabrini's pastoral activity is indeed marked by the "charism of totality:" the whole time, all his strength, all his talents, and all the gifts of grace. He goes to the people; he wants to know his flock as much as possible, in person his flock; he wants to see beyond reports and statistics the 'real state of souls;' he does not wait for the people to go to him in his episcopal palace, rather, he goes out looking for them in their homes, in fields and factories, in schools and associations; he goes out looking for those who are separated from the spiritual fold willing to face difficulties and criticism in order "to gain a soul for Christ." The pastoral charity reaches all human wants and miseries. He strongly affirmed that the mission of the Church is "*to evangelize the children of labor and misery. [I.] Where there are people who work and suffer, there is the Church.*" He understood that the missionary activity of the Church cannot be different from the pastoral activity and that the missionaries are pastoral agents in any part of the world.<sup>39</sup>

Bishop Scalabrini missionary intuition gives priority to catechesis. "*It is completely based in the Word revealed by God and has its roots in the mandate of the Divine Master to his apostles: 'Go, and teach!'*" A catechist is a missionary because he proclaims the Good News of Christ he has first received, and hence he continues the expansion of the Church as it was done in the first Christian communities which were built on the proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>40</sup>



37 M.FRANCESCONI, *The Spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini (Spirituality of the Incarnation)*, Trans. Martino Bortolazzo and Ezio Marchetto, Scalabrinian Congregations, New York, 1992, p. 46-47.55.

38 *Ibidem*, p. 49.

39 *Ibidem*, p 50-51.

40 *Ibidem*, p. 45.46.

To relive, today, Scalabrini's figure and mission will not end up to repeat or discover some outline of pastoral care of migrants, but to adopt especially his great utopia – a united, fraternal and just humanity – and his motivations – which in the last analysis, are always those that distinguish peoples and activities from each other.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.2. Father Joseph Marchetti's example

Father Joseph Marchetti, as a seminarian, was a catechist of the younger ones. One of them affirmed: "His desire for the missionary apostolate and martyrdom filled with fervor those years of his preparation.' He could not have been luckier! he would exclaim in remembering the martyrs. And in his opinion, the real happy men were the missionaries. At his solemn first Mass, immediately after his ordination, he revealed that he too had felt the call to be a missionary, already for some time."<sup>42</sup>

During his brief time as a pastor, he saw the hard reality of his parishioners, determined to emigrate to Brazil. His missionary vocation and Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini's lecture on emigration, in Luca (1892), motivated Fr. Marchetti to give a generous response on behalf of the Italian immigrants in Brazil. Admitted conditionally by Scalabrini as "a missionary extern," in 1894, he made his first voyage to Brazil. A short time later, he made his second voyage, which was decisive in his life.<sup>43</sup>

In a letter addressed to Bishop Scalabrini(12.12.1895) he concluded it saying: "*Here I am, ready to die, I have so often desired martyrdom but, if instead of bloody martyrdom, I am lucky to find martyrdom in my apostolic labors, I shall consider myself happy.*" He also affirmed, "*In order to respond better to the lofty mission which you mercifully have committed to me, I feel impelled to sacrifice myself even more by pledging and vowing, forever, that I will always be a victim for my people for your love. So, by my vow of charity, I shall place my people before myself, my joys, my health and my life, With the vow no longer to waste even a quarter of a hour in vain, I consecrate all the physical and moral strength of my body to you and my neighbor.*"<sup>44</sup>

Father Joseph Marchetti immersed himself totally into the world of migration, which became the focus of his mission. Moved by a true desire to collaborate in the development of the migrant populations, he did not spare efforts to find forms and means which would lessen the suffering of thousands of peoples in the plantations of the interior of the State of San Paulo and of the marginal populations in the city of San Paulo and in the interior of Brazil. Courage gave him the readiness to leave, and humility conferred him the promptness to

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41 R.RIZZARDO, *O Carisma Scalabriniano na Igreja, Scalabrinian Congregation, Rome 1991, p.60.*  
42 M.FRANCESCONI, *Like a Meteor – Fr. Giuseppe Marchetti. Trans. J. Cinquino, Centro Scalabriniano, Piacenza, p.6-8.*  
43 L.M.SIGNOR, *Irmãs Missionárias de São Carlos Borromeo, Scalabrinianas (1895-1934), CSEM, Brasília 2005, p.54-55.*  
44 M.FRANCESCONI, *Like a Meteor –Fr. Giuseppe Marchetti. Trans. J. Cinquino, Centro Scalabriniano, Piacenza, p. 24.29.*

serve. Fr. Marchetti's concern included all the migrants, but especially the most abandoned ones: the orphans and the sick without medical and spiritual assistance.<sup>45</sup>

He did not neglect nor count the sacrifices in the face of the peoples' material and spiritual needs. His charity, profound humility and the wonderful vows of charity and of victim for neighbor, added to the traditional vows, manifest the soul of a person totally immersed in God and focused on the welfare of others. Faith was the source of his hope, which changed into works, produced fruits of charity. He preferred the "least ones," those who could not be self-sufficient, those who depended on the charity of others for survival.<sup>46</sup>

### 2.3 The mission in the life of Mother Assunta Marchetti

After she had reflected and prayed, Mother Assunta accepted Fr. Joseph Marchetti's invitation to be a missionary with him and to care for the orphans. She understood that God was asking her to change the vocation to cloister life for that of the missionary. As she had always done, she pronounced a generous "yes" to God's will and left with her brother.<sup>47</sup>

Once she pronounced the vows in Piacenza, mother Assunta was finally certain of her vocation: she felt united to her brother by the same charism: to take with humility and simplicity the wealth of the love of God to the neediest and most abandoned migrants, the orphans and the elderly in difficulty, through the evangelical service. The enthusiasm and commotion of that moment were confirmed by her daily determination, constancy and generosity, until death.<sup>48</sup>

Her missionary journey in Brazil lasted for 53 years. It was an ascending road. She walked it without hesitation, without losing heart, with the courage which had motivated her to give the first "yes" before the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In fidelity to this "yes," she became gradually aware of her mission in the Church: the mission to be the cornerstone of the Institute; the one who after having accepted the peculiarities of the charism, was called to safeguard it, defend it and transmit it in its originality, especially after the times of crisis. The Servant of God knew how to be courageous, conferring identity to the Congregation and encouraging the Sisters in the specific apostolic commitment.<sup>49</sup>

45 *In Memoriam Pe. José Marchetti (1886-1996) – Province of Our Lady Aparecida, S. Paulo 1996, p.26.*

46 *Fr. Giuseppe Marchetti-exemplo de amor a Deus e ao próximo, síntese elaborada pela jornalista Francisca Sônia de Mello, S. Paulo.*

47 *Cuori di Luce – tre esempi di spiritualità nella terra di Camaiole, Comune di Camaiole e Parrocchia di Santa Maria Assunta 2002, p. 36. Article written by Sr. Laura Bondi, postulator of the cause of Beatification of Mother Assunta.*

48 *La serva di Dio Assunta Marchetti –cittadina di Camaiole (1871-1948), Atti del Simposio di studio, Camaiole 1994, p. 52.54.*

49 *LAURA BONDI, Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti, Roma 2004, p. 158-161.*

In her mission Mother Assunta demonstrated to be a simple woman, a mother who offers herself to Christ and to the brothers and sisters. She is woman of compassion, the one who incarnates her life in the little ones, in the poor, in the least ones. In the encounter with the foreign peoples, she does not speak a language of words but a language formed by gestures of attention, silence and compassion. The gestures and the silence are the sounds of the language of the poor. Mother Assunta practices those sounds up to the point of making the supreme gift of herself.<sup>50</sup>

During the six-year term of 1912-1918, in which mother Assunta was superior general, the *mscs* Congregation went through a period of affirmation and progress in every sense of the word. The missionary expansion of the Institute began in 1913 in the State of S. Paulo and in 1915 in Rio Grande do Sul, where the pioneer Sisters proved to be true missionaries.<sup>51</sup>

The moving strength of the Sisters' progress was their spirit of prayer and interior life, together with a profound humility and unlimited charity. When her duties permitted, Mother Assunta helped cook for the orphans and was present in all the areas of work particularly in the most hidden ones.<sup>52</sup> She did everything well, from the simplest of works to those of greater responsibility. And was sure to be doing God' will.

In the South, upon her arrival in Nova Brescia, mother Assunta was made the superior of a small community which was beginning and marked by poverty. Therefore, in the trustful abandonment to Divine Providence, she began her missionary journey on behalf of a group of marginal Italian immigrants, 60 families in all. She meekly accepted to live with this people. In this small village, the servant of God practiced especially the virtues of patience and charity, and lived particularly united to God.<sup>53</sup>

In Nova Brescia, Mother Assunta carried out innumerable activities. Among others, she was catechist, "doctor," nurse and cook. She was always very available and accepted everything with spirit of humility and sacrifice. A witness affirms: "There was no doctor in the place. For this reason, we remember that mother Assunta would go out at night on horse back to care for the sick, always accompanied by a lady. She promoted the recitation of the rosary, would go to the families to comfort them in their sufferings, invited the people to Sunday Mass, and also took care of the theatrical presentations, successfully. And did more: Nova Brescia was an isolated and very poor place; and the Servant of God, with much sacrifice, was able

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50 *Cuori di Luce – tre esempi di spiritualità nella terra di Camaiole*, p.52.

51 LICE M. SIGNOR, *Irmãs Missionárias de São Carlos Scalabrinianas (1895-1934)*, p. 157-158.176 ff.

52 B. FELIPELLI, *Spiritual profile of Mother Assunta Marchetti, S. Paulo*, 1986, p.10.

53 LAURA BONDI, *Biografia Maria Assunta Marchetti, Rome* 2003, p. 101.103.

to build a school for the children of the inhabitants of the place.<sup>54</sup>

She was always the most charitable, the poorest, the humblest, the most patient among the Scalabrinian sisters. Many witnesses testify to have seen in her the Mother of the orphans, of the poor, of the sick, of the suffering, of the sisters in vocation and of her blood brothers and sisters.<sup>55</sup> She evangelized the sick, the poor and sinners; and knew how to live and offer herself in total and constant sacrifice. She did not spare herself in anything that regarded the glory of God and the spreading of his Kingdom.<sup>56</sup>

The theological virtue of charity, divinely infused in Mother Assunta's heart and practiced in relation to the sisters, is the surest sign of her virtue's authenticity, insofar as the community life is an unequivocal test of the capacity to love because it demands generosity and gratuity proper of the virtuous person. Many witnesses confirm that she loved the sisters, sincerely and constantly, until the end of her life; and that, at the imitation of the Good Shepherd, was always attentive particularly to those sisters who due to their frailty had, so to speak, a greater right to this benevolence.<sup>57</sup>

What predominated in mother Assunta's concrete exercise of the charity was a truly heroic practice, a human and spiritual maturity, the integration between the lived charity and that expressed to people, the absence of the egocentrism, of individualism and personal ambition.<sup>58</sup>

Some contemporary witnesses affirm that mother Assunta is a model missionary. Archbishop Paulo Evaristo Arns (06.12.1987), called mother Assunta a contemporary missionary model. She was a person of faith, prayer, sacrifice, and of great union with God and has much to tell us. In her 53 years of missionary life, she left a profound heritage of authentic fidelity to the Scalabrinian charism and a mark of holiness based especially on humility. Bishop Vicente Marchetti Zioni affirms that Mother Assunta's missionary activity opens up like a fan. It is a missionary activity which reaches absolutely all the fields that concern pastoral life today.<sup>59</sup>

### **3. The mission of the mscs congregation**

#### **3.1. The missionary life of the Scalabrinian sister**

Jesus' missionary mandate: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations" (Mt 28, 19); "proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mk 16, 15), has a special meaning for the Scalabrinian

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54 *Ibidem*, p. 103-104.

55 *Cuori di Luce – tre esempi di spiritualità nella terra di Carnaiore*, p. 37.

56 LAURA BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti*, p. 59.

57 *Ibidem*, p. 90.

58 *Ibidem*, p. 99.

59 *In Memoriam Madre Assunta Marchetti (1948-1998)*, *Provincia N. Senhora Aparecida, S. Paulo 1998*, p.8.19.44.

sister. This mandate compels her to leave her homeland, and become “migrant with the migrants,” to be able to understand and evangelize them.<sup>60</sup>

In order to have the experience of been a true a missionary, is necessary to have a profound motivation and a profound spirituality, which spring from a source: the Son of God. The mission emerges from the need to follow the One who, though He was divine, descended to serve. For us, *mscs* sisters, Jacob’s ladder (Gn 28, 10-22), delineated in Scalabrini’s coat-of-arms inspires and sets the basis of these two dimensions of the charism which need to support each other mutually: spirituality and mission.

The mission is not only a horizontal pathway, as the spiritual way is not a purely ascending vertical movement. The mission is the result of a spiritual way and the spiritual way nourishes itself by the mission. Spirituality and mission are intimately connected. This path is not linear, but is constituted by an alternating of climbing to listen and find God and a descending, to encounter and serve the brothers and sisters. In reality, only those who go up to God have motivations and the strength to descent and serve in the arduous work of the mission. In it, we acquire the truth of “going out of oneself” and we acquire the impulse to go up again and acquire a greater knowledge of God. From this comes a total dedication to the mission, in order to go up again later and to penetrate ever more profoundly in the heart of God’s mystery. Whoever does not go up to encounter the Word does not have the desire and the understanding of the mission, and neither the constancy to resist in its difficulties and exigencies.<sup>61</sup>

In the power of the charism inherited from the Founder, Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, the Congregation has a mission in the Church, “the evangelical and missionary service to the migrants, especially to the poor ones and those in need.”<sup>62</sup> Missionary in nature, the Congregation responds to its vocation in the Church, in total availability to God and in commitment with the migrants. Its ideal of missionary-apostolic religious life is a sign of hope, evangelizing presence, education of the faith, promotion and defense of human rights alongside the migrant and refugee brothers and sisters.<sup>63</sup>

In its spiritual and missionary dimensions, the “missionarity” of the *mscs sister*, is updated through the members of the Congregation, in every time and place. This “missionarity” is lived as core of her vocation and action in favor of and with the persons and peoples on the move, giving special attention to the poorest and neediest ones. It includes an integral

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60 M. DALTOÉ, “The Scalabrinian Charism revealer of new ways in the missionary field,” in *Expressão de um carisma a serviço dos migrantes*, CSEM, Brasília 2005, p.83-84.

61 P.G. CABRA, “Spiritualità della missione,” in *Testimoni* n. 17, 2004, p.22-29.

62 *Mscs Constitutional Norms*, n.4.

63 *GENERAL DIRECTIVES OF THE APOSTOLATE*, Sixennial 2001-2007, p.4.

pastoral care which promotes the migrants as persons, arousing their protagonism as active and responsible subjects of their history; in the edification of the Church and in the building of a new society and unity among all peoples. This vision guides, questions and demands a systematic, foresighted and sustained action in the promotion and defense of the dignity of the person and of her/his rights. The horizon of action of the Scalabrinian mission is guided by the goal of wisdom and logic of the Kingdom that configures the plan of God. To this vision there is a corresponding global and coherent analysis of the reality and discernment in the light of the Word of God.<sup>64</sup>

The Congregation incorporates “missionarity” as a distinctive dimension of its identity and action, both in its structures and membership, and with the migrants valued in their vocation as missionaries of the Gospel. The commitment, lived by each *mscs* sister is sustained by a profound communion with God and by fraternal life in community. From these comes the vitality of the constant dynamism of openness to the Word and the inculturation of the Gospel in the realities in which she is part of. The missionary *sending* that each Sister receives, expression of belonging to the Congregation, is the foundation and guide which orient her steps.<sup>65</sup>

### 3.2 The Apostolic action of the *mscs* sister in the context of migrations

The spirit of service and self-giving characterize the apostolic action of the *mscs* Sister, She is inspired by the communion of the Trinity, the Pilgrim Jesus Christ, the fidelity of the Virgin Mary and the examples of St. Charles Borromeo, Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, the Servants of God, Fr. Joseph Marchetti and Mother Assunta Marchetti, and by all the Sisters who incarnated the charism of foundation.<sup>66</sup>

The Scalabrinian mission of evangelical and missionary service to the migrants is characterized by the pastoral, social and cultural action of the *mscs* Sisters and of the Congregation, in the diverse areas of action: works, services, activities, witness, explicit proclamation of the Gospel and animation of Christian living. These express, among others, the variety, diversity and harmony of action with which the *mscs* Sisters serve the Church and the migrants. This action is done through the diverse ministries that aim at the promotion and religious, social and cultural assistance of the migrants. Every pastoral action aims at collaborating and contributing towards their integral salvation. In this process of salvation, the Spirit anticipates the Kingdom of God and moves everyone towards the building of a new society, the way towards the definite homeland.<sup>67</sup>

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64 *Ibidem*, p. 7.

65 *Ibidem*, p. 12.

66 *Ibidem*, p. 6.

67 *Ibidem*, p. 7.

The dynamic strength of the charism led the Congregation to take on diverse activities in the fields of catechesis, Christian education, pastoral care of the sick, social pastoral and pastoral care of migrants. Today, before the new requirements of the charism, the sisters are an important presence in ecclesial and international bodies, and in civil and non-governmental organizations. Through its apostolic action the Congregation aims at contributing towards the formation of a more human, fraternal and united society which is founded on the principles of the Gospel and on the fundamental rights of the person.<sup>68</sup> With the Church and the migrants, the Congregation seeks to solidify evermore its institutional physiognomy, which is strongly feminine, missionary and incarnated.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.3 Communion and mission

The congregational charism, by its nature, has an intrinsic communitarian dimension. Its wealth is expressed in the communion and collaboration among all the members who unite in the same spirit, in view of the mission. This constitutes us as a community and as such we carry it out. The community is the place where we live the charism and it becomes increasingly missionary in the measure in which it is sent to the world of migration and responds to the needs of the migrants. All the members participate of the mission of the community but not in the same manner.<sup>70</sup>

Communion and mission are two interconnected realities. A more profound experience of communion renews the mission’s drive and qualifies it. It can also be affirmed that communion is the result of the mission. There is no communion without mission and there is no mission without communion. Communion is a “spiritual event,” that is, generated and recreated by the Holy Spirit. Only through their action, our communities and the entire Church can become icon of the Trinitarian communion.<sup>71</sup>

Communion is one of the most eloquent means of evangelization. Pope John Paul II, in speaking of the effectiveness of the mission which is to be based on communion, said that of special importance is the capacity to maintain close relations with others. An essential element for the person called to be responsible for a community is to be a person of communion, able to cause fraternal relations arise in everyone. Humanity is increasingly sensitive to the value of communion. Today, this is one of the most eloquent signs and most effective ways of the transmitting the message of the Gospel.<sup>72</sup>

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68 M. DALTOÉ, *“O carisma scalabriniano revelador de novos rumos no campo da missionariedade,”* p. 81-82.  
 69 C. LUSSI, *“Missionariedade em Mobilidade,”* in *Expressão de um carisma a service dos migrantes, CSEM, Brasília 2005,* p. 15.  
 70 M. DALTOÉ, *“O carisma scalabriniano revelador de novos rumos no campo da missionariedade,”* p. 84-85.  
 71 D.TETTAMANZI, *“Comunione fondamento e dimensione della missione,”* p. 46-48.  
 72 RMj, n.61.75.

The *mcs* sister has the mission of becoming an instrument of communion and to work so that all communities and persons involved in activities with the migrants commit themselves in a pastoral of communion that aims at holiness to which all pastoral initiatives must tend.<sup>73</sup>

### 3.4 Challenges for the *mcs* mission

Before the reality which surrounds us, the Scalabrinian charism questions and leaves us anxious. We live in a globalized and at the same time excluding world, of great scientific and technological development, of migration movements searching for peace and conditions to live a dignified life, of the globalization of the economy and culture, of the broad panorama of dangerous situations for ethnic and socially excluded groups, of ethnic cleansing, of projects to eliminate the cultural differences, of government systems which utilize the human being for the production of the neo-liberal system, of the trafficking of children and women, and of many other evils which deprive the person of her/his full dignity.<sup>74</sup>

John Paul II, in the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Mission*, affirms that “Among the great changes taking place in the contemporary world, migration has produced a new phenomenon: non-Christians are becoming very numerous in traditionally Christian countries, creating fresh opportunities for contacts and cultural exchanges, and calling the Church to hospitality, dialogue, assistance and, in a word, fraternity.” The Church must make these millions of migrants part of her overall apostolic concern, approaching them, in order to lead them to the knowledge of Christ and his Gospel. In this way, the Church’s mission *ad gentes* has no boundaries.<sup>75</sup>

In the document of Aparecida – the final document of the V General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops – the bishops speak of the “suffering faces which hurt in us,” among these is the face of the migrants. They affirm: “the pastoral attention of the migrants is an expression of charity as well as an ecclesial expression of it.” There are millions of persons who for different reasons find themselves in constant movement. In Latin America and Caribbean the emigrants, displaced and refugees, above all for economic and political reasons, and reasons of violence, constitute a new and dramatic reality.<sup>76</sup>

The appeal of the bishops of Latin America and Caribbean, which is also expression of universal Church’s appeal, challenges us to a commitment, so that: “The Church, as Mother, must experience itself as having no boundaries, a familiar Church, attentive to the growing

73 John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 2000, n.30 -31.

74 DALTOÉ, “O carisma scalabriniano revelador de novos rumos no campo da missionariedade,” p. 82-83.

75 J.S. MARTINS, *Andate e Annunciate*, p. 241, RMI, n.37.

76 Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), *Documento de Aparecida – texto conclusivo da V Conferência Geral to Episcopado Latino-Americano e do Caribe (DA)*, 2007, n. 411 [English translation mine].

phenomenon of the human mobility in its diverse areas. It believes to be indispensable the development of a mentality and spirituality of service to the brothers and sisters on the move, by establishing appropriate national and diocesan structures, which facilitate the encounter of the foreigner with the particular Church that receives the migrants. The Episcopal Conferences and the Dioceses must take on this specific pastoral in a prophetic manner with the strength to unite both criteria and actions, which may favor a permanent attention also to the migrants who also must to become disciples and missionaries.<sup>77</sup>

According to the Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, “The challenge confronting us in today’s migrations is not an easy one because many different spheres are involved: economics, sociology, politics, health, culture and security. All Christians must respond to this challenge; it is not just a matter of good will or the personal charisma of a few.”<sup>78</sup>

There emerge, in the same Instruction, some principal characteristics of the physiognomy of “missionarity” which also present themselves as challenges for the Church’s Pastoral care of migrants, especially for us *mcs* sisters. Among others, the are outstanding:

- The welcoming of the migrants is precisely indicated as a missionary event. It is a service to communion. The missionary calling is not determined only by geographical distances but by differences of culture and religion of the migrants. The Church calls all the ecclesial bodies to converge in a sincere and diversified action of welcoming the migrants.<sup>79</sup>
- The ecclesiality, marked by the universality, is a distinctive trace of the missionary action with the migrants and refugees and a vital space for them. Migrations express the image of the missionary Church.<sup>80</sup>
- Communion, built in the respect for the legitimate diversities and where the migrants are considered as active members of the community,<sup>81</sup> is a sign of the universal communion of the Church. The witness of communion becomes proclamation, element of attraction and convocation. This experience of fraternity must characterize the ecclesial communities. All local Churches, institutes and movements are called to collaborate in the mission with the migrants, providential builders of the universal fraternity, and to become “the home and school of communion.”<sup>82</sup>

77 DA, n. 412 [English translation, mine].

78 PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLES, *Instruction Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi (EMCC)*, n.3.

