

Apostolic Virtues



Paolo Manna

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Apostolic Virtues

Fr. Paolo Manna

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Introduction

Fr. Paolo Manna was born in Avellino, Italy in 1872, and at the age of 19, he entered the “Society of the Foreign Missions of Milan” (the forerunner of P.I.M.E.). Four years later, he was ordained a priest and assigned to the missions of East Burma. His twelve years among the Karen tribe of the Burmese mountains were marked by great missionary zeal and enthusiasm, as well as sufferings, privation and ill health.

Finally forced back to Italy by his illness, Fr. Manna began immediately to lead the “missionary renewal” of the Italian Church. In 1908, he became the director of *Le Missioni Cattoliche*, a bulletin describing missionary life throughout the world; he also published two best sellers on missionary themes. He founded the magazine *Propaganda Missionaria* in 1914, and within a year had a circulation of more than 100,000 per month. To instill missionary awareness and enthusiasm among young people, he founded *Italia Missionaria* in 1919.

Fr. Manna’s greatest desire was to mobilize the whole Catholic world for the missionary cause, and to this end he founded the Missionary Union of the Clergy in 1916 and served as its director for five years. The Union’s purpose was to stir up missionary fervor among bishops and priests, who would then inspire their congregations to the same. Today, the Union is established in more than 50 countries and publishes 25 national bulletins. The English edition goes under the name of *Omnis Terra*.

It was during Fr. Manna’s tenure as Superior General of the Society (1924-1934) that the merger with the Mission Society of Rome took place

in 1926, and the name Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (P.I.M.E.) was given to the united community.

Among his vast writings, one of the most significant is entitled “The Separated Brethren”, published in 1941. This book provides just one example of his being “ahead of his time” as, well before the notion became popular in the Church at large, he called for a spirit of ecumenism and unity among all Christians, in order to be a more effective witness to the non-Christian world.

Apostolic Virtues is a collection of Fr. Manna’s circular letters, written during his time as Superior General to all of his members. First published in 1943, with further editions in 1955 and 1964, it is a lesson in how much can be accomplished if one truly loves the Lord, and a testimony to the great love which always filled his life, sometimes described as a “soul of fire”.

Translator's Notes

The primary purpose in undertaking this translation is to provide the wealth of Fr. Manna's insights and apostolic zeal to P.I.M.E.'s English speaking students in formation. It is presumed that their reading will be in the context of formation activities and thus guided by commentary and reflection on the part of a given formation team with application, for example, to the current situation of the missionary world. For this reason, such commentary and "updating" is not included here.

As mentioned in the Introduction above, there are many ways in which we could consider Fr. Manna to have been "ahead of his time". His call for ecumenism among Christians is one example, as is his strong admonition against any kind of cultural imperialism in missionary activity.

On the other hand, it must be recognized that, at least in terminology, Fr. Manna writes as a man of the early 20th Century. In the translation, different terminology is sometimes employed. For example the word *infideli*, which could be translated literally as infidel, heathen or unbeliever, has been rendered the more general non-Christian. In addition, some expressions of "triumphalism" in regard to missionary work have been somewhat softened. For the most part, however, every attempt has been made to remain true to the original text; again, it is presumed that necessary commentary on the part of formation team members will accompany the reading.

Scriptural quotations are taken from the "New American Bible". Naturally, references to the Code of Canon Law are taken from the

old Code, and will not appear in exactly the same form in the new Code. For greater ease of reading, the Latin expressions, which remained in the Italian text, have also been translated into English; for this, much appreciation is due to Fr. John Boracco. Thanks go out as well to Mr. Paul Witte for his editing contributions, and to U.S. Regional Superior Fr. Bruno Piccolo for his encouragement.*

Fr. Steve Baumbusch, PIME

Foreword

“Without faith the missionary has no reason to be.”

So wrote Father Paolo Manna in his work, *Apostolic Virtues*.

Indeed, Father Manna recognizes that our faith in Jesus Christ, the greatest gift we will ever receive, motivates all of us to be missionaries, to share that gift with others.

Nurturing and strengthening our missionary faith is at the heart of the work of the four Pontifical Mission Societies. These Societies include the Missionary Union, founded by Father Manna in 1916. That spiritual apostolate remains the “soul” of our mission animation efforts, because it is through the Missionary Union that the missionary spirit—a spirit of prayer and sacrifice—helps to strengthen and deepen our faith. Animators—priests, Religious, seminarians, pastoral leaders and those engaged in catechesis—encouraging other animators to be missionary—to “go and make disciples of all nations” (*Mt 28:19*)—compels so many to witness and share their faith with so many more.

Father Manna’s writings—the insights of a missionary in love with our Lord and motivated, in faith, to make Him better known—inspire all of us who are missionaries by our Baptism, whether we carry out that vocation here at home or far away in mission lands.

Rev. Msgr. John E. Kozar

National Director

Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States

CHAPTER ONE: The Spirit Of The Institute

1) To Serve The Church

The mission of the Church is this: to lead people to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His law, and thus to their eternal salvation. In lands which are still non-Christian, the Church has deigned to make use of the work of religious orders and missionary societies so that, with the zealous ministry of holy and worthy workers, the reign of God might be established.

Our institute was founded and placed at the service of the Church to work for the attainment of this noble end. The Church has accepted the offering of our work and has associated us with her divine enterprise, entrusting to us vast territories to evangelize, where our confreres of yesterday and today have poured out (and are still pouring out) sweat and energies which the Lord has deigned (and still deigns) to bestow in great measure.

It is not vainglorious to affirm here that our Institute, even with the inevitable and inherent weaknesses of any human undertaking, has never come up short of its noble purpose; it has always and everywhere given of itself, without reserve and without counting the cost, to the divine apostolate, consecrating to it, without exception, all its members, all its forces and resources, with utmost fidelity to the directives of the Holy See, even to the point of forgetting itself. Our members, in fact, have never considered the Institute as an entity unto itself, with purposes, aims or interests distinct from those of the missions; and this is to their great merit and honor.

If today the institute is better organized, everything is being done with the same spirit of offering better service, to be able to give itself and to give more to the Church and to souls. We must hold fast to this spirit of the Institute, fashioned with generosity, zeal and charity. We must not impoverish nor weaken ourselves through personal projects which could, even in the slightest way, dim the shining, wholly evangelical ideal of missionary life as the Institute conceives it and puts it into practice. This, together with the personal sanctification of each member, is our entire purpose. An Institute assigned by the Church to evangelize a people *is not a substitute for the Church*, which cannot abdicate her right and duty coming from God to direct and govern the sacred ministry of souls wherever and by whomever it is being exercised. The role of the Institute is only that of *service*, lending men and means. And this in itself is already an immense honor! The governance of the missions is always the unique, strict and exclusive province of the Church.

The superiors of the missions, therefore, are named by the Church, receive their powers from the Church and govern only in her name, although they are chosen from the members of the Missionary Institute and are selected or proposed by the Institute. The true superiors *of the missions* then, are *only* those whom the Holy See has named and "...to whom the mission among non-Christians is solely reserved."^[1]

The regular provincial, regional or local superiors do not have any jurisdiction *over the missions*, but only *over their subjects* inasmuch as they are members of a religious society. And these, as evangelical workers in the performance of their ministry, must be submitted in everything to ecclesiastical superiors and directed only by them.