79 EMCC, n. 96.

80 EMCC, n. 97:100.

81 EMCC, n.98.

82 M. A.L. FERREIRA. “Un tempo di transizione” in *Testimoni* n.17, 2004, p. 29; NMI, n.43.

- An intercultural, multiethnic and multireligious society challenges us to form a culture of dialogue, mutual respect, acceptance of the differences; where Christians are educated to welcome, to solidarity and to openness to the migrant; without discrimination, prejudices and divisions. This task requires the commitment of all persons, groups and society.<sup>83</sup>

- The ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue is a fundamental missionary aspect and finds one of its main areas of action in human mobility.<sup>84</sup> The Scalabrinian mission challenges us to promote and to participate of ecumenical initiatives, projects, and of groups that are in solidarity with the human being of any nationality or religion, considering the inalienable right to life.<sup>85</sup>

- The explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ to the migrants who do not know him, requires that in the process of evangelization the Christians must have great respect and attention for the migrants' traditions and cultures. Christians are called to bear witnesses to the gospel of love and peace in our dealings with them. And also to proclaim the Word of God explicitly to them so that the blessing of the Lord, promised to Abraham and his descendants for ever, may reach them.<sup>86</sup>

- The lay faithful in the Church can be protagonists of evangelizing initiatives of great importance and of evident apostolic fruitfulness, in various situations of challenges for the Christian mission. Their agile structures, the majority local, allow them a diversity of presence and missionary activities, which are not possible to members of missionary institutes. On our side, we need to intensify evermore our relationship, apostolate and work with the laity, especially with the SLM, and facilitate their participation in the Scalabrinian mission.<sup>87</sup>

Besides the challenges mentioned above, the carrying out of our mission with the migrants, today, requires that we work in partnership and network with national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations that are active in the cause of human mobility and with the migrants. The purpose of this work is to participate at petitions of decisions and to influence migration policies which aim at recuperating the inalienable dignity of the migrants and refugees.<sup>88</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI affirmed: *"We believe that the reality of migration must never be seen merely as a*

83 EMCC, n.96. 99 -100:103.

84 EMCC, n. 56-69.

85 R. MILESJ, *"Proteção dos direitos e resgate da dignidade humana dos migrantes e refugiados,"* in *Profetismo e identidade apostólico-missionária da Irmã Scalabriniana,* CSEM, Brasília 2001, p.128.

86 EMCC, n. 100.

87 M.A. FERREIRA, *"Un tempo di transizione,"* p. 25; EMCC, 86-87.

88 R. MILESJ, *"Proteção dos direitos e resgate da dignidade humana dos migrantes e refugiados,"* p. 128-130.

problem, but also and above all as a great resource for humanity's journey."<sup>89</sup> Therefore, "the migrants must be followed pastorally by their Churches of origin and motivated to become disciples and missionaries in the lands and communities that receive them, sharing with the latter the wealth of their faith and religious traditions. The migrants who leave our communities can offer a valuable missionary contribution to the receiving communities."<sup>90</sup>

The *mcs*s sisters, missionaries of hope, recognize God's action on the pathways of migration. They are women who, with their attentive and shrewd gaze, perceive the different types of people on the move and with their womanly awareness, create strategies to defend life. Along with the migrants who find themselves in dangerous and vulnerable situations, they channel their efforts to the promotion of actions, to eliminate situations of injustice and create better living conditions. In this manner, they collaborate towards the building of a new society<sup>91</sup> and in the expansion of the Kingdom.

This great hope that sustains the *mcs*s sisters is God. His love alone gives us the possibility to soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect.<sup>92</sup>

Sisters, our daily effort, the difficulties, the limitations inherent to the mission can tire us, "unless we are enlightened by the radiance of the great hope that cannot be destroyed even by small-scale failures or by a breakdown in matters of historic importance. So on the one hand, our actions engender hope for us and for others; but at the same time, it is the great hope based upon God's promises that gives us courage and orients our action in good and bad times. Faith in Christ makes us look always forwards."<sup>93</sup>



89 POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Speech, Angelus, January 14, 2007.*

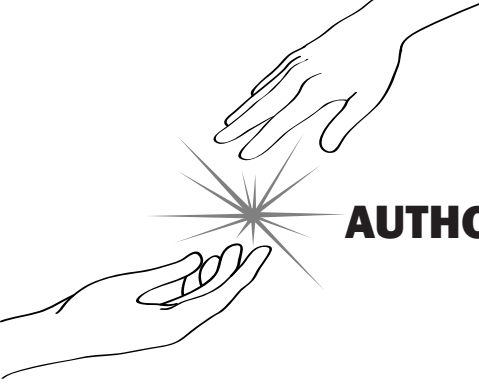
90 *DA*, n. 415.

91 C. LUSSI, "Missionariedade em Mobilidade," p. 23-24.

92 POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Spes Salvi, Vatican City 2007*, n. 31.

93 *Ibidem*, n. 35.41.





# AUTHORITY THE CONGREGATION

## A SERVICE IN SUPPORT OF LIFE AND OF THE MISSION

But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant." (Mt. 20: 26)

The term 'authority' is related to the Latin word *augeo*, which in the dictionaries it means to have the power of causing the development of life, to promote and sustain it. Therefore, this word includes the idea of responsibility, service and initiative.

Authority and obedience are two dimensions of the same reality, "two complementary aspects of the same participation in Christ's offering,"<sup>1</sup> two moments of a process of obedience to God's will. The relationship authority-obedience is not in opposition but is of mutual service needed in a religious community, formed by members who are followers of Jesus Christ and faithful to the mission the Church has entrusted to them. It refers to two dimensions of the same viewpoint of obedience, where all those convoked by the Lord translate into action, as members of the same body – members of one another by the charity – that which pleases the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

The exercise of authority and its service within the religious community has always been a difficult task. It means a service that requires exercising oneself in the charity of Christ, for the spiritual growth (1Pe. 5: 2-4) of the people and of the group in accord with the charism of the Institute. In practice, it is not easy to create an atmosphere proper for seeking the will of God in dialogue and prayer and to do with interior freedom.

### 1. Foundations of authority

#### 1.1. God is the source of every authority

In the Old Testament, God is recognized as the only God, to whom belongs praise and glory (Is. 6:3; 42:8), the only God whom human beings worship (Lv.26: 1) because he is the only judge (Jr. 17:10; Rm. 2:29) and the only Lord of life and history. Every authority is from God and rests in Him (Rm 13:1). It is an authority of love and service in the constant search for

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1 Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, n. 25.

2 Cf. J.M.G. GUERRERO, 'Autorità', in T. GOFFI – A. PALAZZINI, edd., *Dizionario Teologico della Vita Consacrata, Ancora, Milano 1994*, p. 108.

justice. The greatest connotation of this characteristic of God– Lord-servant –is the name “Father” with which often times the OT distinguishes him, a paternity revealed to all peoples (Dt. 32: 6; Tb. 7: 12; Mt.6:33). If God’s authority is qualified as the exercise of an uncontestable power and, at the same time, of loving openness in relation to the other, from this derives that human authority is also modeled according to the same parameters.

Frequently the OT speaks of power and authority. The contexts are many and the meanings are multiple. However, the same idea is always present as a background: power and authority are attributed to God, essentially and exclusively. “*Worthy are you, Lord our God*” (Rev.4:11). This certainty did not come from reason, originated in the historical experience of the people of Israel. The God who reveals himself to Israel is not a remote, motionless and disinterested God, but a God who is near, acts, praises and helps (Lk.1: 51-54), who does not tolerate the oppression and slavery of his people. The importance of the Exodus’ events lies not so much in the event itself, but in how Israel saw and felt the Lord’s presence: “*The LORD saved Israel on that day from the power of the Egyptians.*” (Ex. 14:30-31). Throughout her history, Israel experienced that Yahweh was at her side, acted on her behalf and was the most powerful among the powerful people of its history. Israel’s faith rested on this experience and it is the one that inspired the canticles of thanksgiving in the OT.<sup>3</sup>

Fidelity to Yahweh comprised the security and hope of the people of Israel. Starting from this historical experience, the reflection that followed interrogated itself about the last root of such power. The idea of creation as a convincing and definite response went on delineating and concretizing itself slowly. Yahweh is so powerful because He is the Lord of everything, the Lord of history, He is the source to everything: “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*” (Gn.1:1) and man was constituted mediator of divine authority (Gn.1:28; Ps 8). Because He is the only creator, God exercises all power in history and his authority is absolute. After having suffered the exile’s severe trials, the people must know that Yahweh is capable of freeing them. Moreover, the apostle Paul uses the earthen vessel in the hands of the potter (Rm 9: 20; Is 45:8) to reveal what God is able to do. His authority over the human person does not aim at oppressing him/her, but at freeing him/her.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 Biblical models in the exercise of authority

Abraham is the model of faith for all believers. His spiritual experience is a relationship marked by the radical need of obedience in faith (Gn 12: 1). When God intervenes in the person’s life, reality and appearance no longer coincide and the person is called to discern and read again the events from faith’s point of view, which enables us to see the invisible.<sup>5</sup>

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3 *Ibidem*, p. 108-109.

4 *Ibidem*, p. 109.

5 Cf. G.FPOLI – G. CREA, *Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza – Per una leadership in tempo di crisi*, Rogate, Roma, 2008, p. 33-35.

Moses' leadership is entirely centered on the service of the people's freedom. The project of divine deliverance will go through the mediation of a transformed Moses, matured in the desert's trials and in listening to the Word. He does not choose to lead the people, but God chooses him. In Moses' leadership, Jethro, his father-in-law notices that he is not sufficiently involving the people and the community in the different choices and tasks. Jethro perceives that Moses does everything alone. Such recognition translates itself into a series of operational counsels, but contextually one foresees an invitation to a sort of institutional change. Jethro appears to be attentive to the community's needs and has the good of the people and Moses in the heart. Hence, he dares to propose a course of action. They are secondary tasks. He invites Moses to organize a decentralized structure, with diverse responsibilities for the various levels in the community, reserving the most difficult cases for himself.<sup>6</sup>

A complementary action in the realization of the tasks is also present in the books of Nehemiah and Ezra. Nehemiah, a man of action, would not hesitate to face any obstacle whatsoever, was different from Ezra, calmer and inclined to the studies. By working together, the two finished their task, revealing to be at the service of a project received from God.<sup>7</sup>

Samuel (1Sam. 16: 1-13) after Moses had an important function in the evolution of Israel's society. He is a biblical example of arduous discernment, but leads to form a true fraternity. He administered the difficult passage of the judges' regime to that of the monarchy. In this biblical page, we can recognize not only our inconsistencies, but also the ways of healing in order to exercise a true obedient authority.

The prophets, people whose authority was conferred on them by the Spirit, were people of God (Am.7:15) impelled to speak by the Spirit (Am.3:8) and sent out as passionate heralds of the living God (Is.6: 9; Jr.1:4-5). They were the people's sentinels (Ez.3:17) to warn them when in danger of destruction, the community's true defenders and intercessors and were decisive in everything in order to save it. A prophet is a man who knows by direct experience, is appointed by God to admonish, threaten, comfort and transform behaviors and mentalities (Am.7: 14; Jr. 11:19; 18:10; Ez. 3:15). He is teacher and shepherd of souls.<sup>8</sup>

God asks the "shepherds of Israel" accounts of his flock (Ez.34:1). The king governs after Yahweh (1Sm. 12:13-14). Every authority on earth is participation of His authority (Jr.1:9ss). Paul is decisive: "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God" (Rm.1:1). Therefore, authority must be exercised as a ministry.<sup>9</sup>

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6 *Ibidem*, p. 57-58, 80-84.

7 *Ibidem*, p. 113.

8 Cf. J. M. GUERRERO, 'Autorità', p. 111.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 109.

### 1.3 Authority in the New Testament

Every authority finds its origin and justification in the Creator God. Jesus receives a mission from the Father, to proclaim and fulfill the Kingdom of God, and received the power to fulfill it (Mat.28: 18). Such a mission and authority were later pass on to the Church, to the community of the faithful that perpetuates the presence and action of the Lord Jesus in the world (Jn.20: 23; Mt.28: 18-20).<sup>10</sup>

Jesus did not announce himself but the kingdom of God, that is, the revolution and total transfiguration of the reality of the human being and of the cosmos, purified from evil and filled with God's presence. Jesus proclaims the mercy of God, the fraternity without frontiers, solidarity, service as the only criterion of life, the end of all alienations and slaveries. This kingdom irrupts in the life of whoever receives it with the dynamism of a mustard seed that becomes the largest plant (Mat. 13: 31-32), or with the silent strength of a little east in the dough (Mt.13: 33).<sup>11</sup>

For the Gospel, authority is not in God's place, it does not substitute Him governing according to human criteria. However, led by the Spirit of Christ, it is called to place the others in an immediate relationship with God, in harmony with what *Gaudium et Spes* reminds – it has the task of making God the Father and His Incarnate Son present.<sup>12</sup>

From the Gospel's point of view, we can affirm that authority, naturally speaking, has meaning only to make the person's life grow (*augere*) and doing it is an act of justice, understood as attention to give every person what is indispensable to live life better. From faith's point of view, authority aims at reviving the awareness of Jesus' presence in others and in history; to partake of their joys and needs.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the power conferred by Jesus is not to dominate but to serve. Jesus exercises his power in total communion with the Father (Jn.4: 34), in terms of radical obedience (Heb.5: 8; Phil.2:8). This saving authority of Christ finds a growth in the Church.

In the communities founded by Paul, the leaders are given a mission of great importance: to counsel, encourage and build the community (1Cor.14: 3). The different functions of apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherds are strictly conjugated to the objective for which God calls every authority to participate of the sole mission of edifying the Body of Christ in charity.<sup>14</sup>

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10 *Ibidem*, p.110.

11 *Ibidem*, p.110.

12 Cf. G.FPOLI – G.CREA, *Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza*, p.165; GS. 21.

13 Cf. J. M. GUERRERO, 'Autorità,' p. 110.

14 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 798.

The great Christian leaders become more and more aware of having a great responsibility, that of leading under God's direction. Therefore, they seek to follow the divine inspirations because God is the source of every authority.<sup>15</sup>

#### 1.4 Authority as service at the example of Jesus Christ

With Jesus, the sense of authority is radically inverted and power assumes a completely different meaning from the usual one. Authority suffers a true *metanoia*: from the power-dominion, it passes to the power- service (Mk.10: 45). "He is master and Lord" (Jn.13: 12-15). "He is among them as the one who serves" (Lk.22: 27). "For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk.10: 44-45). In addition, this concept of power must distinguish his disciples: they will not dominate as absolute lords, neither oppress with their power as the great ones of the earth do (Mk.10: 42 ff). On the contrary, they will set free and serve at the example of the Master.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus faces the problem of power not understood as service – a service at the image of the Servant. In addition, he introduced a new style of leader in the world, that of the servant leader. He makes a journey which is the inverse of that made by the human being. He does not elevate himself to dominate, but lowers himself to serve (Jo.13:4-17; Phil. 2: 6-8). Jesus' behavior at the last supper sets a principle of government. The manner in which He manifested himself to be God and Lord, making himself servant, constituted an inevitable starting point. Therefore, the disciples' mission is to serve until becoming 'slaves' of others (Mat.20: 27; Mk.10: 44). This is how Paul conceived his ministry, for him the term slave became the technical term used to define the leader of the Christian communities.

The NT always uses a vocabulary of perplexing inferiority to designate power: slave, servant, server, and service. The terms 'lord' or 'chief' are never used. In this way, authority in the Church will never be of domination, but of minorities and service. Ministry is not an exaltation of oneself, but a service. No human logic will reach to understand that "the last will be first" (Mk.10: 31) or, "the greater be the one who serves" (Lk.22:24-30); and "whoever wishes to be first among you let him be the servant of all" (Mk.10: 44). Christ himself insists that those who wish to be the first ones in his Kingdom must serve the others (Mt.20:20-28).

The evangelical authority cannot satisfy the primitive instincts of dominion and self-fulfillment. From the moment in which Christ, though being of divine nature, lowered himself to serve (Phil.2: 6-8), no authority in the Church will be able to make the inverse road: that is, to elevate itself to dominate. In this perspective, authority is evangelically a service.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Cf. G.FPOLI – G.CREA, *Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza*, p.149.

16 Cf. J. M. GUERRERO, *Autorità*, p. 112-113.

17 *Lumen Gentium* (LG), n.24.27; *Perfatae Caritatis* (PC), n.14; *Code of Cannon Law*, can 618.

When the Church canonizes someone, a saint, a martyr, or a confessor of the faith, the first title given is servant of God. This title honors others. Servant of God is every creature's only noble title. Everything that is not pure service to God constitutes decadence, often disguised by a false greatness.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, authority is a diakonia, a service of love and communion. It takes up the kenosis or annihilation as style, and has the Good Shepherd who gives the life for his sheep as model. The solicitude of the Good Shepherd delineates that of the Father's love for his children: attention, interest, comprehension and happiness when his son returns home. This is an authority Jesus exercised in the washing of his disciples' feet, and in proclaiming of not having come to the world to be served, but to serve.

### 1.5 Religious authority

Undoubtedly, the Council's ecclesiology of communion had a sensitive influence on the manner of considering the exercise of authority in the Institutes of Consecrated Life. In the post-Council years, various theories on the nature of religious authority confronted themselves, highlighting some aspects: religious authority does not have the same nature as the hierarchical one; its origins are essentially charismatic and its transmission is in relation to the gift that the religious family received when the Spirit gave life to it.<sup>19</sup>

In Consecrated Life (CL), the evolution of the later decades contributed toward the growth of fraternal life in community. The desire for a deeper communion among the members and the comprehensible reaction against structures, experienced as excessively authoritarian and rigid in some places, led to the understanding of the importance of the authority's role. Thus, some considered authority as absolutely des-necessary for community life; and others re-dimensioned it to the mere task of coordinating the initiatives of the members. A certain number of communities were induced to live without a superior or person responsible and others to make their decisions collegially. All this brought with itself the danger, not hypothetical, of the breaking down of community life, which inevitably tends to benefit the individual projects, and at the same time, to obscure authority's role.<sup>20</sup>

Law and authority are considered of vital importance for the life of the Church. For the Institutes, there is a recognized just autonomy of life; discipline; preservation of the Institute's identity; proper patrimony; fundamental code or constitutions. With due consideration to

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18 Cf. M. TENACE, *Custodi della sapienza – Il servizio dei superiori*, Lipa, Roma 2007, p.136; G.F. POLI – G. CREA, *Dall'auto-rità all'autorevolezza*, p.148.

19 Cf. S. RECHI, "Il servizio dell'autorità religiosa e la cultura contemporanea," in *Consacrazione e Servizio 5* (2006), p.31-32; PC, n.14.

20 CF. CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE (CICLSAL) *Fraternal Life in Community* (FLC), 02/2/1994, n. 47-48.

the autonomy of the Institute, its government and internal discipline are exclusively subjected to the power of the Apostolic See.<sup>21</sup>

The just degree of this autonomy and the concrete determination of the competencies, are found in the Proper Law of every Religious Institute. The superiors and the Chapters of each Institute have on the members a power defined by the universal law and by the constitutions. The universal law of the Church also affirms that the vow of obedience requires submission to the will of the legitimate superiors, when these order in accord with the constitutions.<sup>22</sup>

While some religious communities have a more hierarchical structure of authority, others moved on to a more participative model, understood according to the needs of the mission, culture and members. Persons in position of authority are also subjected to carry out administrative functions. Although they carry out these functions, the leaders must keep their gaze on big picture, that is, on the Congregation's mission.

### 1.6 The government of a religious Institute

Government must be organized in view of the Institute's life and mission. The superiors,<sup>23</sup> at all levels, do not exercise authority alone. Every superior must be assisted by a council. The councilors collaborate with her through the consultative and deliberative vote, in agreement with the Church's law and with the constitutions of the Institute. The process of participation in decision-making is very important in government. To know how to engage, to decide together and delegate is decisive in religious life.<sup>24</sup>

The term collegiality has a specific meaning in ecclesiology. It refers to the Episcopal college. The doctrine of *Lumen Gentium* affirms that, as the apostles formed one body, united around Peter, likewise the bishops – their successors – are united forming the body whose head is the bishop of Rome, Peter's successor. This does with which the Pope and the bishops work –in more committed and solemn ways – in a 'collegial' way. In other words, it can be affirmed that collegiality tells about the horizontal dimension of the Church, of communion and of participation, that is, the Church is relationship with God in Christ, but is equally fraternity, communion of the children of God, in the Spirit.

By some analogy, it can be said that that there is a collegiality in the general Chapter of the religious Institutes, which generally represents their supreme authority: the members act collegially and normally every person has the same power of decision. For example, the vote of he who has

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21 Cf. Can.586.587.593.

22 Cf. Can. 596. 601.631.

23 In this paper, the term 'superior' is used because it is the term used, today, in Proper Law and Canon Law of the Church and in her documents.

24 G.F. POLI – G. CREA, *Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza*, p.83; can. 627.

authority in the Institute has the same weight as the vote of the person who does not have any authority. The same can be said of a provincial Chapter, within the limits of its competency.<sup>25</sup>

In contemporary language, it is more appropriate to speak of *co-responsibility* in the Chapters and similar bodies, a term that has a broader meaning and is more comprehensible. Co-responsibility – rather than expressing itself in concrete ways of action – it is an attitude, a way of thinking, of positioning oneself and of interacting within a group. Therefore, this principle is applied not only in a General Chapter, but also within the community, the Province or the Institute.

Among the levels of government, the General Chapter, the supreme body of collegial government, represents the entire Institute. Its competencies are described in Proper Law, but aims particularly at safeguarding the Institute's patrimony; at promoting its renewal in harmony with its charism; at electing the Superior, the Councilors, the General Secretary and Treasurer; at dealing with topics of greater importance; and emanating norms for the entire Institute. The General Chapter can be of various types: ordinary, extraordinary, elective. The constitutions determine the Chapter's composition and sphere of its power because it is not limited. The celebration of the Chapter must be regulated according to Proper Law.

The Provincial Chapter is the collegial body that represents the entire Province, and Proper Law establishes its nature, authority, composition, its procedure, and the time of its celebration or of similar assemblies. The local Chapter rather than being a body with decision-making power is more an expression of the community's fraternal life. It has a consultant character and is regulated by Proper Law.

In the religious Institutes, the Code of Canon Law does not admit an ordinary collegial government at any one of its levels. This means that the superior must be personally responsible for what he decides and orders before God, the major superiors and the members, by the very exercise of his function in his pastoral munus of teaching, sanctifying and governing.

Yet, she can and must count with bodies of participation or consultation (councils, assemblies, consultations). For the members of the Institute, participation in these bodies is not merely a right, but also a duty. Generally, these bodies have their functions regulated by canon law, but specifically by Proper Law and must guide their actions with them. The Church orders that every superior have a council and seeks its help in the exercise of her functions.<sup>26</sup> The constitutions establish the cases in which the opinion or the consensus of the council is obligatory in order to proceed validly.

When the council is convoked to give its opinion, the superior is not obliged to decide according to the opinion of the counsel, although it is advisable to consider it. It is advisable

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25 Cf. M.D.CLAUDOT, *Le strutture di governo e di partecipazione delle congregazioni religiose, Ancora, Milano, 1986, p. 19, 20.*

26 *Ibidem*, p. 20; Can. 627.

that the decisions made in reference to persons count only with the council's opinion and not with the consensus, thus guaranteeing the superior a greater freedom to act based on the knowledge acquired in virtue of her function. When the consensus is required, the council must be convoked and the consensus of the absolute majority must be obtained. There is only one foreseen case in which the collegial decision is admitted, it is when a sort of a tribunal is formed to emit the secret vote on the dismissal or not of a member.<sup>27</sup>

### 1.7 Responsibility

A retrospective look allows us notice that religious life brings in its history a way of exercising authority, which normally did not facilitate co-responsibility, although the presence of the styles of different governments in the various Institutes became known. It can be affirmed that *co-responsibility* means shared responsibility – from the Latin *cum-responsabilitas*. In the past, such sharing was very limited and responsibility was the monopoly of authority. The fact of being habitually excluded from participation in decision-making processes, produced attitudes and a behavior which tended to infantilism, little interest and a weak sense of belonging to the community, to the province or to the Institute. In some Institutes of women, there was much struggle (and in some areas there is still much work to be done) to make the relationship between superior and religious one of ‘adult’ persons. In recent decades, religious life tried –and is still attempting- to accomplish an important passage from a community founded on discipline and obedience – to the so called ‘regular observance’- to a community built around the evangelical value of fraternity, attentive to the needs of each person and more careful to the human aspect.

At the center of the present culture is the responsible and generous collaboration, where there is no one who thinks and decides, but where each person is considered capable to assume her/his responsibilities, in a conscious and co-responsible offering, with the conviction that true maturity is to accept the process of mutual enrichment. Although, this does not mean *acefalia*,<sup>28</sup> that is, the disappearance of the authority's figure, but the assumption of a style and way of government, of animation, of participation which – even with respect to the specific roles – rise the awareness that everyone can and must give their contribution to the choices about the community.

Moreover, a more fraternal style which is respectful of the individuals allowed a certain individualism to enter religious life. There were also those persons who took advantage of the benevolence that must characterize fraternal life, to give themselves their own spaces from which they excluded the community and isolating themselves from it. If individualism

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27 Cf. Can. 699.

28 *The new forms of consecrated life prefer to use other terms and not the term ‘superior’ It can even change the name of superior to another one, but it must be clear as to who decides in the end and how.*

is harmful, an excessive centralism is also. Some one said that if individualism causes one to freeze to death because of the reciprocal isolation, centralism causes one to die from overheating, because the space is excessively narrow.

The insistence on the personal responsibility could diminish what has always characterized religious life, that is, the spirit of obedience. The affirmation that the new name of obedience is co-responsibility is frequent today. "There are those who observe that within the preceding mentality obedience was exercised in dependence, instead, today, obedience is exercised in interdependence or in coordinated responsibility, or in the responsible collaboration."<sup>29</sup>

Co-responsibility uses its instruments and democratic formulas of government: for example, arriving at a decision through a voting which expresses the will of a majority that seeks God's will, welcoming and valuing diversity and, therefore, the richness of the contributions. Once the decision has been taken it should not find the disagreement of an opposition, but everyone's serene obedience.

On the other hand, in some situations, some important values but difficult to practice, or certain choices which are more adherent to the Gospel, may be intuited and supported merely by a minority that can be defined as 'prophetic'. Hence, more than gathering consensus, it means knowing how to listen to each other, attentively, with availability, and discover the greater good for the community or Congregation. Then, it is understood that the style or the most appropriate instrument of co-responsibility in religious life- particularly in Chapters- is the "community discernment which is a rather useful process, even if not easy or automatic, for involving human competence, spiritual wisdom and personal detachment."<sup>30</sup>

### 1.8 Relationship between authority and obedience

At the anthropological level, the relationship between authority and obedience implies a concept of freedom, its legitimate space and limits. Between both, if faith's motives are lacking, fraternity reduces itself merely to a poor living together. Faith is the essential part of consecration and supports the entire structure of religious life. Many crisis, today, derive from the fact that motives of faith no longer exist in many consecrated persons.<sup>31</sup>

The *confessio Trinitatis of Vita Consecrata*, places the ecclesial Christological dimension of religious life and, hence of the relationship authority-obedience on the Trinitarian horizon. The Trinitarian life becomes the model of all ecclesial and missionary communion starting from the obedience of the Son to the Father, between Christ and the apostles, in the plan

29 Cf. P. CABRA, *Per una vita fraterna, Queriniana, Brescia 1993, p. 135.*

30 Cf. VFC, n.50.

31 Cf. P. MARTINELLI, *Autorità e obbedienza nella vita Consacrata e nella famiglia francescana, Dehoniane, Bologna 2008, p145-149.*

of a complementary relationship. Though in different ways, all conciliar and post-conciliar documents underline the evangelical fruitful exercise of authority-obedience, the necessary harmony of all the members with the Word of God, the listening attitude, the communion of prayer and inter-subjective dialogue in the mutual relationships.<sup>32</sup>

“Considering that Christ in his life and work was the perfect *amen* (cf. *Rev* 3:14) and the perfect *yes* (cf. *2 Cor* 1:20) spoken to the Father, and that to say *yes* means to obey, it is impossible to think about the mission if not in relation to obedience. To live the mission always implies being sent, and that includes referring to the one who sends or to the content of the mission to be developed. It is for this reason that, without reference to obedience, the term *mission* becomes difficult to understand and is exposed to the risk of being reduced to something that refers only to those developing the mission. There is always the danger of reducing the *mission* to a profession to be done in view of one’s own fulfillment, thereby being managed more or less by oneself.”<sup>33</sup>

If the exercise of authority and obedience will find their converging point in a common vision, inspired by the Gospel, according to the divine plan, Consecrated Life could say something to the world in view of the full realization of the person and of a renewed meaning of freedom, before the progressive dehumanization, pollution of the spirit, of life and of culture.<sup>34</sup>

The more recent Church document on this topic, *The Service of Authority and Obedience* singles out that authority and obedience, although lived in a different way, “always have a peculiar relation with the Lord Jesus, the obedient servant, who came to the world to do God’s Will.” With the intention of doing God’s will, authority and obedience are not therefore two distinct realities or absolutely opposed but rather two dimensions of the same evangelical reality, of the same Christian mystery. They are two complementary ways of participating in the same oblation of Christ. Authority and obedience are personified in Jesus: for this reason, they must be understood in direct relation to him and in a real configuration to him.<sup>35</sup>

At the example of Christ, obedience to the superiors, in spirit of faith and love of God, means to overcome a static notion of human relationships, fulfilling the true value of obedience, which is not a servant but is filial dependency and is animate by responsibility and spirit of collaboration. Authority in an institute must express itself at the spiritual, formative, disciplinary and administrative levels because it is called to animate community life and to

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32 *Ibidem*, p.44-45.

33 Cf. CICALSAL, *The Service of Authority and Obedience* (SAO), n. 23.

34 Cf. CICALSAL, *Starting Afresh from Christ* (SAC), nos 13-14.45; P. MARTINELLI, *Autorità e obbedienza nella vita Consacrata e nella famiglia francescana*, p. 61-64.

35 Cf. SAO, n.12.

be the promoter of fraternity in a constant effort to live the consecration. Authority and obedience must be the initiators of freedom, creativity and the desire for communion.<sup>36</sup>

Authority, as far as it is expression of God's love for those who consecrate themselves to Him, is understood as a service exercised in charity. A characteristic of authority with reference to obedience is the spirit of listening, which can only promote true charity and unity among consecrated persons. The relationship between authority-obedience aims at achieving the promotion of the person through the liberating dimension of filial obedience.<sup>37</sup>

The search for God and his will "constitutes the struggle of each day." Human mediations are always limited. The assiduous and arduous search of the divine requires the usage of every available means, which may help discover and support it in its fulfillment. A privilege means is the Word of God. The loving encounter with the Word shows one how to discover the way to life and the way through which God wishes to free his children, nourishes one's spiritual instincts for the things which are pleasing to God, conveys the sense and the taste for his will, making one sensitive to the Gospel, to the faith and to the truth.<sup>38</sup>

Fraternal life which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, particularly life in community is the particular sign, before the Church and society, of the bond which comes from the same call and the common desire – notwithstanding differences of race and origin, language and culture – to be obedient to that call.<sup>39</sup> Then, to govern is not equivalent to command, but it is to serve in view of the salvation of all the members of the community. This type of government is not in function of submission, but it is a work of love: to love someone is to recognize his/her gift, help him/her exercise it and grow deeper in it.<sup>40</sup> To love and obey, around these two choices develops the relationship between Christ and the Father, between He and us, between the others and us. Therefore, obedience presents itself as an exercise full of interior freedom.

## **2. The exercise of authority in the life of blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, father Joseph and mother Assunta Marchetti**

### **2.1 Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini and his effort for unity**

Our founder John Baptist Scalabrini was a man in communion with God, with the Church and with neighbor. He sought to be in 'intimate and perfect union' with the Church, a union

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36 P. MARTINELLI, *Autorità e obbedienza nella vita Consacrata e nella famiglia francescana*, p. 52-57/124.

37 *Ibidem*, p.48.

38 Cf. SAO, n. 7.

39 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consacrata (VC)*, n. 92.

40 Cf.R. COZZ, "Autorità Obbediente" in *Testimoni* 1/2008, p. 1-15.

which takes place in the threefold unity of faith, communion and submission and at the same time, makes us effective members of the Body of Christ.<sup>41</sup> We can say that he spent his life working for the unity of all “*that they all may be one*” (Jn.17: 21). For him humanity’s supreme purpose is “*to gather all peoples into one in God through Jesus Christ.*”<sup>42</sup>

Scalabrini reflects on the unity of the Church making an analogy with the human body. Just as in the human body not all members perform the same function, in the same way not every member of the Church exercises the same office, but form the mystical body Christ. If a member ceases to contribute to the common good, or ceases to profit of this source, it ceases to live. The same is true of the Church. It is a family in which all the members are united among themselves in a similar way. They share life, contribute to the common good of the family, in accord with the gifts they possess. We are “*united in faith, charity and obedience with the Pope and the Church.*” And adds, “*How beautiful and inspiring is the sight of this immense family of believers dispersed throughout the world, all confessing the same creed, cherishing the same hopes, enjoying the same sacraments, believing in the same priesthood, offering the same sacrifice, .listening to the same voice of the common Father (...).*”<sup>43</sup>

The founder was strongly convinced that the Church is sacrament of communion. The communion lived in the Church, in virtue of the Holy Spirit, is the reflection and communication of the love that exist among the persons of the Holy Trinity.<sup>44</sup> In the Church, there must be unity of love, of faith, of governance, of sacraments and of the people. He recommended unity to the people: “*Unity of mind, unity of heart, unity of action. During these very troubled times we are going through, we can support each other only if we are united.*” In the Church, we must be united! The people must be united with their pastors, the pastors with the bishop, who must be in perfect union with the Pope, to face together the problems that may arise and direct their energies toward the common good. The people should abandon themselves to the paternal authority governing them: they should have total submission of their minds and hearts to their shepherds, through them, and with them, to the Shepherd of the Church who guides us all.<sup>45</sup> Obedience to the Church, according to Scalabrini, is an essential condition for living in unity with Christ and with the brothers and sisters.



41 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *John Baptist Scalabrini – Espiritualidade da Encarnação, Scalabrinian Congregations, Rome 1991, p.92*

42 THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATIONS, *A Living Voice - John Baptist Scalabrini. Translated by Fr. Gino Dalpiaz, c.s., U.S.A, 1987, p. 64.*

43 *Ibidem, p.108.*

44 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *John Baptist Scalabrini – Espiritualidade da Encarnação, p.103.*

45 THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATIONS, *A Living Voice - John Baptist Scalabrini. p. 119/122.*

Obedience to the Pope was a constant in the Founder’s life.<sup>46</sup> His strong conviction that the Pope is the center of unity in the Church led him to make solemn promises of loyalty and obedience to the Pontiff. He insisted on the unity of the clergy and faithful, and on the edification of the Church’s unity, seeking to draw close to all through the pastoral visits. First, he worked to unite the laity to the pastor by establishing the parish committees to assist the priests in the exercise of their ministry and other persons for the good of unity and evangelization. He also worked to unite the Church and the state for the good of all souls.

He advised the missionaries <sup>47</sup> to remain always united to Jesus Christ, as the branches to the vine. He was certain that the effectiveness of their apostolate derives from the union with Jesus Christ and among themselves. They were to be united as one. United in thought, affections, and desires, just as they were united for the same end. He implored, “I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.” They will be able to remain united with all humility and meekness, and by bearing with one another through love.”<sup>48</sup> In effect, in the first Rules of Life for the missionaries he prescribed: “They shall strive to preserve the most perfect union with the companions of the Congregation treating each other with an open heart and sincere affection.” <sup>49</sup>

He was convinced that the superiors should be the first ones responsible for unity and for this they should work, “I desire that you form as our program.” He said to a Provincial Superior and to the Vicar General, “I will never cease to recommend the unity of thought, affections, and desires in the Lord Christ! I recommend that you make any sacrifice to maintain and solidify concord among the brothers.”<sup>50</sup>

## 2.2 Authority in Scalabrini’s View

Before those who exercised the function of authority, he affirmed, “Undoubtedly, there is suffering intrinsic to obedience and others inherent to authority.” He demanded that the religious lead a life in “full communion of charity and unlimited obedience to the Pope,” obedience to the Superiors of the Congregation and to the Ordinary of the place where they

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46 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *John Baptist Scalabrini – Espiritualidade da Encarnação*, p. 94.

47 It is difficult to find correspondence of Scalabrini directly addressed to the pioneer Sisters of the Congregation. This fact is explained because “in the beginning Scalabrini and Fr. Joseph Marchetti thought of the women’s scalabrinian Congregation as a second order, aggregated to the Pious Society of St. Charles” (Cf. L.M. SIGNOR, *Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles, Scalabrinians/1895-1934*, CSEM, Brasilia 2005, p.148). Therefore, Scalabrini’s correspondence was addressed to the superior of the scalabrinian fathers in S. Paulo.

48 THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATIONS, *A Living Voice - John Baptist Scalabrini*, p. 469.

49 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *John Baptist Scalabrini – An Insight into His Spirituality*, Center of Migration Studies N.Y. p.72 -73.

50 *Ibidem*, p.73.

would exercise their ministry. The majority of the authors take us to conclude that, as superior of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles, Scalabrini valued what they did and motivated them with encouraging words. He asked accountability of the activities promoted and organized in every mission, as well as of the financial administrative situation of the missions. Moreover, all the religious' pastoral activities should be approved by the local bishop, and be carried out always in union with him.

Scalabrini governed more by example than with words. He understood the exercise of his ministry as a service. He said at the beginning of his episcopacy, "As for myself, debtor to you all, I shall embrace you all in my ministry in service to you and every one for the sake of the Gospel."<sup>51</sup> As bishop, he governed with temperate charity and firm authority; with a firm hand but also with kindness; he had great esteem for the priests and felt the duty to lead them, first with the example and then with authority; he was humble and meek. Normally, before taking extreme measures he would go very slowly. To those he delegated authority, he would say, "it is necessary to have patience and try to win over with the charity of Jesus Christ; with prayer, with persuasion and finally also with a little firmness."<sup>52</sup>

He dealt with the problematic priests in a paternal way. Hence, he would win them over and bend their wills. Depending on the case, he was also severe and used disciplinary measures. Someone said, "He was a father to all particularly to the clergy."<sup>53</sup> In dealing with people he used the greatest prudence, generosity and wisdom. He was a peacemaker. Had a sense of equity and equilibrium and was very just in his relationships with the more difficult persons.

He knew the art of governing. In fact, he governed his diocese with extraordinary prudence, thereby successfully prevented divisions among his people. He lived crises of government, but was able to lead them to a good end, valuing the good found in the persons and frankly disapproving, what was exaggerated or wrong. In a general way, his integrity was recognized at the end of his life.<sup>54</sup>

In the government of the diocese, he applied the principles of participation and collaboration. In Scalabrini's time, the government of a Diocese and parishes was centralized in the person of the Bishop or Pastor. During his episcopacy, we find the expansion of the consultation to the persons directly responsible for the care of souls, that is, the vicars and pastors who became ever more co-responsible with the mission. Hence, these assumed the indispensable role of collaborators. He expressed his support to the "Chapter of the Cathedral," assuring them trust

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51 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini*, Città Nuova Editrice, Roma 1985, p.108.

52 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini*, p. 333.

53 *Ibidem*, p. 334.

54 *Ibidem*, p. 336.

and asked for their collaboration in a most intimate union. The “Cathedral’s Chapter” continued to be defined as the “*Senatus Ecclesiae*.”<sup>55</sup> Witnesses affirm that Scalabrini was punctual to seek the opinion of the Chapter, when the law, the customs or even convenience would demand it. However, was also firm in not to consider it as a binding power.

In his ministry, he sought everyone’s collaboration. He had collaborators in the government of the Diocese and demonstrated to have great esteem and affection for them, and systematically profited from their counsels. He surrounded himself by prominent persons, for their virtue and knowledge, asking for their counsel in the most important and delicate cases, not only to his Vicar General but also to the priests. He taught that, not all persons are suitable to exercise the service of authority. When he named someone for the function, he always sought to place the most suitable people in the right place.

Concerning religious authority, the writings, examples and advice given to his missionaries, give us a clear idea of how Scalabrini lived communion and about his way of governance. The founder invited all the superiors of his Congregation “to undertake their responsibility with courage, faith and spirit of service, seeking nothing else but the greater glory of God, the greater good of the souls and of the Congregation.”<sup>56</sup> For him, the superior is the spiritual leader. He insistently reminded the superiors about “their duty to look after the exact observance of the constitutions and common life, to faithfully transmit and see to it that the orders of the Superior General were carried out, to talk with the confreres and to enter into agreement for the uniformity of action.”<sup>57</sup> And besides watching “so that the duties would be carried out honestly and according with the orders received, the Superiors of the houses should seek to cultivate and increase, in their dependents, the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, spirit of humility and of sacrifice, spirit of meekness and of charity.”<sup>58</sup>

He advised a superior, saying that he should motivate the missionaries for the exact observance of the Rules of Life, which lead to holiness, encouraging them to the faithful practice of what they prescribe. He wrote to Father Zaboglio, “Make sure the rules are put into practice especially those that have to do with the practices of piety in common, and *meditation* at all costs. I must call attention to this very serious matter. Admonish, be vigilant, exhort, and, if necessary, give orders. This is such a necessary goal that no sacrifice should be too much to achieve it.”<sup>59</sup> His greatest preoccupation was to lead the religious to the configuration to Jesus Christ.

55 *Ibidem*, p. 329.

56 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *John Baptist Scalabrini- An Insight into his Spirituality*, p. 69.

57 *Idem*.

58 *Idem*.

59 THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATIONS, *Scalabrini – A Living Voice*, p. 472.

The superiors must seek holiness. "Be holy and everything will flourish in your hands."<sup>60</sup> He encouraged them saying, "Governing human being is hard and the cross of the command is heavy. The Lord stood by me and strengthens me. So, have courage, be calm and trust in the Lord. The superior must be strong, when his duty calls for it."<sup>61</sup> The superior should love his confreres "as a father loves his children. Encourage them; correct them; see to it that they keep the spirit of their vocation."<sup>62</sup> "Prudence and firmness: these are the qualities that make for good government and these I daily beg God to grant you."<sup>63</sup>

He firmly believed that God, upon entrusting an office to a person, also gives the grace necessary to put such a service into effect. "Those who are destined to govern are to carry out their function with firmness and modesty. Grace will accompany them in the exercise of the ministry entrusted to them."<sup>64</sup>

### 2.3 Unity and authority in the life of Father Joseph Marchetti

Listening to God's call, Father Joseph Marchetti lived his vocation in total dedication to God and neighbor. He carried out his ministry with much apostolic zeal and consecrated himself totally to the good of souls. He was faithful to the Scalabrinian charism, to Jesus Christ and to the migrant, always showing courage and perseverance.

This priest who embraced Scalabrini's cause, became one of his first missionaries, lived the advice of his Bishop and Superior to the last consequences. This meant also to accept and carry out the program of unity that Scalabrini proposed to his Missionaries, which means: "Unity in thought, affections, and desires in Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Father Joseph Marchetti revealed to be a man of God, who sought to be intimately united to Jesus Christ through prayer, contemplation and dedicated himself to the service of neighbor. His intimate union with the Lord gave him the strength necessary to give up his life, so that others may have life. He was considered the martyr of charity. Fr. Marchetti undertook the precept of love "you will be my disciples if you love one another" (Jn.13:35), in a profound way, in the living of the Scalabrinian charism, in self-giving and in love of neighbor. His great charity to God and neighbor, led him to add a fourth vow to his religious vows, that is, "always to sufferer for the neighbor for the love of God. He consecrated to God and neighbor all his

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60 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *John Baptist Scalabrini- An Insight into his Spirituality*, p. 56.

61 *Ibidem*, p.60.

62 THE SCALABRINIAN CONGREGATIONS, *Scalabrini – A Living Voice*, p. 474.

63 *Ibidem*, p. 478.

64 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *John Baptist Scalabrini- An Insight into his Spirituality*, p. 70.

love, all the energies of the intellect, all the physical and moral strength of his body.”<sup>65</sup> Charity is boundless; it overflows his heart and moves him to give his life on behalf of the most needed migrant brothers and sisters.

Inspired in the love of God, the martyr of charity, aware of been a son of the Church, brother to everyone, in communion with the Lord and with the brothers and sisters – strongly felt the duty to assist the needy persons. His letters and brief biography about his life, witness that in a little more than four years of priestly ministry, he consumed his life in total dedication to neighbor, out of love for Jesus identified with the *anawin*: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me in your house” (Mat.25, 35). He lived his priesthood as a minister and servant of the poorest among the migrant brothers and sisters and his orphan and abandoned children. Frequently, he risked his life to “gain everyone for Christ.”

Analyzing the facts of his life, we can deduce that the aim of Fr. Joseph Marchetti was to be always united to Jesus Christ as the branches to the vine, and was united to his superiors and confreres. Therefore, this is one of the reasons for which his life produced abundant fruit for the Kingdom among the migrants.

Based on the frequent correspondence of Fr. Marchetti with blessed Scalabrini, it can be concluded that Fr. Marchetti was in communion with his superior and much desired to hear from him. The majority of the letters that he wrote to the Founder aim to inform him or to communicate to him about his activities, where he was, the work and situation lived. Moreover, to ask advice and ‘practical instruction’ regarding his undertakings. We read in his letter of 31 January 1895, “Hence, I tell you that the whole situation is one filled with difficulties for my work.” In a letter, written a little later, 10 March, Marchetti expresses, “Oh how it grieves me, my venerable Bishop, not to receive any letter from you! Enough Well, one will come I no longer know what to do”.<sup>66</sup> In a letter of 29 March 1895 writing about the orphanage, he affirms, “I should very much like to know your views and feelings about the new institution.”<sup>67</sup>

Fr. Joseph Marchetti also longed for unity among the priests. He knew that community life is an essential dimension of religious life and manifested his profound desire to live it. Faced with the fact that the first missionaries were very scattered and ministering in different parts of Brazil and upon learning that a priest would arrive to strengthen the presence of the Missionaries in that country, he wrote to his Superior, saying, “send a Father very soon. Do not send him here and there, lost in the settlement, but gather us all together, so that we make up a team, providing moral and physical support to one another, because we draw

65 Cf. Z. ORNAGHI, *Pe. José Marchetti – O Mártir da Caridade, Caxias do Sul 1996*, p. 53.

66 Cf. LAURA BONDI, “Some Hitherto Unpublished Writings to help Recall and deepen Appreciation for Father Joseph Marchetti,” *Rome 1995*, p.19.