2) Our Only Ambition

After this, it would not be out of place to say a word about the spirit with which our Institute must consider the missions. This spirit, which the Holy Church has implanted in solemn documents, must be well impressed in our hearts and must inform and guide all of our activities. The missions are a part of the vineyard of the Lord, which the Good Shepherd has given to the Institute, only in order to send workers there to till the soil and found the Church. The missions are a part of the Church and it is only to establish the Church there that we are sent. But neither we, nor all the orders and Institutes which work in the world put together, are the Church. They are only sent to prepare the way and establish the Church. And when will this be? When can their work be said to be completed? “*Only when in every ecclesial region they have sufficient ecclesiastical structures of their own, their own indigenous clergy and their own means of carrying on their works.*”^[2]

May it never happen among us (as, thanks be to God, it has never happened up to now) that a mission become an end in itself: that congregational, national and economic interest prevail over those of God and the Church. This would betray our apostolic mission and impede the establishment of God’s reign. We are apostles! The Apostles did not have anything in mind other than to serve, but they always served Jesus Christ, only and uniquely. We are apostles, and we wander far and wide, we work generously, only for the sake of souls, only for the Church, only for heaven! It is natural that orders and institutes will tend to grow, to extend themselves in members and in activities. Such dispositions, which we also

feel, can be a blessing as long as we never lose sight of the end to which everything is ordered and directed: God, the Church, souls. We can be more numerous and stronger, but only in order to serve better.

It can happen, instead, maybe even unconsciously, that we put God, the Church and souls in second place, and we put forward that which concerns the interests of the orders, the congregations, and maybe the nations. This can be seen in the missions when we don't place the highest priority on the formation of the local clergy; when even if their number is sufficient, we continue to consider them unready; when we don't consider it good that other workers come to take a part of the territory where we have not yet arrived to work; when we consider the handing over of our territory to missionaries of another nationality as a diminishing of our Institute. To serve the missions in this way might favor the solidity and material interests of a missionary institute, but it by no means favors the spontaneous and free spread of God's reign in non-Christian countries, and thus the establishment of that Church which has honored us by confidently entrusting the missions to us.

We must be and always remain true missionaries of great hearts and wide vision, faithful servants of the Church and of our Lord Jesus Christ. To the Holy See, to the Pope, for Jesus Christ, we submit all of ourselves: who we are and what we have as individuals and as Institute. We are happy if the sacrifices of our dedicated lives can bring forth new churches of God in those areas where so many of our confreres are sowing in tears and in blood.

We admire them. We feel more than ever intimately united with them in the love of our Lord, to whom we daily remember and recommend them in prayer.

3) That We Might Be Worthy...

My most ardent desire is that we can prove ourselves ever more worthy of the divine vocation with which the Lord in His goodness has honored us: to live out the true ministry of the Gospel, totally immersed in and afire with the Spirit and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose work we must continue, spreading the Kingdom and participating in His triumph. And not only must we reflect inwardly in order for our ministry to be worthy of the Gospel: we must seek to make ourselves, to the extent possible, more worthy of the immense task which our Lord, through His Church has entrusted to us.

We must, individually and collectively, feel very strongly the responsibility which this task imposes upon us, since it is from us, from our vibrant zeal, that millions of souls await their salvation. Christ will reign in the fields entrusted to us only insofar as we, His missionaries, plant His cross, extend His victories and found the Church. This sense of apostolic responsibility and this ardent quest for Christ's victory are the precious inheritance left by our predecessors: the gift given to them and to us by the One who has called us.

But it is necessary that this fire of apostolic zeal be ignited even more in our hearts, because the field which still remains for us to cultivate is so vast, and so numerous are the souls which we must reach.

Our apostolate, then, must be a wise, constant and untiring effort toward reaching this great, noble, glorious goal of making God and his Son Jesus Christ reign in our missions. Woe to us if we flag in our efforts, if the missions begin to become ends in themselves, if we don't examine ourselves day after day to see if what we are doing is as much as we could be doing for the cause of God!

4) Let Us Preserve Our Spirit

Supreme, jealous care must be taken by a superior to maintain the good spirit and keep intact the ideal, the type of perfection which is proper to the members of the Institute he leads. Our Institute has developed its traditions of apostolic spirit, has delineated the type of perfection which corresponds to our zealous missionaries, such that they inspire many others to want to be a part of our apostolic family, totally dedicated to promote the establishment of the God's reign in non-Christian territories.

What is our tradition of apostolic spirit? It is that we are essentially and exclusively missionaries: missionaries in the truest, highest and most complete sense of the word. Those who enter among *us* *must* know that the Institute has no other goal than the missions among the non-Christians and that we are totally and only missionary. We don't go to the missions according to our pleasure and choice; we go where the superiors send us. We don't say yes to some places and no to others; we must *be* available to go everywhere. We don't go for a certain number of years, but for our whole life. We don't go with a view toward advancement or reward, but only to sacrifice ourselves, to work and die for the sake of Jesus Christ and souls. Neither do we go with the desire to affirm ourselves and implant ourselves as an Institute, but only with the desire to serve God and the Church with the utmost disinterest, happy in the knowledge that one day fervent indigenous churches might arise upon our tombs, so that the work of our distant successors might be considered to be less indispensable than that of ourselves today. Finally, we don't go to wave flags of "civilization" and patriotism, but only the humble cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have only one great ambition: that this cross alone might save souls and reign over the world, even at the cost of our own lives.

This is our spirit: in the Institute we must learn the missionary *life* seen and lived by our dear fathers and brothers dispersed throughout the non-Christian world. This exclusive application toward our great goal not only forms our character, but also provides our power and our value. Bound,

like the apostles, to no vow, to no place nor human interest, we have no other name than that of our goal: *Missioni Estere (Foreign Missions)*. Like the apostles we dedicate ourselves to shape our whole spirit according to that of the Divine Teacher and to follow faithfully the teachings and examples of His apostolic life. Just as we cannot place degrees and limits on the practice of the evangelical virtues, because we have no means to measure dedication and self-sacrifice, neither can we put limits on our perfection in the imitation and love of our Lord, who does all for the sake of souls.

Thus only those with great and magnanimous spirits, who desire to love the Lord very much, can be a part of our Institute, where generosity, dedication, renunciation and sacrifice are presupposed essentials to every activity, without which no step is taken. The one filled with this spirit, afire with this charity, succeeds. The one not equipped with it finds himself out of place, is burdened, and fails!

Those with weak, indifferent, enigmatic, negligent, and self-interested spirits, who are too attached to family, while not bad, are not suited for us who must be the chosen warriors of the Lord, destined for the front lines, where the risks and the responsibilities are greater. The superiors in our houses of formation, therefore, must always have foremost in their minds *all qualities required in our missionaries*, and thus they must know how, over time, to discern which ones are truly called from among the many who aspire to join the Institute. For our ministry, a greater number of workers doesn't help, and can even do great harm, if it is not accompanied by quality.

5) The Great Danger

Given the atmosphere which exists and the current manner of recruiting vocations, I foresee a danger: the danger that we might, without even noticing it, gradually begin to come down from the heights I have been describing, to settle for a comfortable mediocrity. This, however, would be

followed by innumerable miseries and the ruin of the Institute because, as I have recalled many other times, our goal is too great, the life of the missions is too hard for mediocre virtues and a less than generous spirit to suffice. In the atmosphere in which we live, who cannot see the many areas in which the human tries to take over the divine, or how the modern tendency for organization sometimes threatens to kill the spirit, and the mechanism often becomes an end in itself? Today everyone and everything is evaluated according to how much money can be accumulated and possessed. We *are* in the century of publicity, of exaggerations, of noise, because it seems there is a need to make an impression, to exalt oneself, even at the expense of the truth.

In regard to this spirit which invades everything and materializes everywhere, I never stop praying that the Lord will release and free us from it, and I exhort all of you, beloved confreres, to be careful to keep it far away from all of our endeavors, if we really want to represent God's power in the mission fields. It doesn't matter that in doing so we might be appreciated less, or thought of as old fashioned, or deprived of some material advantages, because in the end "*whatever is not born of God shall perish altogether,*"^[3] but "*the truth of the Lord remains forever.*"^[4]

[Editor's note: The following paragraph may be very offensive to Protestants. It is included because of the historical nature of this document.] It might be too self-satisfying—if only for the purposes of propaganda—to compare our modest activity with the striking and grandiose ones of the Protestants, not taking into sufficient and due account the *spiritual element*, which in the Catholic apostolate is a little less than everything and in that of the Protestant sects is a little more than nothing.