67 *Ibidem*, p.23.

strength of spirit from our unity, which makes us effective and prevents our efforts from being dissipated.” The young priest firmly believed that united the missionaries could be more effective in their mission. He continues with candor and humility, “So, I beg you, for the love of God send all the priests you have ready here to S. Paulo, pay no heed to other considerations. The profit of the souls of both Missionaries and settlers, and the good of our Congregation all demand that we be united and not scattered. It is vital to proceed united, hierarchically organized. Once we are a real body, a single word or letter will be enough to make the people respect our settlers in their interests”.<sup>68</sup>

The ability to be in solidarity with the suffering persons and compassion were acquired through persevering prayer, as a gift of God which enables us to persevere in communion not merely with the most vulnerable persons, but with everyone. The unshakable faith, hope and charity led Father Marchetti to live an intense apostolic religious life, which, living only twenty-two months in Brazil, gave life, and cause the appearance of extraordinary undertakings.

Fr. Marchetti also surrounded himself with collaborators who help him in the realization of the apostolic activities. Without them, it would have been impossible for him to accomplish so much, within a limited period, as was that of his presence in Brazil. In the letter of 10 March 1895, he wrote to Scalabrini, “and there will be no lack of work, because I shall appoint a coordinator in every settlement to act as forwarding agent for its orders. This system will also guarantee that closer and livelier ties are kept up between settlers and missionaries.”<sup>69</sup> He sought the collaboration of the religious and laity, delegating responsibilities also during his trips to the haciendas.

#### **2.4. Unity and authority in the life of Mother Assunta Marchetti**

Mother Assunta sought to live in constant communion with the Lord and with the members of her religious family. The frequent reception of the Eucharist, nights of adoration to the Eucharistic Jesus and a life of intense prayer nourished her charity. She lived profoundly united to the Lord and this union poured into love, which gave her the energy to dedicate herself totally to the brothers and sisters, without any discrimination, treating them with kindness, tenderness and goodness unreservedly. She manifested God’s love through the love of neighbor, and served the poor as if she was serving the very person of Jesus. In other words, Mother Assunta was everyone’s servant. She drew strength to carry out this fruitful apostolate in constant prayer, in the intimacy with the Lord and meditation of the Word of God.

Mother Assunta lived this profound communion particularly in her religious family. She exhorted her councilors with these words: “Without sacrifice we cannot do any good to

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68 *Ibidem*, pp.47-48.

69 *Ibidem*, p. 21.

our fellow Christians, and we do even less if we do not practice charity among ourselves; but let us hope that this will not be lacking among us. Union and charity: with them everything can be endured, and all sufferings are less burdensome."<sup>70</sup> She believed that it is necessary to harmonize sincerity with charity because charity and unity cannot exist without love for truth. She would say, "When there is no sincerity, it is a real misfortune."

When Mother Assunta visited the families that invited her, she participated of their joys and sufferings, and worried about their spiritual wellbeing. She made charity and harmony the basis on which the difficult, but hopeful work of consolidation of the Congregation would happen. In 1927, she wrote: "In the meantime, let us learn from the past. A sincere and cordial union is necessary, if we want everything to go well." In addition, she continued to exhort the sisters to work for the union of the Institute in order to form a single entity. "Now we must close our ranks together in the sweet bond of charity, and, forgetting the past, set out again or rather begin again a new life."<sup>71</sup>

Her love and self-giving had universal dimensions. She spent her life doing good to everyone. And, she sought to preserve peace, tranquility and moderation at every occasion. She avoided disputes, was gentle and good in her dealing with others.

Mother Assunta "was unknown to any sort of pretense, protagonism, self-affirmation or self-defense. She loved and constantly sought to be anonymous, forgotten, and in the last place. She governed calmly, although feeling unworthy of exercising her office. The exercise of authority was for her a pure service and an invitation to serve."<sup>72</sup> She did everything for the glory of God and Congregation. To serve was her motto. She placed herself at the service of all: sisters, orphans, poor and sick. For her, 'to govern is to serve.' She occupied the first place while remaining the last among her sisters and being the servant of all. Her example of service was extraordinary, because she always served by doing all kinds of work and with total dedication. She was admired for her promptness in everything, always the first in the community activities.<sup>73</sup>

Mother Assunta possessed leadership qualities that permitted her to support the Congregation and develop her apostolate, notwithstanding the crises undergone by the Congregation. These qualities were faith, hope, love, courage, calm and prudence. She was also gifted with a great administrative capacity, broad vision and moderate discipline. In her work, when necessary, she sought the advice of experts. In addition, she was aware of her limitation, but trusted the Lord, abandoning herself unconditionally to His will.

70 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, "A Brave Woman." Trans. Fr. Salvatore DeVita, 1974, p.58-59.

71 Ibidem, p. 55, 58, 59.

72 Cf. L. BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti*, Loyola, São Paulo 2004, p. 238.

73 Cf. M.FRANCESCONI, *A Brave Woman*, p. 47.

One of her principal virtues was the profound love dedicated to the Sisters. She treated everyone with affability, humility, love and comprehension, comforting them with words of wisdom, She shouldered with responsibility the full defense of the Scalabrinian charism and sought to render it more dynamic. In this period, religious houses were established in the interior of the states of São Paulo and in Rio Grande do Sul. She visited the Sisters in their missions, animating and encouraging them in the living of the apostolic religious life.<sup>74</sup>

Although exercising the function of authority in the Congregation, she lived the motto that “the Superior must be the first to obey.”<sup>75</sup> She would also say, “In case anything happens, we have done nothing else but obey.”<sup>76</sup> She was docile and always manifested the need for obedience and submission to the ecclesiastical authorities. She would subscribe herself as “humble servant.” When in 1910, the Sisters were asked to make the Novitiate again, Mother Assunta, the Superior General, submitted herself with docility, edifying the companions and becoming the most humble and most obedient novice. She was firmly convinced that the Congregation was at the service of the Church.<sup>77</sup>

She insisted with the Sisters on the fidelity to the observance of the Constitutions (Rules). With a language proper of her time, she expressed: “What our good superiors ask of us, gently but firmly is the full and faithful observance of our Rules, and the absolute and unconditional obedience to their authority.”<sup>78</sup>

Mother Assunta demonstrated with her life that she believed unreservedly in the word of the Apostle Paul: “There is no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God” (Rm.13:1). The obedient attitude was constant in relation to the constituted authorities, leading us to believe that obedience was one of the principal dimensions of her profound and convinced spirituality. Though gifted with an energetic and determined temperament, she knew how to obey always. Many witnesses confirm that Mother Assunta lived totally abandoned to God and possessed by Him, to the point of always recognizing Him in the mediation that asked her obedience. Hence, she always maintained an unperturbed peace.<sup>79</sup>

In her government, Mother Assunta assiduously sought the human and spiritual growth of the Sisters and offered them the possibility for the formation development. Notwithstanding

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74 Cf. MSCS, *The Spiritual Profile of Mother Assunta Marchetti*, S. Paulo 1986, p.10.

75 Cf. M.FRANCESCONI, *A Brave Woman*, p. 59.

76 Cf. MSCS, *The Spiritual Profile of Mother Assunta*, p.37.

77 Cf. LAURA BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti*, p. 26-29.

78 Cf. MSCS, *The Spiritual Profile of Mother Assunta*, p.36.

79 Cf. LAURA BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti*, p. 227-229.

her heavy work schedule, she found daily time to write to the Superiors of the communities, advising them with transparent clarity, firmness and charity.<sup>80</sup> She trusted in Divine Providence and encouraged the sisters with the words: “have faith and courage in the good Lord. Let us place ourselves in God’s hands and do his Will. He will take care of us.”<sup>81</sup>

In the realization of her function, Mother Assunta counted with the cooperation of her sisters and particularly the Superiors of the communities. This collaboration was important for a good government and to the essential unity for the consolidation of the Institute. She confessed that she accepted to be Superior General because she was sure of the good will and cooperation of her sisters, above all, of the immediate guidance of the Holy See. She said to them: “As I accept, a great hope smiles upon me.” She counted with the loyal prompt and generous cooperation of all the Sisters and, above all, of the Superiors of the communities.<sup>82</sup>

### **3. Authority at the service of life and of the mission**

#### **3.1 The service of authority and the contemporary culture**

Today, cultural, sociological and political traces, as well as anthropological, philosophical and theological perspectives, developed in the various contexts, interweave themselves in the debate on the function of authority.<sup>83</sup> This debate is also present within the Congregation and at different occasions, one notices the need to deepen the reflection on this topic, above all, with reference to the composition and structure of government at the various levels.

A historical reading, before and post Vatican Council II, shows that in making it possible for the Catholic Church to have a better communication with the contemporary social, economic, political and cultural realities, the Council constituted itself as a divider of waters. In Latin American, there is the added reality of the Medellin and Puebla’s conferences with the courageous option for the poor, which also brought changes within Consecrated Life. These factors and others provoked a true re-founding of Consecrated life, transforming its institutional structure. The exercise of authority, intra-community relations, the formation process, and the growth of vocations in popular settings, new kinds of residence, new types of Theology, and the new meaning of the vows were the major areas affected.

In reference to the specific exercise of authority, there was a general turn around. In the past, the superior thought and decided and the religious’ task reduced itself to execute the orders of the authority. The reaction to this absolutization of authority was to emphasize liberty,

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80 C.B. FELIPELLI, *Madre Assunta Marchetti – A Missionária de Ontem e de Hoje*, São Paulo 1987, p. 14.

81 Cf. MSCS, *The Spiritual Profile of Mother Assunta*, p.18-19.

82 Cf. MARIO FRANCESCONI, *A Brave Woman*, p. 55.

83 Cf. G.F. POLI – G. CREA, *Dall’ autorità all’ autorevolezza*, p. 169.

personal responsibility and autonomy. From the excessive authoritarianism, we passed to the misrepresentation of autonomy, which, by denying the requirement of the relationship, denies also the source of happiness and life. The emphasis on freedom and personal autonomy led to another extreme: the relativism of happiness to a promise, the syncretism of values that make up a sort of personal menu for good living to the espousing of values bound to individualism, the search to avoid suffering at any cost, not to sacrifice anything.<sup>84</sup>

In the contemporary Religious life's context, authority's enemy is not disobedience, but individualism: the attitude of the person who centers everything on self and creates a situation of life in which every person is self-sufficient. At the community level, the lack of a positive tension on the journey of faith and of love does so that every lamentation is justified and every gift from God is insufficient: the sense of emptiness and of the insipid reflects itself in the loss for the taste for prayer, in the lack of attention to the spiritual growth, in the indifference to history, in the concentration on one's rights. Unfortunately, for a notable spiritual pathology of modern times, in the name of modernity and of reason, we often change the meaning of the values that we are unable to live.<sup>85</sup> Secularization threatens to destroy the essence of Consecrated Life and its external expression, as well as of making faith irrelevant, in a society that distances itself more and more from the Christian principles.

Undoubtedly, a cultural view that is more democratic, dialogical and respectful of the person's rights, helped religious life purify many attitudes of the past and live the relationship authority-obedience with greater balance. This does not mean the disappearance of the figure of authority, but adopting styles and modalities of government, animation, participation, that even with respect to the specific roles, they raise the awareness that all can and must give a contribution to the choices that affect the community. Such view brought to light the concept of the co-responsibility of all the members and translated itself, concretely, in the creation of structures of participation that allow the active collaboration, the valorization of the personal charisms, the talents, the abilities and the judgment of the members.<sup>86</sup>

The service of authority is an indispensable mediation, which goes beyond a vision that limits the function of good organization of programs and administration of entities. The right recognition of authority does not oppose itself to the principle of co-responsibility, according to which all the members are equally called to the spiritual animation of their family, because all received the Spirit. In its exercise, authority has the mission to animate,

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84 Cf. S. RECHI, "Il servizio dell'autorità religiosa e la cultura contemporanea," in *Consacrazione e Servizio* 5(2006), p. 30-36; M. TENACE, *Custodi della sapienza*, p. 13.

85 M. TENACE, *Custodi della sapienza*, p. 75-76.107114; 13. S. RECHI, "Il servizio dell'autorità religiosa e la cultura contemporanea," p.31.

86 Cf. S. RECHI, "Il servizio dell'autorità religiosa e la cultura contemporanea," p. 31.

to awaken the energies from within, and facilitate community dynamism in view of giving shape to the common project. The service of authority will be efficient when it is able to involve all the members in the important decisions, so that everyone may participate in the discernment of the plan of God for the community.<sup>87</sup>

Authority is such when it allows for the irradiation of the charisma, thanks to the members' life, and fructifies the personal talents in view of the mission. It becomes a precious service when it does not make obedience unrefined, lowering it to forms of military submission and infantile docility or worse, of personal irresponsibility. It enriches the individuals when it does not concentrate, nor absorbs and neither intervenes in everything. True obedience does not impede the responsibility and choices. It does not prevent, but favors the human growth and freedom of the individuals. Only the free choice renders the growth, convictions and witness authentic and true. Every form of coercion can oblige to change behaviors, but does not shape peoples' hearts.<sup>88</sup>

The religious authority must motivate the people and the community to grow in evangelical maturity. The lack of formation and education in the faith, of an authentic vision of religious life, of mature people to be responsible for the communities and that follow spiritual life; all these 'poverties' make it difficult to delineate a possible physiognomy of government in religious life, today.<sup>89</sup>

### 3.2. Priorities in the service of authority<sup>90</sup>

Since the 90's, important Church documents treated the topic of authority in CL. Such documents show aspects that characterize the function of authority. The most recent one: "*The Service of Authority and Obedience*," somehow underlines what could be defined the spiritual-pastoral function of authority. Authority, in fact, is called to assure along with prayer and all the other spaces necessary for the spiritual life also everything that builds fraternal life in community. In particular, it should know how to encourage the persons in the difficult moments, keep love for the Church and for the Charism alive, guarantee the ongoing formation, listen and dialogue with much availability.

The mentioned document and others point out some priorities for those who exercise the service of authority in Consecrated Life:

a) *In consecrated life authority is first of all a spiritual authority.* In history, the first superiors were the spiritual fathers, those who gave rise to Christian life.<sup>91</sup> Authority is at the service of the spiritual

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87 *Ibidem*, p. 31-34.

88 *Ibidem*, p. 33-34.

89 *Ibidem*, p. 33-34; M. TENACE, *Custodi della sapienza*, p.14-15.

90 The priorities which are listed here were taken from the Document "*The Service of Authority and Obedience*," n.13.

91 M. TENACE, *Custodi della sapienza*, p. 139.

progress of the person and of the edification of fraternal life in the community, facilitating and supporting a total dedication to the 'service of God,' in the religious. The principal task of the superior is the spiritual, community and the apostolic animation of her community.<sup>92</sup>

An authority is 'spiritual' when it places itself at the service of what the Spirit wants to realize through the gifts that He distributes to every member of the community, in the charismatic project of the Institute.<sup>93</sup> The service of authority demands a persevering presence, able to enliven and to recall the reason to be of consecrated life, to help the persons to correspond with ever-renewed fidelity to the call of the Spirit. This entire movement of collaboration and of common syntony must converge to the decisions that need to be taken, in view of the objectives that the community proposes itself.<sup>94</sup>

b) *Persons in authority are called to guarantee to the community the time for and the quality of prayer, looking after the community's daily faithfulness to prayer, in the awareness that the community approaches God with small but constant steps, everyday and by everyone's effort. In addition, that consecrated persons can be useful to one another to the extent that they are united to God. Furthermore, persons in authority are called to take care that, beginning with themselves, daily contact with the Word does not disappear, since "it has the power to edify"(At.20:32) individual persons and the community and to indicate ways for the mission. Mindful of the command of the Lord, "Do this in memory of me" (Lk. 22:19), persons in authority will assure that the holy mystery of the Body and of the Blood of Christ is celebrated and venerated as "the source and summit of communion with God and among the Sisters."*<sup>95</sup>

c) *Persons in authority are called to promote the dignity of the person, paying attention to each member of the community and to her growth, giving to each one the appropriate appreciation and positive consideration, nurturing sincere affection towards all and keeping reserved all that is said in confidence. Authority must respect the person; help her grow in maturity and responsibility, giving priority to everyone's responsible attitude, although it may encounter risks. It is her task to animate the person to decide and act, without suffocating and neutralizing initiative and creativity.*<sup>96</sup>

In these last few years, a renewed concept of anthropology has made the importance of the relational dimension of the human person much more evident. Such a conception finds ample confirmation in the image of the human person that emerges from the Scriptures.

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92 Cf. Can. 618.619; *Mutuae Relationis (MR)*, n. 13; *VFC*, n. 49.51 a.

93 Cf. *SAO*, n.13.

94 Cf. *G.FPOLI – G CREA, Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza*, p. 360; *VC*, n. 70.

95 Cf. *SAO*, n.13.

96 Cf. *SAO*, n. 13; *M.G. GUERRERO, "Autorità,"* p. 116.

Undoubtedly, it has also influenced in the fear of conceiving the relations within the religious community, making it more attentive to the value of openness to someone other than oneself, to the fruitfulness of the relation with the diversity as well as enrichment that comes from it, for all and for each one.<sup>97</sup>

Such a relational anthropology has also exercised an influence, at least indirectly as we have already recalled, on the spirituality of communion, and has contributed to the renewal of the concept of mission understood as a shared commitment will all the members of the People of God, in a spirit of collaboration and co-responsibility. Holiness and mission pass through the community because it is ever more a community experience: in the reciprocal welcoming; in the sharing of gifts; in the common search for the will of the Lord; in the willingness of each other to bear one another's burdens.<sup>98</sup>

In today's cultural atmosphere, community holiness is a convincing witness, perhaps even more than that of the individual: it shows the perennial value of unity, a gift left by the Lord Jesus. This becomes particularly evident in international and intercultural communities that demand high levels of welcoming and dialogue and are, at the same time, witnesses of the universality of the Christian message, space of reciprocal welcoming, where it is possible to contemplate diversity as a gift of God.<sup>99</sup>

d) *Persons in authority are called to inspire courage and hope in the midst of difficulties.* As Paul and Barnabas encouraged their disciples by teaching that, "we must undergo many trails if we are to enter into the reign of God" (Acts 14:22), likewise persons in authority must help to accept the present difficulties. This includes reminding that they are part of the sufferings that lead to the Reign of God, giving courage and hope in times of difficulty; and point to new horizons for mission.<sup>100</sup>

Leaders of the community are like the Good Shepherd who gives his life for the sheep, because even in the critical moments they do not retreat, but are present, participating of the concerns and difficulties of the people entrusted to their care; and like the Good Samaritan they will be ready to care for any possible wounds. Furthermore, leaders humbly recognize their own limits and need for help from others, knowing how to turn their own failures and defeats into rich learning experiences.<sup>101</sup>

e) *Persons in authority are called to keep the charism of their own religious family alive.* The exercise of authority also includes putting oneself at the service of the charism of the institute to which

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97 Cf. SAO, n. 19.

98 *Idem*, n. 19.

99 Cf. SAC, n. 29; VC, n.54, SAO n.19.

100 Cf. G.F. POLI – G. CREA, *Dall' autorità all' autorevolezza*, p. 377, SAO, n. 13.20; VFC, n.50

101 Cf. SAO n.13.

one belongs, safeguarding it carefully and making it real in the local community and in the province or the entire institute, according to the plans and orientations offered, in particular by General Chapters (or analogous meetings). What is required of persons in authority is an adequate knowledge of the charism of the institute, making it part of themselves, in order it later in relation to community life and in relation to its place in ecclesial and social contexts.<sup>102</sup>

A deepened understanding of the charism leads to a clearer vision of one's own identity. The document *Mutuae Relationes* affirms, "Superiors have a grave duty, their foremost responsibility in fact, to assure the fidelity of the members to the foundational charism.<sup>103</sup> There is a need for a creative fidelity to the foundational charism and to the subsequent spiritual heritage of the Institute, as response to the signs of the times that emerge in today's world.<sup>104</sup>

"Reference to the institute's founder and to the charism lived by him or her and then communicated, kept and developed throughout the life of the institute, thus appears as an essential element for the unity of the community. To live in community is to live the will of God together, in accordance with the orientation of the charismatic gift received by the founder from God and transmitted to his or her disciples and followers."<sup>105</sup> The unification and unity of the institutional body is convergence of possibilities, integration of personal charisms and growth in the sense of belonging. This task demands forms of government and structures of authority that are in harmony with the congregational charism and enables the community to fulfill its mission.

f) *Persons in authority are called to keep alive the "sentire cum Ecclesia."* Persons in authority have the task of helping to keep alive the sense of faith and of ecclesial communion, a positive atmosphere of participation, capable of thrusting the community towards new horizons of the mission in the Church and in the world. The "sentire cum Ecclesia" that shines in founders and foundresses implies an authentic spirituality of communion that is "an effective and affective relationship with the Bishops, primarily with the Pope. The task of following the Lord cannot be taken by solitary navigators but is accomplished in the boat of Peter; which survives the storms. Persons in authority should remember, "Our obedience is a believing with the Church, a serving with her.<sup>106</sup>

g) *Persons in authority are called to accompany the journey of ongoing formation.* A task always to be considered most important today on the part of persons in authority is that of

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102 *Idem*, n.13.

103 *Cf. MR*, n.14.

104 *Cf. M. TENACE, Custodi della sapienza*, p. 155-156.

105 *FLC*, n.45.

106 *Cf. SAO*, n.13.

accompanying the persons for whom they are called to care throughout their lives. This they do not only by offering help in resolving possible problems or in managing possible crises but also in paying attention to the normal growth of each one in every phase and season of life. This in order to guarantee that “youthfulness of spirit which lasts through time” and that makes the consecrated person ever more conformed to the “sentiments which were in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5).

Therefore, it will be the responsibility of persons in authority to keep a high level of openness to being formed as well as the ability to learn from life. In particular, this is important to do regarding the freedom of letting oneself be formed by others and for each one to feel a responsibility for the growth of others. Both will be fostered by making use of means of growth in community passed on by tradition and that are today especially recommended by those who have solid experience in the field of spiritual formation: sharing the Word, personal and community plans, communitarian discernment, review of one’s life and fraternal correction.<sup>107</sup>

h) *Persons in authority are capable of making final decisions and assuring their implementation.* In an atmosphere strongly affected by individualism, it is not an easy thing to foster recognition and acceptance of the role which authority plays for the benefit of all. The person who exercises authority, by dialogue, should know how to involve the sisters in the decision-making process. It should still be remembered that *the final word belongs to authority* and, consequently, that authority has the right to see that decisions taken are respected. Moreover, it will be a word matured in a dialogue of fraternal communion, in an atmosphere of prayerful reflection, “in accord with science and conscience.” Those who exercise authority *cannot renounce their obligation as those primarily responsible* for the community, as guide of her sisters in the spiritual and apostolic life.<sup>108</sup>

The daily journey of fraternal life in community demands a participation that consents the exercise of dialogue and discernment. Where it is practiced with faith and seriousness, it can provide superiors with optimal conditions for making necessary decisions in the best interests of fraternal life and mission. When a decision has been made in accordance with the procedures established by proper law, superiors need perseverance and strength to ensure that what has been decided does not remain mere words on paper.<sup>109</sup>

Persons in authority must assure the precious balance between individual and community, between community and mission, between life *ad intra* and life *ad extra*. Along with the mercy and forgiveness for the sister who might have erred, the sense of justice when the

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107 *Ibidem*, n.13.

108 Cf. VC, n.43; G.F.POLI – G. CREA, *Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza*, p. 218.360.

109 Cf. G.F.POLI – G.CREA, *Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza*, p.360; FLC, n. 50.

wrongdoing harms others cannot be lacking. Persons in authority must understand that the ideal is not that of having a community without conflicts but instead a community that is willing to confront its own tensions in order to resolve them positively, looking for solutions that ignore none of the values that must be taken into account.<sup>110</sup> The religious community is called to be a prophetic sign of the possibility of bringing about fraternity and solidarity in Christ. To live in community is to live the will of God.<sup>111</sup>

### 3.3 The principle of subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity is invoked as criterion used in the distribution of functions among persons. The person in authority that has the function must take the final decision, according to proper law<sup>112</sup>

In Consecrated Life, the application of the principle of subsidiarity is necessary for the exercise of authority at any level of government. This demands the availability of the constituted authority to trust in the sister, or, to provide the sisters with the space to act, motivating and encouraging everyone to make an effort to nourish one's part of responsibility within the global sphere of the mission. With reference to the community, it is likely to become agent of its own development.

Fraternal life in community postulates a participation of all the members of the community. In this manner, each person assesses her life in the face of God's project. The obedience of the religious, as that of the superior, has the same objective: the search and the fulfillment of the same truth. In this way, obedience and authority become the encounter of two freedoms, and in itself, the encounter of two responsibilities. The person is truly free when it is love that moves her obedience and becomes able to believe in her ability to think, to choose, to decide and to discern.<sup>113</sup> Co-responsibility and participation are also exercised even in various types of councils at various levels, places that find themselves united in full communion.<sup>114</sup>

The task of authority will be to share information and responsibilities, committing itself to respect each person in her just autonomy. This implies in a patient work of coordination and, on the part of the consecrated person, a sincere availability to collaborate. It is necessary that every person

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110 Cf. SAO, 25b.

111 Cf. FLC, n.45; VC, n.52, 92-93.

112 *Applied to the social field, this principle means that any action must be developed at the level nearer to the person - in the street, in the neighborhood, in the municipality, in the city. That is, persons or groups take recourse in the next higher level only when there are no conditions to deal adequately with the problem in their area of activity. In broad terms, it means the investment of authority at the lowest possible level of an institutional hierarchy.*

113 Cf. M. TENACE, *Custodi della sapienza*, p. 58.68.

114 Cf. PdC, n.14.

be integrated in the group's mission and that everyone be involved based on their objective possibilities. Persons who exercise authority must indicate new horizons for the mission and all the members need to make an effort to maintain the balance among the various aspects of community life: prayer and work, apostolate and formation, commitment and rest.<sup>115</sup>

A serious ongoing formation program, built into a radical reconsideration of the problem of formation in Institutes of Consecrated Life, will help light the way to an authentic path of renewal: renewal in fact "depends primarily upon the formation of their members."<sup>116</sup>

### 3.4 Authority and interpersonal dynamics in Consecrated Life

In any civil or church institution, power is involved in a form of governance, according to the degree of maturity of the persons and of the interpersonal and organizational relations. There are those who affirm that there are three models of relations of power in religious life. In the first predominates the power of the institution, where authority in exercise is the guardian of the traditions; of the observance of the norms, laws and statutes, promoting in this manner certain uniformity and centralization of the decisions. In the second model, the power is centered in the community that creates its systems of administration, promotes forms of collaboration, co-responsibility, participation and communion. A third model is centered on the individual, where the individual characteristics of each member predominate. In this model there is the great danger that the personal charisms become expressions of power 'in a separate world' that each member builds, or render CL fragile and cause it to loose it. There are also those people who propose a new model, characterized by "logic of reciprocity, independence, co-responsibility, collegiality and of subsidiarity (.).in view of the living and realization of life's evangelical project."<sup>117</sup>

This new model of government must be able to render the members' creativity and responsibility possible, in the growth of the spiritual life and in the effective apostolic commitment and, for us Scalabrinians, in the mission with the migrants. Every sister is called to grow in her interior freedom, in responsibility, in creativity and in the realization of Jesus' the mission in the world: "I came so that all may have life and have it in abundance" (Jn. 10:10).<sup>118</sup>

In the interpersonal relationships, there are open and enclosed intentions constantly implicated, in the sense of influencing the other's decisions and conduct. The intentions can manifest themselves in very subtle ways, as if in a recrudescence of the conflict or in

115 Cf. M. TENACE, *Custodi della sapienza*, p. 162.

116 Cf. PdC, n. 14.

117 Cf. D.P. BALDISSERA, "O poder na Vida Religiosa Consagrada," in AA.Vv., *Análise institucional na Vida Religiosa Consagrada, Conferência dos Religiosos do Brasil, 2005*, p. 146-147.

118 Cf. S. SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, Paulist Press, New York 1986, p.17.

a competitiveness in the efforts to regulate the behavior of the other person. Power in interpersonal relationships can be emotionally positive or negative and, politically can go from the *laissez faire*, going through democracy, even to the autocracy and collegiality. Power can be shared equally or in an unequal form. The problem is not the power, but who exercises it, how it is exercised and for which purpose.<sup>119</sup>

The building of new communities requires a profound renewal of the manner of governing the community, leading it to self-transcendence with a firm hand. In this, two perspectives are evident: the attention to the person responsible for the community and the indication of operative means and instruments to fulfill this service efficiently. It is an authority capable of interpreting the common vision shared in the community, animating and encouraging to carry out and to put into effect the decisions made, in the context of the specific mission of one's Congregation.<sup>120</sup>

To be efficient, a person who exercises power in the community must have high consideration for the relationship with the members of the group, because these contribute significantly towards the achievement of the objectives. It is important to recognize the value of every single proposal, but at the same time also motivate so that everyone may know how to relate their expectations with the purpose that the entire group established for itself and for which it works.<sup>121</sup> The way she perceives the members of the community, the ability to listen to their needs, and the precision with which she affirms her authority, are all elements that influence those who exercise authority as well as those who participate with their own resources towards the common growth of the group.<sup>122</sup> The psycho-sociological dynamics of the individuals, of groups and of communitarian organizations, support an authentic and common path for witness to faith and to the utopia around collective projects.

It is also good to remember that it is not enough to convince the members of a community to do certain things. The challenge of the leader is in knowing how to involve the persons to work for the objective of common life, which is the new life in Jesus Christ. This includes every aspect of life, the work, the friendship, the choices of values and the mission and fuses itself with God's will, as a choice of aggregation and realization.<sup>123</sup>

Whoever exercises power must also learn to lead and overcome the temptation to omnipotence, to self-sufficiency, to pride, to vanity, to discouragement and to the disenchantment. These

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119 Cf. D.P. BALDISSERA, "O poder na Vida Religiosa Consagrada," p. 148-149.

120 Cf. G. CREA, "Autorità e dinamiche interpersonali nella vita consacrata," in *Consacrazione e Servizio* 10 (2003), p. 9.12.

121 *Ibidem*, p. 265.

122 Cf. G. CREA, "Autorità e dinamiche interpersonali nella vita consacrata," p. 24-25.

123 *Ibidem*, p. 24-35; G.F. POLI – G. CREA, *Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza*, p.146.

temptations also influence everyone, though in a different degree, independently of whether or not they carry out functions of power. There is also the reverse of these temptations: the sentiments of impotency, the childish dependence on authority, fear, the omission and the consensus with the iniquity, in order not to loose the acquired comfortable place. We are united in good and in bad times, in the promotion of life and in its denial.<sup>124</sup>

### 3.5 The capacity for leadership

The concepts of leader and leadership have an application ever broader in our society, not only in administration, management, religious life, but also in every aspect of our daily life.<sup>125</sup> There is talk of leadership in the most diverse groups and organizations. Very frequently, it is said that such a person has the gift for *leadership*. A leader is the one who knows how to guide a group of persons, who does not have any doubts about the objectives and leads the group to achieve them. Many persons can be leaders within their areas of competency. Even a child who establishes the rules of the game is considered a leader. Therefore, leader is not a concept bound to a task or a position that the person occupies, but it is a concept bound to what one does and, above all, how we do it. Hence, the term leader is not used merely in administration, in managing companies, but also in the area of religious life. Then, it is deduced, that every person can be a leader in certain situations of one's life, but not everyone possess those gifts that commonly define a leadership.<sup>126</sup>

Nowadays, there is much talk about management in the various fields of activities. It can be affirmed, "Management is the art and ability to lead people and coordinate processes, aiming at carrying out the mission of an organization."<sup>127</sup> In this sense, every institution needs to develop the minimum of management principles, aiming at the initial and ongoing formation of its members, the internal organization, and the realization of projects with its clientele. Management is not synonymous of corporation or business, but it means to organize in the best way possible in order to achieve the desired ends, at the different levels. This is the talk about corporate management, missionary management, management of social initiatives, management of volunteers, management of service giving and others.<sup>128</sup>

#### *Characteristics of a person who has leadership:*

Ability for leadership is necessary for all the members of the communities, in the responsibilities and tasks intrinsic to their mission. For everyone, especially for those who

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124 Cf. A. MURAD, *Gestão e Espiritualidade*, p.192-196.210-211.

125 To lead means to guide, to go ahead, to direct.

126 The dictionary defines leadership as orientation, command, guide.

127 A. MURAD, *Gestão e Espiritualidade*, Paulinas, São Paulo 2007, p. 91.

128 *Ibidem*, p. 91-92.

exercise the service of authority, at the diverse areas of the Congregation, some indispensable characteristics of the art of leading,<sup>129</sup> such as:

*Self-awareness of the leader:* knowledge of her own capacities, intelligence, gifts to achieve the foreseen objectives and to be able to transmit her vision to her group.

*Communication:* a person needs to have the capacity to communicate effectively, express the ideas clearly, and make one understood by the others. Communication will be facilitated if the speaker has credibility before the group, objectivity and knowledge.<sup>130</sup>

*Listening:* in the area of communication, listening strengthens the leader. The strong bosses are attentive listeners and effective listening encourages the interpersonal relationships. Listening means to make room within oneself, know how to accept not only one's certainties, one's style, one's history or character, but also the dimension of the value that exists in the other. It means to be able to offer oneself to the others with attitudes of transparency, appreciation of the internal experiences and a consequent expression of authentic relationships. Listening entails also to know how to open oneself to the diverse phenomena between oneself and the members of the group, with a congruent behavior between one's way of seen and experiencing the world, and the awareness of the reality of the other with whom one interacts. It is necessary to know how to listen profoundly, to go beyond what one is hearing. In reality, the words are merely an instrument for convey sentiments, emotions, experiences and information.<sup>131</sup>

*Sharing:* In this logic, the leadership of the servant inverts the organizational pyramid. From a model of command/control, it passes to the servant/nourishment. God's grace develops the gifts for a true collaboration, as Jethro suggests to Moses. Jethro invites Moses to enter into this perspective and apply the principle of *subsidiarity*, above all, in view of a healthy discernment, placing objectives and strategies in harmony with God's plan and with the aim of acting justly.<sup>132</sup>

*Shepherding:* the leader shepherd is invited to attend to the flock not by obligation, but willingly, without interest for the profit or for material advantages. A leader, by inspiring himself in the Good Shepherd, avoids the temporary advantages, does not behave as the owner of the flock, but fights every sort of power and dedicates himself totally to the work of the Lord, in accord with what is written in Phil.2:6-11.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, Jesus is the model *par excellence* in seeking the lost sheep.

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129 Cf. G.FPOLI -G.CREA, *Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza*, p. 172.

130 *Ibidem*, p.173.

131 *Ibidem*, p. 52. 378.379.

132 *Ibidem*, p. 174-175.

133 *Ibidem*, p. 175.

*Know the members of the group:* it is essential that the person who exercises authority knows the members of one's group, their problems, tasks and needs. In addition, she needs to have administrative abilities to motivate the persons to deal with the fundamental problems within consecrated life, which is not so much how it operates but how it is lived.<sup>134</sup> Besides, she needs to be in a constant listening attitude and dialogue with the individuals, in permanent listening to the Word of God and discover the signs of the Spirit.

*Promoting:* in her creative function, the leader has the task to comprehend people, understand what they feel and promote the creativity of the members of the group. Leaders must accept the various expressions of ideas, opinions and feelings of the members, which does not mean to approve everything, but to consider others' ideas as valid for discussion.<sup>135</sup>

*Administering:* the leader is also called to administer, or collaborate with the person who has this responsibility. In religious life, it is rare to find the topic of economy or money in official documents. It seems to be a dull topic without theological and spiritual consistency. But this is a topic that a leader or a director needs to keep in mind, principally when facing requests for approval of a community's accounts, projected expenses and budgets.<sup>136</sup>

*Organize - re-organize the future:* besides the role of servant, shepherd and administrator of the material goods, a leader is called to facilitate the group or community's renewal, to find ways to inspire the members and develop a vision in view of a better future, which demands organization or reorganization of the present. For this, is necessary to have the group's vision, enter in discussion and examine the signs of dissatisfaction that emerge from it. She also needs to have time to meditate, reflect, and be in solitude, as Jesus did. The organization without administration fails, without spirituality it empties itself. The articulation of administration allows for a new synthesis between spirituality and efficiency, values and results.<sup>137</sup>

The community that repeats itself as more or less tired, must transform itself in a community in transformation, involves itself in the mission, objectives, relationships and in the vitality. Obviously, it needs to clarify the ideas, have a plan/project, specify the objectives, and choose the strategies. Apathy and indifference cause the community to fall asleep and at times even kill it. Moreover, the frozen certainties lead to a slow death.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 176.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 177.

<sup>136</sup> *Idem*, p. 177.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. A. MURAD, *Gestão e Espiritualidade*, p. 245 - 246.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. G.F. POLI - G. CREA, *Dall' autorità all' autorevolezza*, p. 181-182.

*Use the time well:* fundamental for the leader is to know how spend the first hours of the day before the Lord and plan the daily activities, in order to better exercise the tasks of government. There are important and urgent things. It is necessary that she knows what is more important and essential.<sup>139</sup>

*Form a cohesive group:* before beginning a task, the leader needs to structure her group. Jesus chooses simple men, not only for what they were, but also for what they would be able to become under his leadership. There were moments in which Jesus needed to remain alone with his disciples in order to deepen his teaching (Mat.5, 1-12). Moreover, he did not exclude educated persons, as for example, Paul.<sup>140</sup>

Responsibilities are not free from fatigues. Every authority needs to find time to empower the service of director and overcome the temptation to yield to tiredness. Today the complexity of the community and of the groups require more autonomous persons, capable of taking initiatives, capable of imagination, committed to overcome or assimilate their limitations. No superior is ineffable and none of them always errs.<sup>141</sup> Knowing how to take advantage of the obstacles as apprenticeship for a better management and cohesion of the group is a determining capacity of a leader.<sup>142</sup>

The leader will be helpful to our communities if she is able to risk, trust in the young, accept the precariousness and vulnerability, maintaining our communities' doors and windows opened so that the Spirit may enter because we cannot tell where he comes from or where he goes (Jn.3:8).<sup>143</sup> Moreover, she cannot be lacking of a strategic orientation, exercising on the present a transforming strength that promotes a profound directional sense in the community, in the Congregation; strength capable of giving a vital impulse to the community and seek strategies to continue the journey. A strategic leader has the ability to look in perspective at a future for a long period of time; transform the strategies into action; determine and propose effective points of intervention in the group and organization and develop the capacity of collaboration in the members.<sup>144</sup>

### **3.6 Challenges for the authority/government in view of the mission**

In Consecrated Life, there is always the danger of reducing the mission to a profession to be exercised in view of one's fulfillment, thereby being managed more or less for one's interests.

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 183.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 183-184.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 42-45.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 127-130.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. M.TENACE, *Custodi della sapienza*, p.127.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. G.F.POLI – G. CREA, *Dall'autorità all'autorevolezza*, p.402-410.

One is in mission when, far from seeking one's affirmation, one is, first of all, led by the desire to accomplish the will of God.<sup>145</sup>

Authority/government has an important task in carrying out the mission, faithful to the charism proper to each Institute. In the past, the risk could have come from persons in authority being directed mainly towards managing the works, with the danger of not taking care of persons. Today, the risk can come rather from the excessive fear of hurting others' feelings or from a fragmentation of competencies and responsibilities that weakens the unified movement towards the common objective.<sup>146</sup>

Multiple are the challenges that the present time places on people in authority/government in the task of keeping the charism alive and coordinating the energies for the mission. We list some tasks:

*a) To help the group have a unison vision*

Authority needs to discover constantly ways to balance the purpose of the Institute with the potentialities of each member. It needs to propose an ideal vision of the journey, which facilitates collaboration and promotes an atmosphere of reciprocal confidence.

*b) To notice what happens in the group*

It is necessary to become aware of the multiple alternatives present in the group, in order that its interventions respect others' experiences. Every leader must reason and reflect, and needs the maximum of information.<sup>147</sup>

*c) To encourage the taking up of responsibilities and respect them when taken.*

It is necessary that persons in authority convey to their collaborators Christian strength and the courage to improve, to rediscover their own talents and resources, face difficulties and overcome fears. It is important that the people know in what they are involved, know to what they consent. On the contrary, eventually there will be an unconscious rejection of the decision.<sup>148</sup> In some situations, it is necessary to be firm, maintain the decision and face opposition, in others, it is necessary to be flexible.

*d) To invite the members to confront diversity in a spirit of communion*

Rapid cultural changes in progress give rise to tensions within the community. There are a growing number of communities that are made up of persons who come from different

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<sup>145</sup> Cf. SAO, n. 23-24.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibidem*, n.25.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. G.F. POLI –G. CREA, *Dall' autorità all'autorevolezza*, p. 420-421.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. SAO, n.25.

ethnic groups or cultures, thereby making generational differences more evident. We need to understand that the ideal is not that of having a community without conflicts but rather a community that is willing to confront its own tensions in order to resolve them positively.<sup>149</sup>

*e) To maintain the balance between the various dimensions of consecrated life*

Persons in authority must assure that the greatest possible attention is paid to the balance between time dedicated to prayer and time dedicated to work, between individual and community, between commitments and rest, between attention to common life and attention to the world and the Church, between personal formation and community formation. One of the most delicate balances is that between community and mission. It is opportune that some inviolable rules that guarantee both a spirit of sisterhood in the apostolic community and an apostolic sensitivity in community life be respected.<sup>150</sup>

*f) To have a merciful heart*

Persons in authority are called to develop a pedagogy of forgiveness and mercy, that is to be instruments of the love of God that welcomes, corrects and always gives another chance to the sister who makes a mistake and falls into sin. The perspective of mercy affirms that God is able to draw out, even from sinful situations, a way that leads towards the good. The entire community is convoked to learn this merciful style.<sup>151</sup>

*g) To have a sense of justice*

There can be behaviors in members that seriously harm their neighbor and that imply a responsibility vis-à-vis people outside the community. If it is necessary to have understanding for the wrongdoing of the individual, it is also necessary to have a rigorous sense of responsibility and charity towards those who are eventually damaged by the incorrect behavior of some member of the community.<sup>152</sup>

*h) To promote collaboration with the laity*

In order to reach the objective of mutual collaboration between religious and laity, "it is necessary to have religious communities with a clear charismatic identity, with an intense spirituality and missionary enthusiasm, capable of communicating the same spirit and the same evangelizing thrust to the laity. The sharing of the charism of their institutes is an invitation to discover new ways of making the same charism and mission operative. In this way, the religious community becomes a center radiating outwardly a spiritual force, a center of animation, of fraternity

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149 *Ibidem*, n.25.

150 *Idem*.

151 *Idem*.

152 *Idem*.

creating fraternity, and of communion and ecclesial collaboration.<sup>153</sup> The great challenge is to work with the laity and learn from them who have different perspectives and needs.

*i) To motivate an honest evaluation of the community*

It is authority's task to be able to see the tendencies of the community, its critical points of unity, and the degree of satisfaction of community life. It is necessary that it sets the atmosphere, choices of processes that permit the members to expose their ideas, what they think, seek, and how they live. The person in authority always has the function of motivating the group to achieve its objectives, through a method agreed upon in common, and anticipating of phases of evaluation. The attentive awareness, guided by the Holy Spirit, is able to perceive up to what point it can negotiate, and which means are coherent with the end that it wishes to reach.<sup>154</sup>

Jesus response still echoes today as challenge and appeal for the person who exercises power: "Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mk10: 43). When this service becomes difficult, it is good to remember it as an act of love to Jesus and to the brothers and sisters. It is important to listen to the words of the apostle St. Paul: "Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship; keep praying regularly; share with the brothers and sisters who are in need" (Rm. 12:12-13).

May Mary, the humble Servant of the Lord, strengthen us in the search for God's will and in the generous giving of our life to the service of the migrants.

"O sweet and holy Virgin Mary with Your believing and perplexed obedience, at the announcement of the angel You gave us Christ. At Cana with your attentive Heart You showed us how to act responsibly: You did not wait passively for the action of Your Son but You anticipated it, making Him aware of the need and with discreet authority taking the initiative to send the servants to Him.

At the foot of the cross, obedience made You the mother of the Church and of believers while in the Upper Room every disciple recognized in you the gentle authority of love and service.

Help us to understand that every true authority in the Church and consecrated life has its foundation in being docile to the will of God and help each one of us become in fact, authority for others with our own life lived in obedience to God.

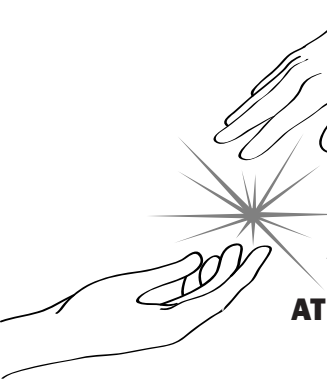
O merciful and compassionate Mother, 'You who did the will of the Father, ever ready in obedience', make our lives attentive to the Word, faithful in the following of Jesus, the Lord and Servant, in the light and with the strength of the Holy Spirit, joyful in fraternal communion, generous in mission, prompt in our service to the poor, looking forward to the day in which obedience in faith will flow into the feast of Love without end."<sup>155</sup>



153 *Ibidem*, n.25; FLC, n.70.

154 Cf. A.MURAD, "Gestão e Espiritualidade", p. 208.

155 SAO, n. 31.



# ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMY

## AT THE SERVICE OF THE CONGREGATIONAL MISSION

“Charge them, to be rich in good works and generous, sharing what they have” (1Tim 6, 18).