6) Concerning Our Public Relations

Let every manifestation of our public relations remain immune to this modernism: they must be serious, fitting, truthful, in perfect correspondence to the life of our missionaries. People used to read the humble reports of the Propagation of the Faith, often written by the missionaries with blood and tears. Today, people prefer to read beautiful vignettes, fantastic accounts, and more or less imaginary stories, almost as if the cross of Christ has nothing more to say, as if the divine drama of the apostolate being played out in so many places, the perilous work of winning millions of souls for Jesus Christ which claims our most urgent cooperation, is not in and of itself enough to interest the faithful. The old missionary bulletins, even though they were humble and modest, were always uplifting, often moved people to reflection and even tears, and inspired heroism. Our publications should be the same: a true echo of the heart of Jesus, yearning for the salvation of the non-Christians. The good Christians, the faithful who have a sense of Christ within them, do not read our bulletins to satisfy an idle curiosity, but to live the apostolic life and to participate in it in whatever way they can.

The principal goal of our public relations, whether written or oral, is *to stir up vocations*. Missionary vocations are the most precious gift that God can give to the ones he chooses, and through them, to poor non-Christians, to the Institute which welcomes them, and to the Church from which they will one day be sent. Apostles and only apostles constitute the truly indispensable element for the salvation of non-Christians: “*How can they believe unless they have heard of him, and how can they hear unless there is someone to preach, and how can they preach unless they are sent?*”⁵¹ All of our public relations, then, must strive to stir up a great fire of apostolic fervor in the hearts of youth, so that, in the ultimate analysis, good vocations are produced and a greater number of missionaries are sent to non-Christian peoples.

Today, there is no lack of conferences, seminary courses on missiology and missionary exhibits; there are even films and theater shows on the subject of missions. But afterwards, how many feel inspired and *decide to*

offer their very lives? What is lacking? You know the answer: *true* vocations come from God, and we must pray to God for them: *Rogate Dominum messis...* It is to this end that in each of our houses we offer weekly communion and rosary for youth, and pray the *Veni Creator* every day. To this prayer we add, as much as we are able, the work of publication and spoken testimony, both of which must always be humble, disinterested, and *inspired by faith*.

An old missionary, worn out from years of hard work, can go into the seminary and speak about the needs of souls, and *has the power to sow vocations*. Simple but inspired words, fortified by the evidence of his own sacrifice, have the power of the word of God, and can generate other missionaries. So also, the stories which and the needs of souls, are more important than descriptions of material constructions and works.

Thus our public relations must be serious and holy, just as the apostolate is serious and holy. To do otherwise is to discredit the sanctity of the cause, the missions and the Institute. Thus there is the danger, far from imaginary, that this theme, not treated in a serious and holy manner, ends up not making an impression, no longer penetrating the heart, and resulting in mere speculation like any other.

7) Toward Our Goal

Let nothing sway us; let nothing distract us. With our eyes and hearts fixed on Jesus Christ, we are as unshakable as He and His Gospel! Let us beware of every modernism which can weaken within us the true spirit of the Institute, totally and genuinely apostolic. Let us proceed, even if slowly and heavily, toward our great target: the salvation of many souls, the foundation of the Church in the lands which have been entrusted to us for evangelization, the triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER TWO: The Great Imperative

1) Be Holy

We missionaries often ask ourselves why the work of the conversion of the world proceeds so slowly. Many reasons to explain this sad fact could be cited, and truly the problem can be considered from many different angles, some of which have nothing to do with our responsibility. However, for the part that concerns us (and this is the main one), the problem has a very clear solution. God, in His infinite wisdom, has desired to have co-workers. God does His part very well; do those called to assist Him do their part just as well?

Suppose that the whole Church, the whole People of God, directed by their bishops and priests, really felt the apostolic duty which inspires them to promote the spread of the faith by all the means at their disposal, suppose that missionaries, the more direct instruments in the conversion of souls, *were saints*, the non-Christians would be quick to convert.

The subject of the missions has been and is now almost ignored by Christian people! Those who were interested in it in the past were always an extremely small minority, and it is sad to see (even if today some steps forward have been made) how this huge issue is far from being understood and confronted fully by the clergy and people. It's extremely sad, because Catholic people would have more than enough energy to promote more worthily the work and evangelization of non-Christians, if they were instructed, organized, and above all enkindled by priests to a greater spirit

of faith and zeal. The Holy Father and the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith are very concerned with mission, but they are like generals with few soldiers. The divine mission entrusted by our Lord to the Church to preach the Gospel to the peoples of the earth is entirely a work of cooperation; where such cooperation is scarce, the movement toward conversion is necessarily slow.

But this is not what I want to talk about. I cannot stress enough the part that missionaries in the field have to play in this cooperation, and it is for this reason that I say to you: *be holy missionaries*, and for the part that concerns you, your apostolic duty will be completely fulfilled: the souls which the Lord in His merciful design has entrusted to each of you to bring healing, will be saved, and at the end of your days you will be able to say with the Divine Redeemer: “*I guarded those you gave me, and not one of them was lost.*”^[6]

2) In Glorious Footsteps

We have some great examples in front of us and we need to treasure them. Our Institute can boast of a deposit of apostolic traditions, of methods of apostolate which are so noble, so enlivened by the highest spirit of sacrifice, self-denial and zeal, that nothing separates us from the larger missionary institutes. This sacred deposit is our true wealth, our boast: on it rests my hope for divine blessings to always accompany our institute, and because of it our apostolic family is well thought of and appreciated by the Church.

From the Servant of God Mazzucconi to the last of our deceased missionaries—to speak only of those who have died—what a crown of heroism and unknown martyrs, what sweat poured out, how many struggles, how many lives sacrificed before their time, have contributed to the foundation of that Church which you continue to build amid so many hardships and sufferings! What is the secret, what is the soul of such zeal,

dedication and perseverance, of a heroism that too often results in the sacrifice of life? That is what we need to investigate in order to encourage ourselves to follow in these footsteps, to do our part, to cooperate with everything in our power in the conversion of non-Christians.

Our missionaries, even from the human point of view, have been superior men. Some among them have been eminent in doctrine and knowledge of language; others for their astuteness and sensitivity in assimilating themselves and relating with people of other cultures evangelized by them; many were true strategists of the apostolate always taking on new positions; all were courageous, hardened to fatigue, ready for any hardship. But it was not their intelligence, nor their prudence, nor their courage that made them great in our eyes and in the eyes of God: they were great, they saved many souls, they founded many churches, principally because *they were holy men*, men of a rich interior life. This was the secret, the soul of their zeal, their perseverance, and their successes. It is the solemn teaching which they have passed on to us, and of which I love to remind you, so that *always* our missionaries of today and tomorrow might find in it the primary and essential basis for the sanctification of themselves and souls entrusted to them.

3) Prayer And Optimism

At times, discouragement can infect a missionary right in the middle of his apostolic career. Well, also in this case, there is no other remedy than prayer, which puts us in the position of supplicants and helps us to see both our misery and the comfort that can be found from the fruits of our struggle.

You won't find men of prayer who are pessimists in regard to missionary work. And if you can think of some missionary, whether in the missions or back home, who says that the results of his apostolic work among the non-

Christians are not worth the efforts he has put forth, you can be sure that the one you are thinking of is not a man of prayer.

We must take as a matter of faith that, just as every prayer is infallibly granted in proportion to its moral perfection, so every effort made for God for the conversion of souls is effective in the proportion to which it is enlivened by prayer. We may or may not see the results of our work here below, but they are there, and God takes note of them. The fidelity, omnipotence and goodness of God guarantees this, because united to God in prayer, it is not we who are working, but God who is working in and through us, and God never works in vain.

The missionary must never be discouraged. It would be an offense against the all-powerful God who has called him and for whom he works! The true missionary is always an optimist, always filled with the enthusiasm which first inspired him to leave everything and follow our Lord in the way of the apostolate.