The entire Plan of God revealed in the Bible since creation, which culminated in the rising of the Church, has a clear purpose: the communion of the person with his Creator, with his fellow human beings and with the whole creation.

In speaking of economy and administration, obviously one speaks of goods.<sup>1</sup> In fact, economy reveals its importance and full meaning in a broad context, in relation to the purpose that it must serve, the service of the person. A character that is inherent and intrinsic to the temporary goods is the instrumental one, of service to the person.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the temporal goods, Sacred Scripture, as far as it reveals the mystery of God, also reveals man’s mystery and the meaning of the world that surrounds him, which includes the temporal goods. Particularly, voluntary poverty for the Kingdom of Heaven will find meaning in the mystery of the poverty of Jesus Christ who completely reveals himself in his redemptive death.

In the Canon Law language, ‘temporal’ goods are not a mere synonym of ‘material’ goods. While living his earthly existence, man does not only need material goods, but also needs spiritual goods: his life doesn’t fulfill itself in its biological reality; man who lives in time is body and spirit, therefore, he needs both material and spiritual goods. Both are temporal goods and concern themselves with time and its laws. By opposition, they point onward to the eternal goods, to transcendence. This leads us to understand that the meaning of the

1 *Economy is the social science that studies the production, distribution and consumption of goods, and services. The term economy comes from the Greek oikos (house) and nomos (custom or law). It means law, or administration of the oikos, the house. In other words, the economy tries to respond to three basic questions of any economic organization: what, how and for whom. Administration is the composite of norms and functions whose objective is to discipline the elements of production and submit productivity to a control of quality to achieve the efficient desired result, which provides the necessary resources to meet the diverse needs. Simplifying it, administration occupies itself with maximizing the production of goods and services, according to the desired model.*

2 *The Social Doctrine of the Church on economy, from which the biblical, theological and doctrinal elements found in the text were taken, are found in the PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO DELLA GIUSTIZIA E DELLA PACE, Compendio della Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa, Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2004, n. 323-335.*

temporal goods and the appreciation that people have for them, greatly depend of their anthropological view and outlook on life.

In diverse historical situations, the doctrine on the temporal goods has acquired new connotations. The magisterium of the Church, the teaching of the first fathers and the life of its saints gave their valid contribution to such updating.<sup>3</sup>

## **1- Biblical, theological and doctrinal elements**

### **1.1 The goods in the Old Testament**

Beginning from the first pages of the Bible, the temporal goods are intimately bound to the life of the person. Therefore, they are signs of his/her greatness and weakness: God gave these to the person for his/her service, so that he/she may fulfill himself/herself in fidelity to God and in communion with the brothers/sisters. The creation of the world, with all its goods, is in view of the human being. In accordance with the sacred author, everything that God made is good and for the service of the person. She is at the summit of creation, but finds her meaning in the worship to God. She was created in his image and likeness and hence is above all created things. However, with sin, the human being breaks the relationship with God and the consequences are felt on the whole creation in relation to the goods. Thus, the person who no longer recognizes her Creator is a person who no longer has a correct relationship with creation and with the brothers and sisters.<sup>4</sup>

In the Old Testament, there is a double position in face of the material goods and richness. First, goods are seen with appreciation, necessary for life. Abundance, but not richness and luxury, is regarded as God's blessing. The patriarchs, holy and just men, are presented as rich personages (Gn 13, 2,6; 26,12-14); the messianic times are times of abundance of temporal goods (Is 9,6; 11:1-5; Ps 72, 1-3); the prophets see the religious renewal as a renewal also of the created world and the goods (Am 9,13; Dt 15,4-6; 28,1-4). On the other hand, the economic goods and richness are condemned not in themselves, but for their bad use. The prophetic tradition denounces robbery, usury and exploitation, particularly in relation to the richest (Is 58, 3-11; Jr 7, 4-7; Os 4,1-2; Am 2,6-7, Mal 2,1-5).

Various biblical passages remind that only God is Lord of the earth and of goods. God predetermined that the earth is for all peoples: "The land is mine, and you are but aliens who have become my tenants" (Lv 25, 23). The book of Deuteronomy stresses the need to help the poor, widows, orphans and the strangers. The same book foresees "The Lord, your God, will bless you abundantly in the land he will give you to occupy as your heritage, there should

3 Cf. V. DE PAOLIS, *I beni temporali della Chiesa, Dehoniane, Bologna 1995, p.239-240.*

4 *Ibidem, p.241-242.*

be no one in need. If you but heed the voice of the Lord, your God, and carefully observe all these commandments which I enjoy on you today” (Dt 15, 4).

In itself, poverty is considered an evil but is also seen as a symbol of the relationship of the human being with God. Everything comes from Him as a gift, and must be appreciated and shared. To recognize oneself as poor before God means to want to live under His dependence. And God responds with his saving action. A new David is promised (Ez 34, 22-31). Moreover, God’s law will be written upon the hearts (Jr 31, 31-34). To be rich before God means to want depend of one’s strength to fulfill oneself. The moral value of poverty lies in this: humble availability, openness to God and trust in Him. These attitudes make the person capable to recognize the relativity of the economic goods and treat them as divine gifts, to administer and share them, because the original possession of all goods belongs to God.

In the wisdom literature, poverty is seen as fruit of idleness and laziness (Prov 10, 4) and as a natural fact (Prov. 22, 2). During the exile there rises a nearly religious conception of poverty: poverty means humble, confident and obedient attitude to God; poor are the “remnant” of Israel, the faithful Israelites who submit themselves to God’s will (Ze 2,3; 3, 11-13; Is. 61, 1-3).<sup>5</sup>

Near the time of Jesus, there was a community in *Qumran* that conceived poverty in this fashion: common goods, contempt of wealth, kind of laborious, simple and moderate life. In its vocabulary, poverty has a profoundly religious meaning: the humbling situation places them in a privilege situation before God: the poor is object of injustice and human wickedness.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2 The teaching of Jesus about the goods

The New Testament is a continuation of the OT, however, the former deeply innovates the latter, because it brings a novelty that originates in the Christian mystery. The mystery of Jesus, his life and his teachings shed light on how goods are viewed in the NT. The redemption of the goods will happen in the measure in which they will be instruments of charity, rather than of egoism and prepotency. The link between the mystery of Jesus and the temporal goods is explicitly described by Paul (Phil 2, 5-11). It is the *Kenosis* of Jesus in view of the redemption of every human being. Salvation was granted us through the generous gift that the Son of God made of himself for us in the mystery of the Incarnation and Easter. This mystery marked Jesus’ entire life: he entered the world poor, lived poorly, proclaimed the beatitudes of poverty and died poor on the cross. The fulfillment of his mission as Messiah was that of the Son of Man, who has nowhere to lay his head (Lk 9, 58), and who has not come to be served but to serve - to give his life in ransom for everyone (Mk 10, 45).<sup>7</sup>

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5 *Ibidem*, p.244.

6 *Ibidem*, p.244.

7 *Ibidem*, p. 244-246.

Paul highlights the ontological dimension of Jesus' poverty, especially poverty in the mystery of redemption. When he affirms that Jesus, though rich became poor for our sake, he means another kind of poverty - the poverty of the mystery of the incarnation (2 Cor 8, 9; Phil 2, 2-12). In this perspective of the mystery of incarnation and salvation, through the way of poverty and suffering, there opens up also the space for understanding the meaning of a voluntary poverty, embraced for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the following of the poor Christ (Lk 14, 25-33).

In his response of adhesion, the disciple must travel the way of the beatitudes (Mat 5, 1-12) to remain in the Kingdom and proceed in the right direction. All Jesus' teachings on temporal goods are contained in the discourse of the Beatitudes.

Jesus welcomes the preceding tradition about economical goods, wealth and poverty, and gives them an exact clarity and comprehensiveness (Mt 6,24; 13,22; Lk 6, 20-24; 12,15-21; Rm 14, 6-8; 1 Tm 4,4). In granting his Spirit and changing the hearts: He inaugurates the Kingdom of God, providing an opportunity for a new companionship in justice, fraternity, solidarity and sharing; perfects the original goodness of creation and of the human activity corrupted by sin. The human being, freed from sin and introduced in the communion with God, can continue Jesus' work with the aid of the Holy Spirit: do justice to the poor; release the oppressed, console the afflicted, search actively for a new social order.

From his Father, Jesus received the mission to give life in abundance to all (Jn 10, 10). Life in abundance has a personal dimension that includes faith and conversion to the Gospel (Mk 1, 15) and requires the sharing of goods (Lk 19, 1-10) and a social dimension that frees from sickness, hunger and social exclusion (Lk 4, 1ff; 6, 20-26; Mat 25, 41 ff). In the social dimension there is also Jesus' prophetic denouncement against the religious law which does not consider justice and mercy (Mat 23, 23); against the power used to dominate and exploit (Mk 10, 41-45); against the rich who exclude God and neighbor from their program of personal and social life (Mat 19, 23; 13,22; Lk 16, 19-31).

By his life and mission, Jesus gives a very clear message about material goods: they are significant in the measure in which they are at the service of everyone's life, preferentially, at the service of the life of the poor and excluded.

In his teaching, Jesus makes us understand that economy and a good administration are an essential dimension of life: the Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field and a valuable pearl (Mat 13, 44-46). Moreover, it is necessary to sit down and calculate the expenses before we begin to build (Lk 14, 28) and he praises the good manager (Lk 12, 35-48). The Gospel gives precise orientations in everything, also, for when we seek criteria to place our savings in the bank, so that they may to produce the due interest (Mat 25, 14-30). St. Paul, in turn, exposes those who want to be bishops and do not know how to manage their own house (1 Tim 3, 5).

In the light of revelation, every economic activity is considered as the human being's thankful response to the vocation he received from God when placed in the garden: to cultivate, to keep, to use it within precise limits (Gn 2, 16-17) and to perfect it (Gn 1, 26-30; 2,15-16; Wisdom 9, 2-3). Within the spirit of the parable of the talents (Mat 25, 14-31; Lk 19, 12-27), the good administration of material goods is a work of justice towards oneself and others. In this direction, the economic activity and material progress must be placed at the service of the person and society. In this way, they become places of salvation and sanctification.

Faith in Jesus Christ leads to a correct understanding of the social progress, within the context of a unified and integral humanism. It is what the Church's magisterium teaches. Christ is the first born of every creature. Everything was created and exists in Him. In Him is the fulfillment of all things, because he reconciled everything. The history of humanity, marked by the personal and collective effort to elevate the human condition, occurs in this divine plan.

### 1.3 Riches exist to be shared

In his letters, Paul often speaks about the topic of riches (2Cor 9, 6-15; 1Tm 6 17-19; 1Cor 5, 11; 6, 10; 1Tm 6, 9ff). Moreover, He severely exhorts those who fall into the temptation of selfishness, to make the goods absolutes, to make them an end in themselves and the reason for their lives (1Tm 6-9-10). "If we have food and clothing we have all that we need" (1Tim 6, 8).

In the NT, there are also examples of persons who make good use of riches: Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the women who assisted Jesus, Zacchaeus and others. In this perspective, the communion of goods Luke proposed in the Acts of Apostles (2, 42-45; 4, 32-35) acquires a particular importance. Such ideal is strongly bound to the reality brought by Christ and his Spirit.

The word *koinonia* (communion) which will always have an important place in the life of the Church has various meanings. Let us recall the key ones:<sup>8</sup>

- *Koinonia* is first of all the sharing of the goods needed for the earthly subsistence (Heb 13, 16; Acts 2, 44; 4, 32);
- *Koinonia* is the collection Paul organized for the Church of the Jerusalem (2Cor 8, 3-4; 9, 12-13; Rm 15, 26-27);
- *Koinonia* is the union of all the faithful in Christ through the Eucharist (1Cor 10, 16; 11, 17-34);
- *Koinonia* designates the unity that reigns in the area of salvation and unites the faithful, not only among themselves but also to the apostles (At 2, 42) and to the divine persons: to God the Father (1 Jn 1, 6), to Christ (1Cor 1, 9; 10, 16) and to the Holy Spirit (2Cor 13, 13; Phil 2, 1).

In summary, from the above-mentioned meanings, we can affirm that the foundations of  
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8 *Ibidem*, p. 248

the communion of goods is the same as the communion of the saints: it is the supernatural unity that we have in Christ through the Spirit; but such unity resumes the natural unity of the people and leads it to fulfillment.

The sharing of the goods is one of the essential elements of the first Christian communities. The icon presented in the book of the *Acts of Apostles* seems to be the best model of communitarian economy that Religious life has always wished to witness to: "Those who believed shared all things in common; they would sell their property and goods, dividing everything on the basis of each one's need" (Acts 2, 44-45).

The sharing of goods is a sign of the authenticity of Christian Life. The communion of life occurs in the communion of goods: this criterion is illustrated by two examples of an opposing sign: Joseph (also called Barnabas), who shares his wealth, Ananias, and Sapphira who deceive and do not share (Acts 4, 32 - 5, 11).

The sharing of goods in the religious community is a fundamental aspect of religious poverty. This implies to not only consider or practice it in a purely juridical form, obeying the norm of giving the community all the goods that we acquire or receive. A "theological reason" enters in the economy. It is lived in religious life as sharing in community, placing the goods at everyone's disposition, to provide for the sisters' needs and help the poor. This is the economy that all of us freely assumed as consequence of the consecration to Christ.

Therefore, Religious life wants to live this value with greater radicality and for this reason, we share the goods, even though the person could freely do this, without a vow. The challenge consists in conciliating the religious values with the material conditions of common life. The financial aspect could betray us if we do not apply the serious criteria of religious life to the management of economy.

#### **1.4. The common good in the teachings of the Fathers of the Church**

The fathers of the first centuries of the Church updated the biblical message, above all in the homilies that speak of the goods and riches. Particular remembrance is made of St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, St. Agustin and St. Gregory the Great. The updating of the message is concentrated especially in the works of charity, in the sharing with the poor, in the universal purpose of the goods, in the doctrine about the superfluous and the relationship between sacred objects and worship.

In a special way, the fathers created a common view about the doctrine of the universal purpose of goods. Goods are naturally or ontologically common. This is true, above all, for the Church's goods. They belong to God and to the poor. They cannot be treated as personal goods.

At the practical level, the concept of the universal purpose of goods accepts the obligation to give the surplus to the poor. It also assumes the evangelical accusation, that

is, to go to the ecclesiastical tribunes against those who do not observe the obligation to assist the poor people.

Goods are collected as sacred acts during the celebration of the Eucharist and whoever sins in this matter is excluded from the communion of the faithful. At that time, it was forbidden to accept the gifts or offerings of the unjust and sinners, of whom a long list was made. This entire mysticism that supported the help to the poor occurred in an organized way. The most eloquent example is that of Sr. Gregory the Great (VI Century). He administered the goods efficiently, in order to give to the poor generously.

Clement of Alexandria (II century) affirmed that wealth is the “instrument” and, as all instruments, if used well can produce good works of art and, if used wrongly, the result does not depend of the instruments, but of their use. Particularly, not the possession but the lack of sharing the goods with the poor was what lead to its condemnation of wealth. The text (Acts 4, 32) became the model and later the prototype of the experience in the monasteries. The monasteries gave origin to the first reflection on some fundamental economic topics, such as price, value, exchange. Later, this reflection became the justification of the ethics of the market.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.5 Economy and morality

The economic field is neither ethically neutral, nor inherently inhuman nor opposed to society. It is part of human activity, and precisely because it is human, it must be structured and institutionalized in an ethical manner.<sup>10</sup> Every decision regarding economy has a moral consequence.<sup>11</sup>

Ethical concepts and values that permit the detection of abuses, frauds and corruption committed by unscrupulous persons, in detriment of society as a whole, are connected to the economic system. Economy is a subject of interest common to all peoples of a society, or of an institutionalized group, as is the case of the religious communities.

The Social Doctrine of the Church affirms that goods, although legitimate, are subordinated to the universal purpose. They take on a social value. Hence, every form of unfair accumulation is immoral. Christian salvation is the integral liberation of the human being, liberation from the needs, but also in relation to the possessions (1Tim 6, 10).

Riches have the aim to serve the human being and society. Whoever possesses more has the moral obligation to be in solidarity with the less fortunate ones. Everything that the person has belongs to God. She is merely an administrator of the goods received from God.

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9 Cf. L. BRUNI – A. SMERILLI, *Benedetta Economia, Città Nuova, Roma 2009*, p. 58.62.

10 Cf. *Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate (CV)*, n.36.

11 Cf. *CV*, n. 37.

In this sense, everyone has the right to have the sufficient means to lead a dignified life. Today's economy, based on the private propriety of the means of production and knowledge, does not match God's original plan. This form of economy excludes the majority of people from its benefits and, likewise, drains the natural resources in a savage way. The economy that aims at solidarity journeys in the sense that all production and distribution of goods and services is at the service of life.

There is an intrinsic relationship between morality and economy. Economy aims at the development of wealth and its progressive increase, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. All this is morally sound if its perspective is marked by solidarity and the integral development of man and of the society in which he lives and operates. The primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man, the human person in his or her integrity: "Man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life."<sup>12</sup>

Morality enters into the area of the means and purpose of economy. It exists to promote human dignity and society's good. The purpose of economy is the human and social good. To economy was not entrusted the purpose of the fulfillment of man and that of the good human friendship, but a partial task: the production, the distribution and consumption of the material goods and services.

The economic development is not summarized in a mere process of accumulation of goods and services. Although this aims at the common good, it is not a condition for the fulfillment of the authentic human happiness. What generally happens is that the excessive availability of goods leads the human being to become a slave of possessions and of immediate enjoyment.

The morality regarding the economic activity is inspired in justice and solidarity. If on the one hand, it is a duty to carry out the activity of the efficient production of goods, on the other hand, an economic growth obtained in detriment of human beings, of entire peoples and social groups, condemned to destitution and exclusion, is unacceptable. The existing goods and services must be shared in an equitable way, according to the virtue of solidarity, in order to fight in the spirit of justice and charity "the sinful structures" which produce and maintain poverty, the underdevelopment and the degradation of the ecological environment.

The moral character of the activity in the area of economy implies that all persons and peoples must be subjected. It means that all have the right to participate and the duty to contribute, according to their capacities, to the progress of their own country and the humankind. "The economic activity cannot solve all social problems but it needs to be directed towards the pursuit of the common goal."<sup>13</sup>

12 CV, n. 25.

13 CV, n. 36.

## 1.6 Economy and spirituality

The strong materialism, present in today's culture, is a constant challenge to have ethical and spiritual attitudes in the economic area, particularly with the persons who work with us in institutions.

The nourishment of spirituality in a working area, where goods are produced, brings improvement to the quality of the individual and collective life, motivation to situations of growth and development, motivation for partnership, creativity, team cooperation and work. New meanings arise when people have a transcending dimension, to feel that they are serving a greater cause in their daily tasks.

When organizations create spiritually rich spaces, the members feel appreciated, satisfy their spiritual needs, and experience a sense of psychological and emotional security, as well as a sense of purpose, self-determination and belonging. Corporative spirituality is a differential that characterizes the organizations that transcend in time and are recognized by their balanced financial performances, with qualitative results and respect for the environmental ecology.

The Articulation of management<sup>14</sup> with the spirituality allows for a new synthesis between interiority and efficiency, values and results. It is one of the keys available for humanity to overcome the chaos of the lack of meaning and to make a qualitative jump in its conscience. Spirituality confers flavor and quality to management and helps respond, to where are we going? On what values do we lean? What legacy do we leave for the future generations?

The spiritual failure and that of the values of a person, family, company, institution or country can be much worse than the lack of money or the bankruptcy of the patrimony, because without our values the supporting pillars remain fragile.

There is a spiritual journey to be made by every person that identifies herself with her existence, fulfilling God's Will with the choices made. People work with greater lightness when a spiritual view is nourished in the mission. Notwithstanding this, the ultimate purpose of such a stance does not lie on the production of goods, but on the witness that it is possible to obtain results consistent with the Gospel.

In the document *Deus Caritas Est*, the Pope invites the world of economics to go beyond a dichotomized vision: on one hand the economy to which contracts are sufficient and, on the other hand, private life where *agape* has its place. The message impels us not to see the market in endemic conflict with the gift, but to consider it as possible allied for the civilization

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<sup>14</sup> *Management is the skill of leading people and coordinating processes, handling or using something successfully, or of control of the affairs of a business, in order to fulfill the mission of any organization. The word "administration," for quite some time, was used more frequently, having the advantage to allude, above all, to the physical and financial patrimony. The word management has received a broader horizon of meaning and is becoming a key term, applicable to different realities (Cf.A. MURARD, Gestao e Espiritualidade, Paulinas, S. Paulo 2007, p. 71)*

of love in the various dimensions. The presence of the *agape* (gratuity) opens and elevates the *love-eros* (contract) and the *love-phia* (friendship). Thus, the presence of *agape* in the economic and civil field consents to the contract to become instrument of freedom and equality and to friendship to become universal fraternity.<sup>15</sup> In a recent document the pope affirms, "Without gratuitousness, there can be no justice in the first place."<sup>16</sup>

## **2. The goods and charity in the life of John Baptist Scalabrini, mother Assunta Marchetti, fr. Joseph Marchetti and St. Charles Borromeo.**

### **2.1 John Baptist Scalabrini, prince of charity**

In recalling some elements of Scalabrini's life regarding the topic in question, it is indispensable to say something about one of his attitudes in relation to the people and in his pastoral service: charity.

Benedict XV defined Scalabrini, "the prince of charity."<sup>17</sup> Charity is the virtue that he profoundly lived, particularly in carrying out his mission as bishop. On the day of his Episcopal consecration, Scalabrini received, from Pope Pius IX, the crosier with the inscription, *Charitatis potestas* (the power of charity). In giving it to him the pope said, "Let this be the norm of your spiritual government". In addition, more than the norm of his Episcopal ministry, charity was his main characteristic.

Scalabrini's charity was not a form of philanthropy, merely imbued by sentiments of Christian piety. Charity for him was like a second nature, conferring a special characteristic to his relationships with the neighbor.<sup>18</sup>

His action was rooted in charity, which is the Church's soul. He wrote in a pastoral letter, "The Church loves, behold her entire life."<sup>19</sup> In the same letter, he affirmed that charity is the most important law of the Church. It is not only the Church's soul and shield of defense, but is also its principal instrument of evangelization. For Scalabrini, it was the supreme pastoral principle: "To announce the truth with charity."<sup>20</sup>

15 Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, n.7

16 CV, n. 38.

17 *Message for the occasion of the 10 anniversary of Scalabrini's death, 1915.*

18 Cf. M. Francesconi, *John Baptist Scalabrini – Father of the Migrants – Biographical Traces of the Spirituality*, p.7.

19 M. Francesconi, *Scalabrini-A Living Voice, Scalabrinian Congregations, Rome 1989, p.125.*

20 *Ibidem*, p. 88-89.

Scalabrini reveals all the greatness and gratitude of his charitable commitment when he says: "To make one soul happy is more important than to be happy." Resuming Jesus' message, "There is more joy in giving than receiving" (Acts 20, 35).

Scalabrini practiced charity, above all in occasions of public calamities. However, he was not satisfied with doing personal charity. He would involve and mobilize the community, seeing to it that signs of charity would become a commitment, a communitarian and ecclesial living. An example of this is all the works that he set in motion at a most dramatic moment lived in the region of Piacenza: the terrible famine caused by the winter of 1879-1880.<sup>21</sup> However, besides the interventions at occasions of public calamities or of great deeds, Scalabrini must be remembered for the daily and generous good done to many needy persons.