Revisit, dear confreres, the whole history of your holy vocation: how many difficulties you've overcome, how many separations from loved ones, how many sacrifices, sufferings and tears! You had a great vision of heroism before you, and you were impelled by the desire to prove your great love for Jesus Christ.

But now, so many years removed from the fervor of your first Mass and your unforgettable departure ceremony, do you still have that same enthusiasm, that same desire to work for Jesus, to win souls for Him in great number, to suffer for Him, who did not hesitate to give His life and blood for you? If such is the attitude of your heart, rejoice and thank God, because you are quite right! But if someone feels abandoned and discouraged, disillusioned, cold and unenthusiastic, he should examine what his prayer life is or was like during his years in the missions. Let him examine himself dispassionately and severely, and maybe he will find the

key to the puzzle, the reason for his predicament; and surely the remedy for it will appear clearly to him as well.

4) For The Older Missionaries

Sometimes there is the complaint that young missionaries do not give the account of themselves that could be expected, that they don't take on the attitude and appearance of holy workers for the Gospel. And this sad fact is attributed to the lack of vocations, to the incomplete formation which these young men had in the seminary; and this might even be true! But it could also be that these young missionaries, once they are in the missions and find themselves unattached to the ties of seminary discipline, are not able to find in its stead the more persuasive and attractive discipline of good examples on the part of the older missionaries with whom they have been assigned to work.

It is a grave error to think that a missionary, sent to the missions just after completing his seminary studies, has finished his total preparation! There's another preparation which cannot be given in the homeland: it is the immediate preparation he receives as soon as he arrives in the area where he is assigned to work. In a sense, this is the most important preparation, because it lasts a lifetime.

The young missionary will do that which he sees: even if his earlier preparation has not been the best, the living example of the proven missionaries he finds in the field will have a decisive power to reveal to him the virtues and lifestyle which must accompany him all of his days.

It is of the utmost importance that the new missionary always keep alive and burning that initial fervor with which he leaves his homeland and faces what is for him the new world of the missions. Now it is by conviction that he must attend to the practices of piety which the schedule had provided for him in the seminary. How much will he benefit in this regard

from the good examples of his confreres! How terrible, on the other hand, if he receives an example of negligence in such important matters! My confreres understand very well what I'm trying to say.

Example is a great thing in general, but it has the utmost importance for us missionaries, because the word “missionary” means all that is noble, perfect and heroic in following Christ; thus, anything that goes against this principle hurts and injures the spirit. When returned missionaries, fervent in spirit, pass through the seminary, they are an immense edification; the young men see, learn and feel strengthened in their vocation. Seeing these men has much more effect than many exhortations. And if some others pass through, neglecting the practices of piety? This is also observed, and the effect is disastrous. And won't that also be true in the missions?

5) Meditating On The Cross

The missionary must present himself to non-Christian peoples as *alter Christus* (another Christ). In fact, the missionary is nothing if he does not imitate Christ.

When the missionary relies only on his *humanity*, he is ineffective. It is because so many missionaries of the Catholic Church do not perfectly reflect Jesus Christ that the non-Christians are not converted. How can you expect the poor non-Christian to convert if he sees in the Catholic missionary only a European; or worse, only a minister of the religion of the conquerors, not very different, at least externally, from the infinite variety of Protestant ministers?

Beloved confreres, it is often said that there are few missionaries; but there are even fewer *true missionaries*, the missionaries who reflect the divine figure of our Lord Jesus Christ with their whole lives! But how can they reflect and imitate Jesus Christ if they do not make Him the constant object of their meditation? How can our spirits reflect the features of the

divine model without constantly fixing our gaze upon Him, without studying and analyzing His life, from the manger, to the cross, to the altar?

We must read the Gospel daily; it must be our habitual book of meditation, a book which is never exhausted, because we never finish in our study and understanding of it, nor in putting it into practice in our lives.

Ah! Only the missionary who faithfully imitates Christ Himself and can join Paul the Apostle in saying to the people: *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ*: only He can reproduce that image in the souls of others. Those who do not do this begin to weaken and to complain if their efforts are not rewarded. The missionary must nourish a steadfast love, must have a real passion for souls. But how can he have this love if he is not a man of prayer? It is out of meditation on what Blessed Jesus has done for the salvation of souls that our vocation has sprung. The cross has made us missionaries, and it is the cross which must nourish in us the love for souls.

Let us, then, often make the passion and death of our Lord the object of our meditation, and let us especially dedicate ourselves to this practice during the sacred season of Lent. These mysteries are the true source of apostolic zeal. Thinking of the wounds of Christ, thinking of the cross, the humiliation of Calvary, teaches us to love souls and to embrace any sacrifice for their salvation.

Any fervor which does not spring from the mystery of the cross is passing and ephemeral, because only the example of what Jesus Christ has suffered for the sake of souls can effectively spur us to embrace the sacrifices inherent in every zealous work. Caught up in the love of the crucified Christ, we will undoubtedly be great saviors of souls. The authors of the precious booklet *Monita ad Missionarios* (*Advice to Missionaries*) ask how missionaries, even those who have made the three vows of poverty chastity and obedience, can fall victim to avarice, weakness and vanity in the

missions. They can find no other reason *except that their spirit of prayer has become lax*. Remembering the admonition of Jesus Christ, “...stay awake and pray that you will not be put to the test,”⁷⁷ they say that if our Lord *specifically gave the apostles this command, by virtue of our missionary apostolate we must be fed daily by the bread of prayer!* If for some reason we fail to do so, there will necessarily be a continual decrease in the way of virtue. Serious words, written hundreds of years ago, but too true today as well.

Missionaries, men who are naturally strong and decisive, do not do things halfway. When we became missionaries we intended to give our whole selves to Jesus Christ. If we are not united with Him in a great, total dedication, which one cannot have without prayer, He will be constrained by our lack of generosity to remain far away from us, and we will thus end up being deprived of a great amount of grace, and undoubtedly we will fail miserably.

Let us be united to God through a life of meditation and in this way we will become visible instruments of His mercy. Let us not delude ourselves: apostolic zeal, without which we are nothing as missionaries, does not blaze up except from a heart aflame with the love of God. When our heart is united to God in the intimacy of meditation and prayer, then we will be fervent and our love will inspire us with that diligent, practical persevering and untiring zeal which characterizes the true apostle of Jesus Christ.

6) “Our Citizenship Is In Heaven...”

To reach souls to win them for Christ, human means are not enough. We are on the earth among humanity, but our interests are heavenly and divine; we work in a supernatural world. To work with success in this field, we must be in constant communication with God; we must be able to say: “*Our citizenship is in Heaven.*”⁷⁸ Only in this way will our words and our struggles be effective in reaching souls and reaching the heart of God.

There are some missionaries who preach and who work hard in many ways, but produce little fruit, and too few souls are converted. They don't pray enough, and their work is largely mechanical, little if at all enlivened by grace, which is indispensable in order to win souls! We sometimes grieve over the fact that we are not able to accomplish great things, that our struggles bring about few results: we complain about the hardness of the non-Christians and the newly baptized who do not respond to our care! But do we, who are so certain that we've worked very hard, ever ask ourselves if we've prayed just as hard?

Be men of sound interior life, of prayer, and even if you don't have a lot of natural gifts, the grace of God will abundantly supply anything you lack! How many times have missionaries, with few natural gifts but great in holiness, produced great fruits of goodness in the missions, while others, perhaps more intelligent and able in themselves, have worked in vain! It is worthwhile to know how to preach, but it is much more worthwhile to know how to pray. The missionary who has learned the language well and knows how to preach, but prays little, can expound perfectly on the truths of our religion, but he leaves the people cold. The missionary who has much intimacy with God in prayer, even if he is not the best in his presentation, will always have the gift of planting the spirit of Jesus Christ in souls, and this is ultimately what any preaching must accomplish. The former will teach about Jesus Christ; the latter will *make Him visible*. You understand the difference! "*Unless the teaching comes from within, the tongue of the teacher works in vain*" (St. Gregory).

7) Let Us Live The Faith!

The fervent life of a missionary, his regular, wise, industrious and untiring activity, the unalterable joy of his life and his perseverance in the work, even in the midst of privation, hardship and difficulty, are always the result of a life of faith.

If faith is obscured, then zeal is also diminished; then even the strongest are affected by tiredness and discouragement, and they might end up completely unhappy and lose their vocation. If instead, the missionary lives by faith, then it is great, it is wonderful, it is divine: he can give his whole self to the Church and to souls; no hardship, no difficulty defeats him; no heroism is beyond his power!

The missionary is a man of faith *par excellence*: he is born from faith, he lives by faith, for faith he willingly works, endures, and dies. The missionary who is otherwise is, at most, an “amateur” in the apostolate; soon he will be an obstruction to the mission, a failure in himself and, God forbid, the cause of ruin for souls. Without faith the missionary has no reason to be. He doesn’t exist; or, if he does exist, he is not the true missionary of Jesus Christ.

The missionary who wants to live and remain at the height of his vocation must constantly nourish this spirit of faith, enlightening and inspiring himself by meditation on the great truths of our holy religion. By continual prayer he must receive from God (whose instrument he is) the grace which he needs for his ministry and without which he can do nothing in regard to the eternal salvation of his own soul and that of the people to whom he has gone to evangelize. *Meditation* then, and *prayer*: these constitute the power of the missionary, the only true sources and reasons for his zeal, his perseverance and his success!

A missionary who finds a half-hour of meditation burdensome, who prays his Office distractedly and hurries through the Mass, who has little familiarity with the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin...who, on the pretext of many works and projects taking up his time, gives little attention to meditation and other acts of piety, such a missionary is a poor illusion: his work is in vain and without any true consistency, and his

projects, even if he has many of them, are nothing more than simple chatter, often expressions of a vain and frivolous spirit.

The great sublime mission of the apostolic man is to save souls, and to save them as Jesus Christ saved them. To be able to carry out this divine commitment worthily the missionary must always carry with him the great motives which impress upon him, like a law or a necessity, the duty of the apostolate, zeal for the salvation of souls. Thus he will frequently meditate upon the love of God for souls; upon their value and excellence; upon the danger that so many might be eternally lost; upon the nobility of the apostolic vocation, rich in merits above any other; and upon the indescribable prize reserved for true apostles of the Gospel.

The creation of this visible world, the ineffable mystery of divine redemption, the sanctification of souls which has required so many miracles of divine power, the Holy Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin, the Church, everything which tells us how much God has loved and continues to love His people: there is not any subject of meditation that is not able to convince us of the immense, incomparable love of God for souls.

8) “We Must Pray Always”

This is a recommendation for everyone. For us missionaries it is a law, a necessity, an indispensable condition for success in our divine undertaking and in overcoming all the difficulties we encounter. How many difficulties lay in the path of an apostolic man! I think of you often, beloved confreres, and while I admire you for the great and beautiful works you accomplish, I revere you for the enormous sacrifices you embrace with joy every day for the love of Jesus, for the love of souls. But many times, I also fear for you, especially when I perceive signs, if only slight ones, of discouragement and sadness.

To the honor of our missionaries I must say that no one has ever complained about the discomfort, privations, and hardships which accompany the missionary life: your hearts are too noble to give weight and prominence to such things. But there are moral difficulties and sufferings which even the Apostles experienced, and which St. Paul often mentioned in his letters; pains and sufferings which you also feel, which are able to batter the strongest and most generous of spirits, if they are not sustained by the grace of God: little correspondence, defections, the ingratitude of the converted, loneliness and the feeling of abandonment; the misunderstandings that can take place among confreres and with the superiors; the feeling of being not well understood or appreciated; the scarcity of means, which prevents one from doing all that he would like; the opposition of nonbelievers and Protestants, which obstructs our work; not to mention attacks of temptation and the battle with the evil one who tries the spirit; all of these are difficulties which can produce sadness and discouragement in us.

Who can sustain us in such trials? God, only God, beseeched with a spirit of humility and of filial, faithful abandon. Oh yes, everyone needs to pray, but how much more does the missionary need to pray, and to pray always, since he goes into battle against the demon in his own dominion, and is opposed by a whole world of iniquity, which loves to remain in darkness.

Besides, the missionary, more so than the priest at home, not only has the necessity, but also the possibility to pray: the life of mission takes place mostly in a vast solitude, in the silent forests and mountains, among poor and simple people; it has more than a few similarities with the life of a hermit and greatly fosters the spirit of contemplation and recollection.

When the missionary has completed his rounds of missions and returned to the central house of his area, what peace, what silence and tranquility he enjoys!

How much time then can he spend with the Lord who is there in the tabernacle of his chapel, and is there principally for him? If the missionary is a man of faith, how much grace can he obtain for himself and for the souls entrusted to him, how much grace can he build up in order to carry out his projects joyfully, to make his apostolic endeavors prosper? It is also during these times of respite that the good missionary makes his monthly day of retreat, to renew himself in spirit, to take fresh strength in order to carry on with ever greater fervor and firmer purpose in his holy vocation of saving souls.

As blessed as this solitude might be, however, the missionary must always be ready to abandon it when his duty, the good of souls, requires it. He is mindful that true sanctity does not consist in the sweet enjoyment of spiritual repose, but in the perfect realization of God's will, which for him is the faithful discharge of his apostolic duties, sparing nothing to bring about the glory of God in the salvation of souls. But if he thus interrupts his physical solitude, this does not mean that he interrupts his communication with God. If he is not able to carry the Sacramental Jesus with him, he carries with him His reflections and interior solitude: he knows that he is the temple of the Holy Spirit, that by coming down from Heaven to him each morning, Jesus makes a home in his heart. Even in the most laborious ministries, he, like the angels in the exercise of their office, does not divert his spirit from God; and he prays even when traveling, even in the midst of his most intense work.

How easy, how beautiful is the prayer the missionary can make during his long and frequent travels. Many times nature, with the visible spectacles that it continually offers to his gaze, will invite him to contemplate the beauty and greatness of God; other times, the sight of the non-Christian areas he is passing through will draw from his heart fervent supplications for their conversion. And he can always say his rosary, dropping little seeds of prayer along the way, seeds which will surely not fall in vain.

What a mistake to neglect prayer on the pretext of too much work! Dear confreres, may not even one of you fall into this fatal error. You certainly don't have more to do than the holy Apostles; well, they preferred to free themselves from some activities, even holy ones, to apply themselves *first* to prayer, and *then* to preaching. "*This will permit us to concentrate on prayer and the ministry of the word.*"^[9]

And then, let's be honest. Is it really pure love of God, true zeal for souls that makes one habitually neglectful in the practices of piety? He finds enough time to engage in many activities of a superficial nature, with dubious usefulness in regard to serious apostolic work...he has time for useless visits, for playing games and hunting, for those long periods of recreation and conversations that carry on late into the night. And then would he be stingy with the time he gives to the Lord?

Let's remember: *We must pray always!* When you don't pray, you're not happy; and you don't do any good, whether in the missions or at home, neither for yourself nor for the others.

9) God With Us!

Another very important element of the interior life is devotion to the Holy Eucharist, which I would like to see very active in all of our missionaries.

For us, Jesus is everything, and Jesus is in the Blessed Sacrament. Then what could we lack? If we are lacking something, is it not because we remain distant from the Lord, who is the source of all grace?

Make of the Holy Mass your paradise: the sacred tabernacle should be the magnet which attracts you irresistibly. Before it you will pass the most beautiful hours of your life, and the time most useful for your apostolate: you will attract your newly baptized to it and unfailingly make them better.