He expressed charity in the material and spiritual giving, and in forgiveness.<sup>22</sup> For him, the goods belong to God and have value only if placed at the service of charity. Hence, his deeds in favor of the Church and humanity were many and diversified, because the root and source of all good was always charity: "I made myself the servant of all so as to win over as many as possible for Christ" (1 Cor. 9, 19).<sup>23</sup> For this reason, in moments of great financial difficulty, Scalabrini did not hesitate to sell personal belongings, such as the horses; the golden chalice, a gift of Pius IX; the pectoral cross and to transform his house into a place of restocking for the poor and needy people of the city.

Scalabrini lived radically the principle that this world's goods, the material goods, particularly the goods of the Church, serve to do good to the neighbor; and to make sharing, love, fraternity and charity grow. For this reason, the poor and needy always had a priority in any work that he intended to do.

## 2.2. Evangelical Poverty

Scalabrini is an example of evangelical poverty by his total detachment from riches and money, for the poverty of the vestments, heating system and clothing that was not neglected, but many times mended. He always kept his heart detached from money. He deprived himself from everything and died poor, although millions went through his hands, always invested in works in favor of the neediest people.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, he was called "the bishop of full hands and empty pockets,"<sup>25</sup> because he was convinced that money is like blood, only circulating it brings benefits.

21 Cf. M. FRANCESCONI, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, Città Nuova, Roma 1985, p. 433 ff.*

22 Cf. S. Fongaro, "Bem-Aventurado João Batista Scalabrini, in *A voz, o caminho, a ação do Bem-Aventurado João Batista Scalabrini, Centro de Estudos Migratórios – Província Imaculada Conceição, 1998, p.14-15.*

23 Cf. R. RIZZARDO, *João Batista Scalabrini, Vozes, Petrópolis 1974, p.76.*

24 Cf. M. FRANCESCONI, *John Baptist Scalabrini – Father to the Migrants, p.64-65.*

25 *Ibidem, p. 7.*

He recommended to the priests, “your manner of dressing, walking and behaving should be keeping with the orders you have received. Be content with a frugal meals and with spare and modest furnishings. Avoid luxury, and the pursuit of honors, as well as ambition and vanity. Do not be greedy for money or profit. Be poor. Do not desire to be rich, lest you fall into many temptations. Do not bear your poverty grudgingly.”<sup>26</sup>

Poverty, as the detachment from the earthly goods, he considered it as the most perfect joy. To his missionaries he said that poverty must safeguard the purity of the apostolic intention and charity. “Show, evermore, that your zeal equals your detachment; that your hope is placed in God alone, that from God and God alone you expect your recompense; that you will not leave your apostolate while there are unhappy people to console, ignorant to instruct, poor to evangelize and souls to be saved.”<sup>27</sup>

In a letter sent to *Father Zaboglio*, among the various aspects about the religious life of his missionaries, he worries also about the economic question: “It is important that the administration be reviewed and that we may know how expenditures are done, and with what criteria do we do them. Here we are in misery, I, more than our house. Therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind the needs of the mother house and send as much we can.”<sup>28</sup>

His words do not admit a response, because they are witnessed by a poverty that follow him until death: “Poor I came to Piacenza and poor I will depart for the next world! The little that really belongs to me will suffice to liquidate the debts and pay for my funeral, which, I ask, that it be very modest.

### 2.3. Economy and migrations in Scalabrini’s thinking

For Scalabrini, various were the reasons that forced the migrations of his times, but the principal one was always of an economic order. In the pamphlet, “*The Italian Immigration in America, 1887*,” Scalabrini affirmed that the migration phenomenon is a reality of the international economic policies. At this same time, he publically criticized the government’s project which defended “the freedom to migrate and to force to migrate” to which he responded and strongly defended “the freedom to emigrate, but not to force to migrate;” because in the same measure in which spontaneous migration is a good, forced migration is bad.<sup>29</sup>

Seeking the religious and material wellbeing of the migrants, he founded the Society of Saint Raphael whose purpose was “work to keep the faith, patriotic sentiments and love for the homeland alive in the hearts of the Italian emigrants; and, at the same time, to seek their physical,

26 M. FRANCESCONI, *Scalabrini a living voice*, p. 192-193.

27 Cf. M. FRANCESCONI, *John Baptist Scalabrini – Father to the Migrants*, p.64-65.

28 *Ibidem*, p.448.

29 *Ibidem*, p. 355-357.

intellectual, economic and social wellbeing.” In practice, the Saint Raphael Society’s objectives aimed at the various sectors of the human life, among them the economic aspect. Its help consisted of financing and guidance in the search for new lands and better jobs, and it included a vast network of information among the migrants and their far-away family members, as well as other needed orientations particularly during the first years, always the most difficult ones.<sup>30</sup>

Scalabrini was not a dreamer or idealist, but would adhere to reality in search of the integral promotion of the person: Religious and social education alone cannot do anything; whoever lives with despair in the soul, understands little about the word faith! The bread of the soul must be shared besides the bread of the body! “For the poor, the homeland is the land that gives him bread! And there, very far, they hoped to find it less scarce, less difficult.”<sup>31</sup>

A man as poor and deprived of goods as Scalabrini, lived profoundly abandoned in the hands of Divine Providence. Witnesses affirm that Scalabrini manifested great spirit of abandonment to Divine Providence and, hence, his word was full of hope, conviction and consolation. He would affirm that the mysterious providence of God who governs all things, above any prevision, often times adopts elements to fulfill the greatest deeds and choose the fragile things to confuse the strong, so that no one could boast of himself.<sup>32</sup> Man proposes, but God disposes; man troubles himself, but God leads him; man works and sows his field, but the fruit of his work, it is God who gives it.<sup>33</sup>

### 3. Mother Assunta Marchetti

Poverty, as a familiar condition and religious choice, was for Mother Assunta a steady and courageous form of life. The family’s poverty marked her childhood and youth, and the one she chose, as a response to the call of the Lord, accompanied her since she was twenty years old, assuming it as an increasing identification with the poor Christ.<sup>34</sup>

Poverty, for Mother Assunta, was a good that incorporated all the world’s goods. She did not only live detached from things, dependent on the use of money and in the administration of the material goods. Nevertheless, she also had the maximum consideration for the evangelical counsel of poverty, willingly accepting the privations and imposing heroic renunciations upon herself.<sup>35</sup>

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30 *Ibidem*, p. 465-466.

31 *Ibidem*, p. 356.

32 *Cf. Pastoral Letter*, 1876.

33 *Cf. Pastoral Letter*, 1905.

34 *Cf. L. BONDI, Virtudes da serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti*, p. 207.

35 *Ibidem*, p. 213.

Today, her example of simplicity and temperance of life, based on the evangelical poverty, continues to teach us about the importance of freedom of spirit in our dealings with material goods; and that these will achieve their maximum value when placed at the service of the neediest people. The servant of God was exterior and interiorly poor, detached from material things in order to make room for God. She knew that the religious must live for God, her only treasure.<sup>36</sup> For her, the virtue of evangelical poverty did not have a relationship only with the correct use of the earthly goods, but was an integrating element of her relationship with God.

Mother Assunta witnessed to her constant fidelity to Christ, whom she chose as her 'only good' necessary, in many ways and situations. In Italy, she always lived in houses whose proprietors were the owners of the mills administered by her father. As missionary in Brazil, she always lived in buildings made available by others such as by the Missionaries of Saint Charles, by the pastor of the place or by administrative entities.<sup>37</sup>

She demonstrated to be aware of the importance of depending of the superiors in the use of money, in order to follow Jesus Christ, who became poor for us (2 Cor 8, 9), closer. Witnesses testify that she subjected herself serenely to this dependence, even as Superior General: "In the use of money was always dependent of the Superiors, or of the Apostolic Visitor. She was accountable to him about the economic situation of the Institute, and demanded the same thing of all the houses of the Province."<sup>38</sup>

Many times when carrying out the function of government, she showed her administrative capacity and ability. There are various witnesses who testify to this: "During her government, she revealed a great administrative ability. She made sure the Sisters had what they needed and responded to the various requests for opening of Houses in different places, for this reason allowing the Institute to expand." Mother Assunta had good sense and a practical spirit. She committed herself and succeeded to pay the existing debts, as shown in a letter she sent to the Apostolic Visitor, Most Rev. Egidio Lari, in 1929. She wrote, "I have the duty to communicate to Your Excellency that, with God's grace and Your Excellency's valuable help, we paid the last installment (20 contos) to extinguish the debt contracted with the purchase of the house of Parí, where the day-school "Santa Teresinha do Menino Jesus' functions."<sup>39</sup>

During her 53 years of missionary life, she carried out all types of work, and among these, we find also that of treasurer.<sup>40</sup> In all the activities experienced, she always showed the same dedication

36 *Ibidem*, p. 220.

37 *Ibidem*, p. 213.

38 *Ibidem*, p. 209.

39 *Ibidem*, p. 138-139.

40 Cf. M.FRANCESCONI, *Storia della Congregazione Scalabriniana -Le prime Missioni nel Brasile (1888-1905)*, p.137.

and the same spirit of service and communion. Her journey can be defined as: “from cook to Mother General, from Mother General to cook.” The detachment from fame, name and positions, reflected her interior. Such was her dispossession, that she undertook the tasks and finished the mandate with the same serenity and with the same peace.

Mother Assunta was always ready to occupy one or the other service, carry out this or that task, witnessing to the value and importance of every work done with dignity. She never refused any sort of specific service asked of her. The work was a significant and voluntary expression of her poverty for the sake of the Kingdom, and to partake of the fate of the poor who are a privilege part of the Kingdom.<sup>41</sup>

The administration of the goods has only one objective: the law of charity witnessed by Jesus Christ and by the early Church that we find described in the Acts of the Apostles. Mother Assunta’s entire life was totally oriented to exercise of charity, because she did not let go of the occasions offered her, by the most different circumstances, to manifest her great love for God and the constant joy of alleviating the needs of the neighbor for the love of God. Her total dedication to the brothers proves that she came to serve. She affirmed, “Without sacrifice we cannot do good to the neighbor.”

She had an attitude of total confidence in Divine Providence. At times of danger or of difficulties, with simplicity but with conviction, she exclaimed, “God sees, God provides.” Her trust in divine Providence was unlimited. She knew how to look at her history with optimism, at the future with confidence, and the events of this world, the things and the people with detachment. She often experimented the fidelity of God-Providence and trusted in Him without reservations. Proof of her surrender is this, “God tries us but does not abandon us. We are in his hands and everything he does is well done.”<sup>42</sup>

## 2.5 Fr. Joseph Marchetti

Father Joseph Marchetti, model of evangelical charity, was an extraordinary priest, a man surrendered to Divine Providence and who lived in poverty and charity.

He was born in a very poor family but profoundly honest and pious. He grew up poor and to study overcame great financial difficulties through his firm will, prayer and the help of the benefactors. As priest, he live poorly and everything that he had, including as all his initiatives, were always directed to the needy neighbor. The gestures of charity were many. In addition, he died poor as a martyr.<sup>43</sup>

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41 Cf. L.BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunta Marchetti*, p. 217.

42 Cf. L.BONDI, *Virtudes da Serva de Deus Madre Assunata Marchetti*, p. 43-44.

43 Cf. FS. DE MELO, *Padre José Marchetti – Exemplo de Amor a Deus e ao próximo*, p.1.

Charity was the virtue that profoundly marked his life. He did not only practice it personally, but idealized means for the Christians to practice it. Everything he did was for the good of the defenseless, particularly the orphans and migrants. Hence, he was not ashamed to go from house to house, from store to store to ask for donations for the needy, although receiving humiliations. He said, "men work for themselves and I do nothing else but pray, hear confessions, preach and go from door to door begging. From those who give me money, I take money; from those offering me humiliations, I take humiliations. These are good also. The important thing is that the money comes and the walls are rising."<sup>44</sup>

Fr. Marchetti was poor, therefore without love for money, which for him was merely a means to fulfill Christ's work on earth, in the care for the excluded and abandoned persons of his time. He ardently sought to reproduce interior and exteriorly Jesus' virtues, as Saint Paul says: "It is no longer I, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2, 20).<sup>45</sup>

His spirit of initiative, in seeking responses to the urgencies and needs that arose, demonstrated his administrative capacity and above all his confidence in Divine Providence. For a young, foreign, newly arrived priest, admirable was his action and capacity to unite forces in seeking resources and establishing partnerships, even among opposing sides, so that in a short time everyone were equipped to help in the construction of the Orphanage. Therefore, in a very short time of nine months, the great building of the Christopher Columbus Orphanage was rising, and the construction of an orphanage for the girls had begun in the barrio Villa Prudente. He did all this without counting his many initiatives in the human promotion, vocational and health areas and giving a great impulse to the building of the Umberto I Hospital.

Fr. Joseph had faith in Divine Providence, to whom he entrusted his dreams. The Sacred Heart of Jesus was his confidant and counselor. From Him comes the certainty that God fructified his work, "God wanted the orphanage, I see it, feel it and notice it. *Deo Gratias!*"<sup>46</sup> Divine Providence opened ways for him to concretize his dreams. He understands faith in Divine Providence as a requirement for us not to leave the world as it is, but to work for its renewal. For this reason, he exerts himself with all his strength and seeks to involve other people in the work, entrusting responsibilities to them. He repeated: "Ahead, until when God wants it."

On his 27<sup>th</sup> birthday, 3 October 1896, Fr. Joseph Marchetti professed the religious vows perpetually, to which he added two other vows that evaluate the Missionary's spiritual dimension. He pronounced, "To better correspond to the high mission which you entrusted to me by your mercy, I feel evermore impel to sacrifice myself, pledging with a vow that I will

44 MFRANCESCONI, *Como um relâmpago – José Marchetti (1869 – 1896)*, 1972, p. 29.

45 Cf. *PROVINCIA NOSSA SENHORA APARECIDA, Estudo e aprofundamento sobre a pobreza evangélica*, p.61.

46 *Letter to Scalabrini, 01.31.1895*

always offer myself for the sake of my neighbor for your love. Thus, by the vow of charity, in everything I will set my neighbor over myself, my pleasures, my health and my life."<sup>47</sup>

His material works, his dealings confirm his charity, his life proves it even better, as *Fr. Dario Azzi* wrote, "kindled by the sacred fire of charity, he loved God with all his strength; in God he saw all the people that he loved as brothers and sisters and was willing to give his blood and life for them."<sup>48</sup> He shared everything he had, including his few personal objects, with the least fortunate, but more than things, he shared his pastoral presence, solidarity and sentiments.

## 2.6 Saint Charles Borromeo

From history, we know the wealth of the Saint Charles' family. WE also know how he was able to renounce many privileges entitled to him by right in order to place himself at the service of the Church. This attitude witnesses to his true interior freedom concerning material goods.

His way of holiness is outstanding, particularly, in the voluntary and free choice to be poor, though being rich. He did this in the sacrifice taken to the extremes of deprivation and effort, in prayer, and above all in the pastoral charity.<sup>49</sup>

As bishop, he lived and fulfilled the ideal of the Good Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep. *Louis de Granada* gives this picture of him, "In abstinence, he imitated the ancient monks; in solitude and vigilance, the holy pontiffs; in the constant works of the time of the plague, the martyrs; in the zeal for salvation, the apostles; and in the poverty of his house, the masters of evangelical poverty. In the charitable deeds, he exercised the active life; in prayer, the contemplative life; and in these two lives the service of continuous preaching. He imitated the Savior who was the Master in these three ministries."

Charity was an important aspect of his life, to which he witnessed in a heroic manner particularly in the tragic circumstance of the plague, which history remembers as "Saint Charles plague." Pope John Paul II said that Saint Charles was and still is a model of zeal and charity, a solicitous bishop, above all at the time of the plague, taking first aid to the sick, the beggars and other poor people, giving them assistance, food, clothing and a shelter place. For this, he deprived himself of many things that he had in the episcopal residence, remaining only with the strictly necessary for him.<sup>50</sup>

Saint Charles created charitable institutions. According to him, the works of charity witness to faith and to an authentic Christian life. We do not find explicit statements and modern

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47 ZORNAGHI, Pe. José Marchetti –O martir da caridade, EDUCS, Caxias do Sul 1997, p.53.

48 *Ibidem*, p. 62.

49 Cf. L. CRIVELLI, "Bruciò la vita perché il suo popolo fosse santo," in *Famiglia Cristiana* (43/1984), p.77.

50 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Homily* (4 November 1984 –Arona, Italy).

concepts of social justice in his writings and pastoral activity. We find, however, a total view of the problems of his time, a Christian meaning of generous dedication to the neighbor and detachment from material goods, which should be the interior soul of every form of assistance and beneficence that aims at the moral and material elevation of the person.<sup>51</sup>

The evangelical poverty, the detachment from earthly goods, is another important aspect in his life, because he received a considerable annual income, whether in function of his ecclesiastical investiture, or because of the patrimony of the Borromeo family, patrimony passed entirely to him after his brother Frederick died. Saint Charles progressively renounced the many benefits to which he had a right. Someone affirmed, "Of wealth Charles, knew only that which a dog receives from his master: water, bread and straw."<sup>52</sup>

As bishop, he distributed his rich inheritance and profits from the goods of the family to all the miserable people of Milan. When he had nothing else to give away, he personally begged for the poor. He organized the works of charity in such a way that no category of needy people would be forgotten. He spent his energies through charity, not knowing limitations and precautions. He said, "A bishop who is very careful of his health will not become holy."<sup>53</sup>

## 2.7 Administrator of the Diocese of Milan

When Saint Charles was nominated "perpetual administrator of the diocese of Milan" (1560), he was only 22 years old and did not have any of the requirements needed to receive the episcopal see, since he had not yet received the sacred orders. Even against the spirit of the time, he seriously assumed all the responsibilities that represented the titles and benefits given him and received title of "administrator".<sup>54</sup> He proved to be an administrator dedicated to his people, firm in the defense of the rights when these were violated.<sup>55</sup> In this function, he revealed all his qualities: an extraordinary resistance to work, an energetic and persevering will, and capacity to listen and to ask for advice, before acting courageously.<sup>56</sup> He was considered a genius of the doctrine and organizing techniques, but also a man of a great heart, heroic penance, spirit of sacrifice and much action.<sup>57</sup>

51 Cf. A. RIMOLDI, "Le attività a favore della spiritualità e dell'apostolato dei laici e le istituzioni sociali," in *Attualità della Pastorale di San Carlo Borromeo*, 1965, p. 208.

52 Cf. D. TETTAMANZI, *San Carlo, luminoso esempio di povertà evangelica – solennità di san Carlo Borromeo, Duomo di Milano, 4 November, 2008*.

53 Cf. A. DEROO, *San Carlo Borromeo – il cardinale riformatore, Ancora, Milano 1965*, p. 378-379.

54 *Ibidem*, p. 202.

55 *Ibidem*, p.210.

56 Cf. PGUÉRANGER, *L'anno Liturgico – Il Tempo Pasquale e dopo la Pentecoste, Alba 1969*, p.1245-1248.

57 Cf. G. CERIANI, "Spiritualità del Clero Diocesano", in *Attualità della pastorale di San Carlo Borromeo, Milano 1965*, p. 91-113.

Again, in the various provincial Synods, he deepened the topic of poverty in the priests' life. In the conclusions of the fourth Synod (1576), he exhorts them to poverty, above all in the concrete manner of exercising their ministry with the faithful "Do not be salesmen, neither ministers of Satan, but bearers of Christ." He highlights also the attention that the priests must have when using ecclesiastical goods, saying, "Distribute the goods of the Church to those who are the heart of Christ's love, that is, to the poor, pilgrims, widows, and children, to those who suffer and to the prisoners."<sup>58</sup>

In the process of his beatification, the bishop of Ferrara, *Giovanni Fontana*, who was one of St. Charles' close friends, testified that it was moving to see the few belongings that Charles had when he died. These reveal the austerity of a man who lived as poor as possible, though wealthy. So great was his love for poverty that his homilies could not lack the preaching and the invitation to all the listeners, to relativize the material goods and to deprive themselves from their belongings on behalf of the neediest. His entire life testified to his great dedication to the poor and forgotten and when dying, he left his goods to them.

When someone would make him an observation regarding his austere lifestyle and of much work, he would say, "It is said that my austerities harm my physical strength. But I can affirm that not only my health was never harmed for this reason, as well as that such penances always facilitate the fulfillment of my duties of pastor."<sup>59</sup>

He demonstrated great preoccupation and care for honesty and transparency in the administrative work in his Diocese. For this reason, in his pastoral visits and preaching, he emphasized what aimed at the building of a more Christian world and, consequently, more just and fraternal. He said to the priests, "In all the activities, sales and purchases, avoid robbery, corruption and lie, with the intent to possess what belongs to others. Avoid working with others' money and goods, except if you are obliged to do this for charity purposes. Do not allow yourself to be taken by injustice, neither by the profit, nor friendship."<sup>60</sup>

His attention turned to a good and correct application of the resources of his diocese. Example of this is the response given to a person who suggested to him the purchase of an artistic picture which belong to him, "If it is as a present, I accept it; otherwise to spend money in needless things, is to steal it from the poor!"<sup>61</sup>

Saint Charles did not use half measures when he had to make observations, in relation to an act of bad administration. This is what can be seen in a letter addressed to his administrator;

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58 Cf. D. TETTAMANZI, *Solennità di San Carlo Borromeo (Cattedrale di Milano, 4 November, 2008)*.

59 *Ibidem*, p. 172.

60 R. RIZZARDO, *Carlos Borromeo, Paulinas, S. Paulo 1984*, p. 164.

61 *Ibidem*, p. 165.

who ended a not so transparent and disastrous negotiation for the Milan episcopal curia: “for the interests of the curia, it would have been much better to end, rather than to sign such contracts. Do not complain now that everyone makes fun of you, because honest men have an example of how we should act! I do not accept the excuse of pretending to increase our patrimony; in effect, if we have the duty to maintain it, it is not for this reason that we must dirty ourselves in order to increase it!”<sup>62</sup> For him, the preoccupation for money was the least of them all.

In other words, he concretely said that it was necessary to practice justice and transparency in the management of the Church’s goods, in an exemplary way; since it is not a private patrimony but are goods of the Church, of which we must give accounts to God and to the poor.

The motto *humilitas*<sup>63</sup> - humility – was not only an element in the coat-of-arms of the family, but was the motor of his life and action. Humility took him, as the Lord Jesus, to renounce himself in order to become a servant of all. Humility makes him the servant of his people, infuses in him the courage to remain beside the victims of the plague, when the local authorities flee for fear of contamination. He truly incarnated humility in his life.

### **3. The goods at the service of the mission**

#### **3.1 The economic and financial changes**

The economic and financial changes that occurred in the last years interfered in the interior of the religious communities, of the consecrated persons and of the institutions. No one is immune to the changes that occur in society, in the financial market or in the diverse economic systems.

Among the person’s diverse activities, the economic one is fundamental: without it, human life is not comprehensible and neither visible. The economic ideology of the present system sees to it that every person feels protagonist and responsible for his/her prosperity and development, in large or small scale of his/her goods.