“Look to Him that you may be radiant with joy”!^[10] Let us remain close to the Eucharistic heart of Jesus and this immense source of love will sanctify our poor hearts and ignite them with so much ardent zeal that souls without number will be attracted to us. Thus we will have reached the goal of our life, which is sanctification, and the goal of our divine vocation, which is the salvation of the souls entrusted to us.

When in the midst of one suffering or another, you place yourself before the tabernacle and tell Jesus that it is for Him that you struggle, for His interests that you suffer, that it is His cause which is in peril; when instead of becoming angry at your enemies you implore mercy and pardon for them, then you can be sure that you will no longer feel sad and depressed, but will leave your fervent prayer as if coming out of a healing bath, refreshed and renewed, with greater strength to continue the battle. An hour of adoration overcomes more difficulties than many discussions; a fervent prayer, illuminating the spirit with the eternal light of God, comforting the heart with the life-giving warmth of Jesus’ heart, makes our own love unclouded and fills us with humility and generosity; then, most difficulties, which at first seemed so heavy and insurmountable, appear to us as things which are in fact negligible.

CHAPTER THREE: Our Perfection

1) The Sublime Goal

The nature of our Institute of ecclesiastics not bound by vows could lead some to believe that we would be content with a certain mediocrity in terms of perfection and sanctity. This would be a deplorable mistake: injurious, not to mention dishonorable to ourselves and to the cause we have the grace to serve. This certainly was not the idea of our holy founders nor of the heroic missionaries who, from the time of our foundation up to today, have honored the Institute and the Church with their virtue, no less than with their struggles and sacrifices.

Indeed, for a missionary Institute, it is impossible to speak of mediocrity in virtue and holiness! Just think of what such an Institute desires and must be in the holy Church of God! Thus, I have told you many times: we are not religious in the common sense of the word, but we cannot dispense ourselves from any of the counsels of evangelical perfection, even the most lofty ones, if we want to be who we must be: true apostles of Jesus.

And I have affirmed that to be a missionary in our Institute requires the highest degree of perfection in virtue; so that the Institute is able to offer to the Church and to the Lord—as it has done and continues to do—examples of true and holy workers for the Gospel. I have declared that if our missionary vocation means anything, it is the solemn and real commitment that each one of us takes to give everything without reservation to the Lord, even to the sacrifice of our lives for the salvation

of souls... For this reason, we missionaries must aspire to *the highest level of perfection*, precisely because we are committed to spend our lives, and when necessary to give up our lives for the sake of souls. Nothing separates us, then, from religious, because for us the commitment to this high level of perfection *is always followed by the reality* of an existence which cannot be sustained if we are not animated by a great love for the Lord and a practical love for sacrifice.

This, beloved confreres, is the wonderful theme which I want to address for your edification and mine, to place before the eyes of everyone, especially the younger ones, the sublime goal to which we must aim, lest we receive the divine gift of our vocation in vain, and to inspire us to a greater love for our missionary life and that of the Institute of which we are privileged to be a part.

2) A Most Evident Truth

It is not necessary to demonstrate a truth which is totally evident to us: that among the ministries of the Church, the most holy, the most difficult, the most necessary, in which we by divine choice have been called to participate and cooperate, is that of spreading the faith. And it is just as evident that, for this reason we must lead a most exemplary and perfect life, like those in the Church who make a profession of sanctity.

As priests, we are extensions of Christ the High Priest; as missionaries, we continue in the world His divine mission of universal salvation! Therefore, in order to avoid being unworthy of such an honor, we must recognize our sublime dignity and live accordingly. Our missionary, then, must be a man filled with the Spirit of Jesus Christ, vested with His virtues, penetrated by His sentiments, enlivened by His zeal, afire with His love: a man of the highest evangelical perfection, no less than one attached to the most rigid cloister.

It's true, someone might respond to me, that our missionaries must be men of a certain level of perfection, but let's not exaggerate. Indeed the fact remains that as members of a society of priests without vows, *we don't have the perfection of the religious state*. So this desire that we attain such a height of virtue and perfection is asking too much: it would require us to be monks!

If anyone were to think this way I would tell him: *you are completely wrong!* Not only from us missionaries, but also from other secular priests, the Church requires the highest level of perfection and sanctity! And is not the priest of Christ the *religious par excellence*? And who could say (if we simple priests were held to a lower level of perfection), that the founders of religious orders were able to require of their priests greater sanctity than that required by the divine author of the priesthood of anyone who has the grace to ascend the altar? Who could maintain that our missionaries, apostles of the Gospel, can remain lower in sanctity than those who live a monastic life?

The fact that we, for the wisest of reasons, belong to a society of priests and brothers not bound by vows must not delude us in regard to the level of sanctity to which we must aspire. Let us not confuse evangelical perfection with the religious state. It is not the religious state nor the vows, but something much higher and essential which impels us to be perfect imitators of the virtues and perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this is our priesthood and the call to the divine apostolate.

And I thank God that this sentiment of mine is shared by our dear missionaries. One of them, commenting on what I've said above, wrote to me: "I thank you so much for your promise to treat this subject: yes, we really must be saints, and attention to this is not reserved to religious. If I was not convinced of this, as you are, I would not hesitate a moment to become a religious."

3) The Thinking Of Olier

Yet, I must confess that there is in the world, and not just today, this prejudice that so-called “secular” priests do not attain the height of perfection of the religious. Reading the history of the foundation of the “Company of Priests of St. Sulpizio”, I find a citation from a letter of Tronson (June 1, 1677), which recalls the idea of the Venerable Fr. Olier about the perfection to which every cleric must aspire. The letter expresses my thoughts on this subject exactly.

“When you tell a cleric that he must have at least as much mortification, humility, modesty and fervor as a religious, it is not because you want him to be a religious; you simply want to make of him the same type of cleric that St. Augustine wanted to have among his clergy, the same as the Church has always wanted throughout the centuries.” You can see in Fr. Olier’s book *Les Saints Ordres*, what his feelings on this subject were. It seems to me that he addressed it a hundred times throughout his life.

He used to tell us that clerics have been established in the Church to serve as models of sanctity for every class of person; they therefore must possess the grace and virtues of all the saints, to such a complete and perfect extent that the people who live in the world, *as well as the religious* can see in them what is necessary for their own perfection.

If some people in the world, referring to priests who are prayerful and fervent, use the sayings *they live like monks*, it is because of the corruption of our age and the deterioration of the clergy. Rather we should say, to use the language of the saints, that it is the monks who live like priests since it is the *essential and original obligation of priests* to live in a holy way, and it is the indispensable obligation of monks to imitate the holy priests to follow their example, and to sanctify themselves by practicing *those rules of perfection which were originally given for priests*.

What a great light of truth is contained in these words, which conform perfectly to the spirit of the Church and the teaching of Aquinas, who says: “*Thus the monastic state must follow the priestly state, and by imitating it, ascend to the divine. Ordained clergy who act in any way contrary to sanctity sin more grievously than those religious who are not ordained.*”^[11]

This topic, which is of the utmost importance to us, must be examined very deeply.

4) Perfection And The State Of Perfection

His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, in one of his conferences entitled “Are we or are we not Religious?”^[12] treats this subject with great competence. He says that perfection consists in union of the soul to God through the bond of love. Now, love is a habitual disposition of union with God. It manifests itself here below in varying degrees, the highest of which brings about the adhesion of the soul to God for God Himself. This union with God forms a *state, the perfect state* of the Christian soul. In the same *subjective sense*, one can speak of the *state of grace*, the *state of mortal sin*, etc.

But in the expression *state of perfection*, the word *state* has a different meaning, indicating a social situation *external* to the subject. It is in this sense that one can speak also of the *state of slavery*, the married *state*, and so on. The *state of perfection*, then, indicates a totality of permanent social conditions in regard to perfection.