The process of globalization, suitably understood and administered, offers the possibility of a large-scale redistribution of the wealth on a worldwide scale; if badly administered, it can lead to an increase in poverty and inequality in the entire world.<sup>64</sup>

In the present change of mentality and reorganization of the world’s economic system, the religious institutions were affected at the core of their existence, requiring a restructuring

62 *Ibidem*, p. 166.

63 Latin word that means little raised from the soil – humus, dirt, soil.

64 Cf. CV, n.42.

according to the world's financial policies. With the new culture of globalization, the array of perspectives changed the economic comprehension and the use of money.<sup>65</sup>

The diverse mentalities present in the institutions entered into shock with the new economic paradigms and with the interpretative field of the meaning of consecration and commitment with the vows. In some cases, by the external pressure and independent of one's will, the consecrated person's concepts and behaviors change in relation to the economic world.<sup>66</sup>

In the second half of the XX century, many religious institutes saw their apostolic activities transform themselves into real business companies, small or large, which offer diverse services, almost always in line with the specific mission. The social economic context obliged them to make these choices, not having another possibility to carry out their mission. Consequently, they must function with business criteria: production and income, fulfillment of the working, social and fiscal laws.

However, it is underline that there are noticeable differences between an ordinary business and a business of a religious institute. The ultimate objective of any business is the maximum of returns, but it cannot be this way for a religious Institute's businesses because it proposes itself the objective to realize the Institute's charismatic mission. In this sense, the religious administrators must keep very much in mind the reflection on the world of work and economy, which during the last century was gathered in Church's Social Doctrine.<sup>67</sup> This doctrine, generally departing from the capitalist context, reminds the Christians of their obligations in the order of justice and economics. In addition, this is still good for the religious women and men.<sup>68</sup>

The ultimate purpose must qualify an organization that provides services. The priority of the charism translates itself into a differentiated form of administering and a critical and constructive position in relation to the market and its laws. Institutionally, it signals that it is possible and necessary to administer business with another perspective, integrating the efficiency of the management with human values and commit oneself for a just, healthy and solidary society.<sup>69</sup>

A great challenge is how to attract people to work in our institutions with the spirit of the charism. The principal mechanism for the selection of people is the self-selection. If a person

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65 Cf. M.S. MOURÃO, "O uso do dinheiro na Vida Religiosa Consagrada," in *Análise Institucional na Vida Religiosa Consagrada*, Publicações CRB, Belo Horizonte 2005, p. 152-156.

66 *Ibidem*, p. 153-157.

67 Cf. PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO DELLA GIUSTIZIA E DELLA PACE, *Compendio della Dottrina della Chiesa*, n. 336-345.

68 Cf. E. ARENAS - F. TORRES, *Vita Consagrada ed economia*, Ancora, Milano 2006, p.28-29.

69 Cf. A. MURAD, "Gestão e espiritualidade," p. 86-87.

sees an ideal and charismatic institution, coherent with the values it professes, and if she presents herself as a candidate for the work, it means that at least, in part, she accepts that view of economy and life. However, it happens that the institution/business may have a clear message about its identity. If the signals given are clear, the candidates self-select themselves. It is said that the worst *managers*, from the worth point of view, are attracted by the multinationals, because the candidate is someone who has a great interest in money. More and more, very good *managers* go to work in the NGOs, in the UNO and in the UNICEF, because the person is motivated not only by the money, but seeks organizations that give signs of a high vocation. The most adequate manner to have better persons is to offer high ideal and symbolic remunerations.<sup>70</sup>

In a religious institution, in the work with the laity, the levels of responsibilities are different. The mission is shared, but not in the same way and with the same degree of responsibility. Therefore, not on the level of equality. Surely, that among both there must be collaboration. The collaborators have, at the company level, a much differentiated level of commitment, but to all, without exception, it is necessary to make known the meaning and the purpose of work and in which work are collaborating. It is a way of giving meaning to one's work and make them aware that they are not working in any sort of company.<sup>71</sup>

For the laity, work must be a concrete form of living one's Christian vocation and evangelizing responsibility in the world, which becomes also a way to gain the livelihood.<sup>72</sup>

### 3.2 Economic resources and mission

In Religious life, we need to consider two great levels. The first level deals with the search for the meaning of what we do, of why we live this way, this lifestyle, and this we could call *spirituality*, which is a dimension of the charism. For this reason, the charism is essential, because there is no joy without gratuity and there is no gratuity without charisms. Another level refers to the real structures in which we live: the houses, properties, instrument of work and personal resources. This second level can be called administration. Spirituality without administration becomes an unfulfilled dream; administration without spirituality becomes a computer without a program, a team without adversaries, a car without gas, and a senseless message.<sup>73</sup>

The objectives of a religious institute can be summarized into announcing the Good News and witness to faith, through a suitable lifestyle embraced as consecration. In administrative terms, if we have this in mind, it does not mean to have anything we like, but to have the most adequate,

70 Cf. L. BRUNI – A. SMERILLI, *Benedetta Economia*, Città Nuova 2009, 94-96.

71 Cf. E. ARENAS – F. TORRES, *Vita Consacrata ed economia*, p. 118-119.126.

72 *Ibidem*, p.127.

73 Cf. J.L. CASAROTTO, "As finanças da Cogregação e a vida religiosa-missionária," in *Convergência* 261 (1993), p.136.

the most efficient for our purpose; and it does not mean to do formation in any way, but to seek a very good model for what we want. In addition, it does not mean to be in any place, whether geographical or socially, but to be in the best place to achieve our aim. This capacity to perceive and to analyze the situations, in such a way that we may achieve the maximum with what we have, is not something innate, but it is something we need to learn and develop.<sup>74</sup>

It is noticed that Religious Life has undergone significant changes in spirituality, style of community life, and above all, in the mission. All these changes affect theology and the very pastoral, the lifestyle and, specifically, its way of relating with the human and material resources.<sup>75</sup>

The two realities, economic resources and mission, are intrinsically related. It is not possible to carry out the mission well without the appropriate economic resources. The economy of the religious has to be an economy at the service of the mission, qualifying the various forms of apostolate. The goods that do not serve the missionary activities, or specific objectives of the Congregation, are not necessary.<sup>76</sup>

Undoubtedly, the manner of focusing and dealing with the economic issues, very well expresses what a Congregation believes, hopes and concretely on what it places its trust. The Gospel reminds us, "Where your treasure is, there your heart is also" (Mat. 6, 21). Our treasure must be the mission, the proclamation of the Kingdom. Moreover, to place economy at the services of the person and mission is a concrete form of serving the Church.<sup>77</sup>

The economic management does not have to deal merely with poverty. It has to deal with obedience, since there are laws of the Church, of the very Institute and of the civil Governments that must be followed; and with chastity, since a great freedom of heart cannot be lacking, so that the goods are placed at the service of the human person. We should not be afraid to differentiate between evangelical life and professional management, clearly. They are two distinct levels that must complement each other.<sup>78</sup>

The economic issue cannot be distant from Consecrated life. Many are the incidences that it has on the mission of consecrated life that it cannot do without it. The economic question is of great importance, since it involves an important dimension of our life. Moreover, it is strictly bound to the political activity of society and, frequently, both dimensions are inter-related.<sup>79</sup>

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74 *Ibidem*, p. 137-138.

75 Cf. UNIONE SUPERIORI GENERALI (USG), "Documento de la 60. Asamblea de la USG," in *Economía y misión en la Vida Consagrada hoy*, Il Calamo, Roma 2002, n.25.

76 *Ibidem*, n. 34.

77 *Ibidem*, n. 64.

78 *Ibidem*, n. 26.32.

79 *Ibidem*, n. 14.

### 3.3 Style of administration in the religious Institutes

In the new context of the world economy and of a more technical management, there is a need for more information and better formation in all the religious and, particularly, in those who need to decide and administer the goods of the Institution. Modern efficient management requires capable leadership, aligning with the values of the institution and the best possible participation of the members and collaborators. Every organization requires commitment with common goals and shared values, constant learning, developmental criteria and results focused on its addressee.<sup>80</sup>

The administration of the goods of an Institute requires caution, precision, honesty and professionalization, avoiding speculation. It must keep in mind the evangelical criteria and the fidelity to the specific charism of the Institute, submitting itself to the norms that such administration involves, such as that of the canon law and civil law of the country where it carries out its activity.<sup>81</sup>

Some characteristics of the administration of a religious Institute are essential at any level:<sup>82</sup>

- *Evangelical*: the goods must be used only as means and in the measure in which they serve to achieve the purpose of the Institute. Therefore, the material goods necessary for the development of the mission must be used for the formation of the members and for the realization of the apostolic activities, seeking the most adequate and effective means. The success of the Institution in the mission of the Church and in the society in which it works depends greatly of the quantity of knowledge and self-knowledge;

- *Prudent*: an administration is prudent when the material goods are used for the purpose of the Institute. No person can use them for self-gain;

- *Wise*: it is not sufficient to have a prudent administration, it needs to be wise, that is, it requires that in issues of ordinary administration, the treasurers and administrators know the how of technical operations;

- *Fraternal*: people who are called to this service must be attentive to the needs of the brothers or sisters of the community, always within the limits of poverty and of the Institute's tradition;

- *Co-responsible*: All members who are part of the Institute are co-responsible for the economic decisions. Co-responsibility is founded on transparency. One of the principal functions of a good accountancy is to offer a clear and comprehensible picture of the real economic situation. Many times, the participation of all the members in the economic

80 Cf. A. MURAD, *Gestão e espiritualidade*, p.72-75.91.

81 Cf. E.ARENAS -F.TORRES, *Vita Consacrata ed economia*, p. 10-11.17.

82 *Ibidem*, p.25.27.

process is not possible, hence the need to form councils of economy, principally at the provincial and general level;

- *Efficient*: efficiency refers to the usage of a good accounting technology, which guarantees a good administration. Efficiency, however, consists also in the realization of a good economic management, capable to use the resources and distribute them in the best way possible to the various needs and apostolic projects of the Institute. There is no doubt that the treasurer or administrator must have a strong religious meaning, to assure that her decisions will be always permeated by the needed religious content.

### 3.4 Criteria of discernment in the economy

In present day globalization, it becomes a requirement to know the origin and the functioning of the market's laws, the guide rules of the economic system and its manipulation. Its complexity, however, requires basic knowledge to know how to lead, in an efficient way, with its laws.<sup>83</sup>

There are criteria, which can direct to a very human and religious management, but not exempt of tensions and even of conflicts. Various are the criteria, which intertwine when one needs to form good economic policies in a religious Institute. Among them are the evangelical, the human, the social, the professional, the technical and the institutional. Some are mentioned.<sup>84</sup>

- The evangelical requirement that the goods must serve to create and again strengthen communion; exercise liberty in the face of what we possess and prudence before what we use; a clear invitation to gratuity in the use of the goods and an immeasurable generosity in sharing; the management of the goods animated by a vigorous spirituality.

- The goods of a religious Institute must serve the needs of the Sisters who are active in the apostolate, of the members who are in the initial formation; of the sick sisters; and of the institutional mission of the Congregation. Principally the whole economy must be at the service and function of the people. There is no doubt that we must invest in the formation and preparation of the people rather than on material structures.<sup>85</sup>

- It is necessary to increase the attitude of sharing the goods. In earlier decades, we earned to save or to reinvest especially in institutions, now we earn to live as religious, in order to be able to guide ourselves by the criteria of giving and sharing. Then poverty was much marked by austerity and now by solidarity, which is a visible part of a profound spirituality.

- Austerity must be a general criteria used when making decisions about economy: the

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83 Cf. M.S. MURÃO, "O uso do dinheiro na Vida Religiosa Consagrada," p. 153.

84 Cf. UNIONE SUPERIORI GENERALI (USG), Documento de la 60 Asamblea de la USG," n.40-49.

85 Cf. J.L.CASAROTTO, "As finanças da Congregação e a vida religiosa-missionária" p.132-133.

following of Jesus Christ requires that austerity should be visible also in the choices of the means of apostolate, because the Son of God chose the way of humility, of simplicity and *kenosis*, to incarnate himself. The religious institutes must always remember that their mission is the proclamation of the Kingdom and not a commercial marketing operation.<sup>86</sup>

- Before making a decision, it is necessary to evaluate the possible consequences that could derive for the life and mission of the members of the Institute, but also for the social context in which we live. In the beginning, we should find important elements for the economic decisions in the social dimension of our religious charism. Honesty, righteousness and the sense of justice must guide these decisions. It is a form of proclaiming the Gospel and present a different, an alternative, lifestyle in society.<sup>87</sup>

In the field of economy, the goal of our activity must seek at the reduction of poverty, at contributing towards the change of the political and economic structures that are at the origin of the world's difficult economic situation. For this, there must be an evident prophetic dimension in our manner of proceeding as religious, which courageously shows the social sins bound to consumerism, hedonism and to an economy that produces an unacceptable inequality between luxury and misery, among few "rich" and innumerable "Lazarus".

- It is necessary to show the origin of the economic resources of an Institute, how they come reach us, their purpose and objective;

- The persons implicated in the economic management, need to be reminded that they must consider themselves as mere administrators and authentic religious, guided by the principles of common good. In religious life, no one owns the goods that he/she administers. At the different levels, everything is done in the name of the Institution. The decisions around the goods are made in council and only the effecting of a decision is entrusted to a person.

- For a good discernment in relation to the goods, it is important to count with the counsel and collaboration of laypersons who are specialized in this area. The economic management is a work done as a team and with the help of a technical-professional adviser.

The diligent and co-responsible writing of the budgets is a sign of vitality and commitment of a community. The budgets are a look towards the planning of the economic activity for a period or for an economic exercise, anticipating the resources which can be made available, determining how, when and in what they will be used.<sup>88</sup>

- Abide by the existing laws.

86 Cf. E. ARENAS – TORRES, *Vita Consacrata ed economia*, p. 87.

87 *Ibidem*, p. 87.

88 *Ibidem*, p. 90.

### 3.5. The sharing of goods in the Congregation

The economy of a Congregation must be in function of the Kingdom and, therefore, it cannot have its own project, the profit, the greed, as its fundamental law. It needs love which translates itself into justice, in sharing, into giving and serving.

It is fundamental not to lose sight of the mechanism, which drives Consecrated life, that is, the charismatic perspective of the surrender through the vows. It is always necessary to keep in mind the “well” of the spirituality, which supports and gives meaning to the consecration in an institution.<sup>89</sup>

The goods that we have do not belong to anyone personally, they are the Institution’s and, in theory, all the members are responsible for them. Besides the good of the individual, there is the common good. It is the good of “all of us.” To desire the common good and strive towards it, is a requirement of justice and charity.<sup>90</sup> All of us are to keep in mind how we obtain what we have, how we should or can maintain them and how we should or can use them. In this lies our responsibility and one of the most important tasks as administrators.<sup>91</sup>

The communion of goods is consequence of the practice of faith, emphasized and highlighted by the evangelical poverty. It must be practiced, above all, among the communities and bodies of the Institute, and then it should expand to people and institutions *ad extra*, keeping in mind the needs of the places where the communities are present. This communion is already a sign and witness of evangelical fraternity.<sup>92</sup>

There is no doubt, that to have everything in common is a prophetic sign before this globalized world in which we live and, at the same time, marked by a strong individualism and personal benefit. To share the goods within an Institute reminds us to the experience of the first Christian communities (Acts 2, 42-47). This means that Consecrated Life is an experience of sharing the material and spiritual goods and of the emotional relationships among the members of the communities, as well as, at the provincial and congregational levels.<sup>93</sup>

Sharing is a formation question. The initial and permanent formation should always keep this preoccupation with the concrete reality and with the effort that exists behind the cost of life. It is necessary to educate so that there will be a greater co-responsibility in the dealing of the common goods. Educate to sobriety and essentiality, which means to educate to evangelical, personal, collective and institutional poverty.

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89 Cf. M.S. MURÃO, “O uso do dinheiro na Vida Religiosa Consagrada,” p. 154.

90 Cf. CV, n.7.

91 Cf. J. L. CASAROTTO, “As finanças da Congregação e a vida religiosa-missionária” p.139.

92 Cf. E. ARENAS – TORRES, *Vita Consecrata ed economia*, p. 98.

93 Cf. UNIONE SUPERIORI GENERALI (USG), “Documento de la 60 Asamblea de la USG,” n.62.

There is a noticeable indifference about the thinking of the sharing of goods and a growth of individualism that leads to the loss of the true meaning of the living together, of the common belonging. Everything that the religious produces or receives belongs to his/her religious family and to the poor.<sup>94</sup> The absence of goods' sharing in the institutionalized religious life degenerates the spirit of consecrated people, the common living. Undoubtedly, the material good is more visible and much more practical to be placed in common than the intellectual knowledge, the professional experience or the spiritual experiences originated from the surrender to God through the public profession of the vows. If there are faults in the material field, what can be said about the sharing of the other goods that exist in the community, within the individuals and in the institution? The lack of sharing becomes an ecclesial counter-witness.<sup>95</sup>

### 3.6 The origin of our goods

To a person who would ask us why do we have so many goods if we profess the vow of poverty? The response would be, these goods are not ours – personal. Much of what is at our disposition is the sum of many donations along the history of the Congregation and, other goods acquired as the result and sacrifice of the many sisters who came before us and others that are still working.<sup>96</sup>

In the religious Institutes, for many years, the presence of the religious in numerous schools and hospitals and the austere lifestyle allowed for the accumulation of reserves and the resources they have available today. It is true that today these great institutions-businesses are not a source of income; the lack of their own personnel and the legal demands increasingly reduce the expected benefits.<sup>97</sup>

Religious life is meaningful when we live primarily of the work, whether productive because it generates income, or non-productive in reference to the gratuitousness of the service to others. Not to preoccupy oneself with receiving with one's work, during the active phase of life, is a great irresponsibility and socially incomprehensible. About this Saint Paul's warning is harsh (2Tim. 3, 10).<sup>98</sup>

At every historical time, the world of the economic system challenges Consecrated Life to reinterpret the vow of poverty in the light of the evangelical meaning of being poor in the

94 *Ibidem*, n. 63.

95 Cf. M.S. MURÃO, "O uso do dinheiro na Vida Religiosa Consagrada," p. 165.

96 Cf. J. L. CASAROTTO, "As finanças da Congregação e a vida religiosa-missionária" p.131-132.

97 Cf. E. ARENAS – TORRES, *Vita Consacrata ed economia*, p. 116-117.

98 Cf. F.J. PALOM, "Economía y Misión en la vida consagrada hoy, desde la perspectiva de un laico," in *Economía y misión en la Vida Consagrada, hoy*, p. 48.

following of Jesus, in a world marked by contradictions and economic inequalities. In the religious communities, many conflicts derive from the questions raised around the vow of poverty, with what we live and how we interpret this vow.<sup>99</sup>

The economic order in a religious Congregation, is not merely an administrative question. It is an instance that is present at all moments of our life and, depending on the spirituality with which it is clothed; it can question the entire religious life and missionary activity. This does not mean a marginal activity, but it is a basic pillar on which we are building our life and from it depends also the manner in which we carry out our mission.<sup>100</sup>

If we want to integrate the economy in our lives, naturally, we must evaluate the elements of a dichotomous view of the reality and return to a biblical view. If this is not done, activities bound to the finances will always be viewed as of second category and at the margins of the sinful world. On one side, this depreciates the material goods and every effort that eventually is behind our profits and, on the other side, makes us enter a model that alienates from spirituality and isolates us from the reality and from the people.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.7 The use of money in the Consecrated Life

In the history of humanity, money and riches always walked together with power: money means power. In religious life, also, there is the temptation of power and those who manage the money are subjected to this temptation more than others are. Consequently, the persons indicated for this work must always keep in mind that they are not the owners of the money, but are called to serve the community.<sup>102</sup>

In religious life, there is a distorted comprehension of the values and priorities related to the use of money. The money issue needs a greater adjustment to the demands of the State, to the financial market and to the new rules enforced by globalization. In several religious Congregations, the relationships with the money have been the source and origin of innumerable conflicts in the day-to-day life of the community. Money is one of the most important elements in the living of the evangelical counsel of poverty and constitutes, for many people, a rather problematic issue.<sup>103</sup>

The unfamiliarity with the prices and the work in their own institutions, lead sisters to some irresponsibility and disinterest for the economic aspects, attaining even ingenuity

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99 M.S. MURÃO, "O uso do dinheiro na Vida Religiosa Consagrada," p. 155.  
100 Cf. J. L. CASAROTTO, "As finanças da Congregação e a vida religiosa-missionária" p.137.  
101 *Ibidem*, p.139-140.  
102 Cf. E. ARENAS – TORRES, *Vita Consecrata ed economia*, p. 23.  
103 Cf. M.S. MURÃO, "O uso do dinheiro na Vida Religiosa Consagrada," p. 153 -154.

and indifference about the issues related to money. In the traditional style of the monastic communities, the basic personal needs were supplied and, in a certain sense, the entire group appeared apparently satisfied. Today, the new anthropology integrates and values the world of ideas, as much as the material realities. The economic questions have to do, then, with the quality of life, with missionary activities and with the spirituality that nourishes the organization of the religious group and the ideal of the foundational charism.<sup>104</sup>

Nowadays, with the change of mentality and the economy subjected by the progress of the human sciences, the consecrated person seeks greater liberty in her/his interpersonal and social relationships. The understanding of the meaning of vow of poverty brings about the change of the relation and use of money. The sharing of money is a consequence of the interior freedom in relation to it.<sup>105</sup>

The greater the maturity, better will be the relationship with the money and its use, in view of the well-being of the individual and institution. An institution formed by happy mature and integrated individuals will certainly manifest the wellbeing of the group by the joy of having everything in common. If this would be a reality, what the biblical text says will happen *“Day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved”* (Acts 2, 47). The satisfied wish according to the needs of each person, can only contribute in the space of the spirituality and of the living of the charism.<sup>106</sup>

The following of the poor Jesus presupposes a high level of integration of the personality, and sufficient balance in the use of goods. The evangelical message accentuates the *“vow of poverty”* as condition for this following, *“Go and sell what you have, give to the poor After that, come and follow me* (Mk 10, 21). Poverty is meaningful only because of this proposal of Jesus (Mat 8, 19-22).<sup>107</sup>

In this way, Consecrated Life is a witness of the future kingdom for the world. It is already and not yet, eschatological presence of the fullness of life of God – the Kingdom of Heaven. Consecrated Life hopes that the detachment from all material things will bring full realization in this world. Confidence in Divine Providence is the support that assures the necessary to live.<sup>108</sup>

In conclusion, we can affirm that the aspects related to administration and economy imply attention to the spiritual life, a serious consideration of the experiences of trust in God, spiritual fellowship in Christ, reliance upon God’s Providence and mercy, love and forgiveness,

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104 *Ibidem*, p. 157.

105 *Ibidem*, p. 167.

106 *Ibidem*, p.160.

107 *Ibidem*, p.162-163.

108 *Ibidem*, p. 169.

self-denial, acceptance of the others, justice and peace, rendering life on earth divine and, thus, more dignified the life of the human being on earth.

The text of Matthew 25, on the Final Judgment, has a supreme authority. Jesus makes it very clear that the activities of solidarity are those that count. Really, the act of solidarity opens up to us the unexpected presence of God in the other 'if we have eyes to see.'







**Irmãs Missionárias  
de São Carlos  
Borromeo Scalabrinianas**