Now theology and canonical tradition recognize two states of perfection: the state of *religious perfection* (*status perfectionis acquirendae*) is the permanent social condition of those who make a profession to work towards perfection. The other, which is the *episcopal state* (*status perfectionis acquisitae, exercendae, communicandae*) is the pastoral condition of a Church.

To speak of the *perfect state* refers to one's state before God in the *internal forum*. To speak of the *state of perfection*, on the other hand, refers to one's state before the Church, in the *external forum*, in view of the extent to which one's life reveals the visible splendor of the Church. It's for this reason that monastic perfection needs some kind of outward manifestation which authenticates its essence. The two expressions "perfect state" and "state of perfection" are not interchangeable. You can in fact very well be "perfect" without being in the "state of perfection": some married persons, some widows, some soldiers, some artisans or some servants might achieve a very high level of perfection, without ever passing into the "state of perfection." And vice-versa: neither all professed religious nor all bishops are perfect. This doctrine comes from Thomas Aquinas: *Nothing prevents one who is not in the state of perfection from being perfect, and those who are in the state of perfection are not necessarily perfect because of this.*^[13]

There is, however, an essential difference between the state of perfection of a religious and that of a bishop. In regard to the religious, it is supposed that the one who is consecrated aspires to perfection and strives to reach it. For the bishop, it is supposed that he has already acquired perfection and his effort is to communicate it gradually to others.

Thus, there are two distinctions to be drawn here. First, there is a difference between *subjective* interior perfection and an *external state* of perfection; the fact that one does not participate in the latter does not release one from the obligation to possess the former. Secondly, the external state of perfection of a religious is essentially different from that of a bishop, because the latter presupposes the interior perfection of the subject while the former requires only the will to achieve it.

5) Priesthood And Sanctity

Given these facts, what then should be our own condition, since we participate neither in the religious nor in the episcopal state? The learned

Cardinal Mercier, relying upon St. Thomas, replies that as simple priests, even without the care of souls, we are obliged to seek a high level of *internal sanctity* and that because of our *official* vocation to the sacraments of the Church and the greatness of the ministry which we complete at the altar, *we are even more strictly obligated to seek perfection than any religious by virtue of his profession: “Through holy orders one is entrusted with the highest ministry, whereby Christ Himself is served in the sacrament of the altar, requiring even more interior sanctity than that required of one in the religious state.”*^[14]

And what can we say about the sanctity required for a missionary who is also a pastor of souls? Our collaboration with the pastoral office of our bishops does not place us canonically in a *state* of perfection, because our priestly ordination does not bind us “*ipso facto*” to the sacred ministry and our commitment to serve souls is not perpetual by nature like that of the bishop: it is limited and revocable. But in the internal forum and in front of God, what prevents us from being bound, not only to the perfection of religion and the sanctity of the religious, but also to perfection in regard to the pastoral charity of the bishop? Nothing!

When we dedicated ourselves to the priesthood and the ministry of the missions, our only intention was to consecrate ourselves to the glory of God and the service of souls; at our ordination, when we promised respect and obedience to our bishop, we intended to place ourselves at the disposal of our ecclesiastical superiors without reserve or limits. Therefore, our priestly and missionary hearts were ruled by all the generosity of love of neighbor which characterizes episcopal perfection.

Recall our pledge: *I swear on oath to consecrate my entire life to the missionary works entrusted to this Institute.* Does not this pledge, to consecrate one’s *whole life* to the sacred ministry of souls in distant missions, allow us to declare that the sanctity to which the missionary must aspire is very close to that which the Church presupposes and expects in regard to bishops?

And is this not the thought of the Church, which requires a high degree of perfection even from simple priests? The ordination rite tells us clearly that our Lord desires that His ministers be perfect *in word and deed; ministers of the church must be perfect in faith and works*, thus solidly founded on the love of God and neighbor.

The Imitation of Christ which after Sacred Scripture best reveals the thoughts of God in regard to our sanctification, is explicit on this point: “Behold you have been made a priest; see now that you perform your office faithfully and without reproof. You have not lightened your burden, but are now bound with a stricter band of discipline, and are obliged to a more perfect degree of sanctity. A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues, and to give example of good life to others.”^[15]

6) The Thought Of Chrysostom

This is the doctrine which has always been taught by the Church. I could indulge myself by quoting many of the holy fathers, councils, supreme pontiffs, and sacred authors. I’ll limit myself only to some thoughts of St. John Chrysostom, gleaned from his work, *De sacerdotio*, which was written to defend his flight when they wanted to promote him to the priesthood and the episcopate. We can see what he thought about the priesthood and the virtue which it presupposes.

“Stop”, he implored Basilio. “Stop pushing me to this step. It doesn’t concern the command of an army, nor of a throne. Rather, it’s a matter which, to do well, I need the virtue of an angel. In fact, the soul of a priest must be more pure than the rays of the sun, so that the Holy Spirit will never abandon him, so that he can say: I live, but it is no longer I who live; it is Jesus Christ who lives in me.^[16] If those who live in a hermitage, far from the city, from the marketplace and the uproar of the docks, must fortify themselves on every side so as to succeed in drawing near to God with faith and sincere purity, tell me how much force and violence the

priest must use to keep his soul safe from all wickedness and preserve its spiritual beauty?

Why, *he needs even more purity than any monk*; and the one who has a greater need, also has a greater chance to be contaminated, if he does not use constant vigilance and great attention to keep the enemies far away from his soul... And the monk has no one to think about but himself: if he sometimes has to think about others, they are always few; and even if they were many, they are certainly always less than the number of those who take part in the Church and always require less attention on the part of the one who governs... Those who are dedicated to the priesthood, for the most part, live in the midst of the world and care for those of the world; this makes them weaker in regard to spiritual things.

The priest who has the duty to pray for all the cities, for the whole world, begging God to forgive the sins of all, not only the living but also the dead: what kind of person do you think he must be? I think that for this kind of prayer to be effective, not even the faith of Moses or Elijah would suffice... He must therefore be superior to every one of those for whom he prays, just as a protector must be superior to those protected.

And please tell me, in what order would we place him, when he invokes the Holy Spirit, when he offers that tremendous sacrifice and takes in his hands the Lord of all men? What purity, what piety is required of him? Think how pure those hands must be, how pure that tongue which must pronounce those words; think how pure and how holy must be that soul which receives the Holy Spirit! At that moment angels stand around the priest... and so we believe in the source of the great mysteries which they accomplish.

And you are not horrified anymore with this desire to insert this soul of mine into such a sacred ministry... The soul of a priest must shine forth to illuminate the whole world... The priests must be salt for the earth...

The efforts of monks are also great and their work is serious, but if one compares priestly ministry, conscientiously carried out, with the struggles of monks, one would find a distance between the two equal to that between a king and a subject.”

[And the sacred doctor continues the comparison, concluding that the priest needs more virtue, perfection and sanctity than any monk, and saying:] “If there is someone who succeeds, in the midst of society, to preserve intact and unshaken the tranquility, the sanctity, the patience, the moderation and all the other virtues of monastic life, *more so than the monks themselves*, that person is worthy to be called [to the priesthood].”^[17]

7) The “First” Religious Order

It is with good reason, then, that Cardinal Mercier, addressing his priests, exclaims:

“Those who defend themselves by saying that they are not religious support themselves on this assertion that they are not in a religious state, and they are right, because they are not in fact professed religious belonging to a *canonical* state of religious perfection; but it does not follow that they are not held to the same perfection of life to which religious are held. No, a thousand times no.

First of all, not only *are they religious, they are so in the highest sense of the term...* You, my dear confreres, belong to the first religious order established in the Church; your founder is Jesus Christ Himself; the first religious of His order were the Apostles; their successors are the bishops, in union with whom are all the priests, ministers of sacred orders, including even seminarians who have made a public profession of wanting nothing other than God for their inheritance and nothing more than the service of God for their life’s work.

You are, therefore, religious of the *highest degree*. But then it would be unthinkable that any of you would demand not to be held to a perfection at least equal to that of religious in the monastery. The truth, on the contrary, is that you are held by your tonsure, and even more so by your priesthood, to a *more elevated perfection than they...*

Are religious priests, like, for example, the many sons of St. Benedict, St. Augustine, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius, St. Teresa, St. Alphonsus and the other congregations, held to a higher perfection than yours? No: the clerical vocation is superior to the religious vocation! He who is a minister of the altar and a priest, on the basis of these two titles, is called to a greater perfection than the religious on the basis of his monastic profession. Consequently, the religious who becomes a priest ascends in dignity and assumes the obligation to lift up his soul to that level of sanctity required by his superior vocation; while the priest who becomes a religious does not descend even one degree on the scale of his moral and religious obligations.”

The clear words of the learned and great Cardinal, to which I have referred a great deal, will seem strange only to those who are accustomed to considering sanctity and perfection as being confined to the monasteries. These, however, not only do not respect the simple truth, but also risk obscuring the great ideas of our founders, who had the proper concept of the priesthood and the sanctity it requires, and believed that they should not impose on those who gave themselves to the Institute for the missions, any bonds of perfection beyond those with which our Lord bound His priests.

The great reformers of the clergy did nothing else but recall the principles referred to here in order to reclaim and bring priests back to the sanctity of their vocation. Cardinal de Bérulle, who worked so hard for the reform of the French clergy in the seventeenth century, was one of these.

“The priesthood”, he said, “is the order founded personally by our Lord Jesus Christ: it is the first, the most essential, the most necessary in the Church, because the priestly state is not only a holy and sacred state in its institution, but also the origin of every sanctity which must exist in the Church of God.

Thus, all the virtues and evangelical perfection must be found in that order because of its union with Jesus Christ... From the beginning and long before the foundation of religious orders, the priestly order, of which our Lord is the founder, has had in its fullness the spirit of its sublime vocation, and with all the perfection that humans are capable of having, it has reproduced in itself the virtues of the Son of God.”^[18]

Inspired by these principles, he founded the Oratorio of Paris in 1611. Bousset summarized its spirit in a famous sentence during his funeral homily for Fr. de Berulle: “The immense love of Pietro de Berulle for the Church inspired the plan to form a company of priests, to whom he wanted to give no other spirit than the spirit of the Church, no other rule than her canons, no other superiors than her bishops, no other law than her love, no other solemn vows apart those of baptism and priesthood.”

8) A Motive All Our Own

But let's leave general motives aside and look a little more deeply into our missionary souls. Let's study the supreme needs of our divine ministry, to find, if possible, even stricter reasons for the high level of love to which we must aspire.

What is the missionary vocation as far as we are concerned? It is our love for God, even to the complete sacrifice of our very selves. If our vocation is not based on this, it is nothing! Let us analyze this: how was the vocation born, what shaped it? We must go back in time and remember

what took place between God and us, the sweet and painful struggle in which we engaged: we have to remember the warm and pressing invitations of the Lord and our own hesitancy to respond, the love inspiring us to give ourselves to Him and the terror of the cross, the attractions of His grace and those of the world. Finally, strengthened by counsel and sustained by grace, we surrendered ourselves to the Lord.

And when we said yes, *we did so without reservations*. Jesus would not have tolerated them, nor did we even consider them. Jesus gave all of Himself on the condition that we also give of ourselves, and give Him everything: after all, the exchange was totally to our immense advantage. And neither the sacrifices required nor the rewards promised were ever concealed from us.

Jesus told us: Leave your family behind, leave yourself behind, free yourself from pride, take up My cross. I will give you the world for your homeland, I will give you children without number, I will always be with you with My grace, I will give you Myself, I will give you a special place in paradise... We accepted, and placed ourselves in His following with great joy. We were ready for anything...

Jesus has been faithful! Have we always been the same? If I say that we must aspire to a high level of sanctity, I'm doing nothing more than recalling our duty of fidelity! Sanctity, perfection, is nothing else but the charity and love to which we swore and promised many times.

I know: the first steps were easy. We were small then and more often than not, we were carried along: "*Sweetly enough he rides whom the grace of God carries*"^[19] But later... when the initial fervor passed, when we came face to face with reality, when God gave us the honor to engage in the struggle... how did we behave? Yes, how did we behave?

To be holy, we only have to remember what we have promised, what we have given. We don't belong to ourselves anymore. St. Paul tells us: "*You are not your own*," we are Christ's, purchased by Him, "*and at what a cost!*"^[20] And voluntarily we are sold to him, to the extent that we gave of ourselves. What degree of intimacy has our union with the love of God reached? The barometer of this union is the level of our perfection in the exercise of the evangelical virtues and our spirit of sacrifice. How does our barometer read?

9) Our Commitment

To be saints, and great saints, we need only to remember who we are. We are *missionaries*, executors of God's plan of mercy in this poor world, revealing His glory. Thus a missionary is a man who cannot even think about mediocrity and half measures. He believed, and he believes in the love of God for souls, an immeasurable, infinite love; and, as small as he is, he does not count the cost. If one of us were to say that he does not feel obligated to a high degree of perfection and love, that one would not be giving everything of himself and thus *would not be a missionary*.

The missionary worthy of the name believes in God's love for him and for souls; from this comes his zeal that the name of God be held holy, that His reign will come and His divine will be done in all the world; he knows that it is by the realization of this plan that souls are saved. How can there exist in the soul of this missionary any tepidity, stinginess, reservations, or half measures?

Quite the contrary, the missionary who *feels* his vocation always lives a life filled with the love of God and thus of high perfection. God has given Himself to him and in every moment he renews the gift of himself to God: God has come down, humbled and emptied Himself for His people; and the missionary in order to respond to this love and imitate it, gives himself

every day; he struggles every day, humbles himself and suffers for the good of these souls.

It is due to this union of love and suffering between the missionary and Christ that souls are converted and saved. And you know very well, it's no mystery, that if something is lacking in the work of salvation whereby many times it is not accomplished, the lack is not, and cannot be on the part of God. Sometimes the problem is the unresponsiveness of the people themselves, *but often what is lacking is the sanctity of the minister.*

We must be preoccupied about this! The passion of Jesus Christ has a superabundant, infinite value; but this value is applied to souls through the prayers, self-sacrifice and preaching of the missionary, and it is *only in this way* that he becomes a worthy instrument to serve the mystery of the world's divine redemption. Jesus was victim and priest: we, if we want to bear fruit in regard to souls, must participate in His state of victim and priest. St. Paul knew this, and it was this that he expressed to the Colossians with these mysterious words: "*Even now I find my joy in the suffering I endure for you.*" And why? Because "*In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the church, of which I became a minister.*"^[21]

Therefore, if we do not reach the high perfection of our state, we fall short of our providential mission and fail to accomplish that for which God has called us and we have offered ourselves.

And let's consider further: when Jesus told us that we are *the light of the world and salt of the earth*, these were not vain titles that He gave us, but rather sacred appointments and obligations. But what kind of light will we spread, what kind of salt will we scatter, if our life itself does not shine before the people in sanctity and perfection? But, you will tell me, we can shine with science, we'll lead them with our preaching. My dear friends, if

this were enough, without the sanctity of the priests, the whole world would already be Christian today.

When the preaching of the missionary is not sustained, illustrated and made tangible by the example of a holy life; when the struggles of the missionary are not made fertile by the grace of God, *who gives effectiveness only to those who strive to merit it*, then the most beautiful works, the most arduous struggles and the most inspired preaching result in little or nothing. Keep in mind, especially you younger members, this fundamental lesson of missiology.

10) "...Lest, Having Preached To Others..."

There is yet another grave reason that must stimulate and oblige us to take our sanctification seriously. Poor missionaries! Sent "*in the midst of a twisted and depraved generation*"^[22] where they must shine like stars of virtue and sanctity, they can instead find occasion to lose their very selves. St. Paul knew this, and thus he added harsh bodily penance to the already difficult struggles of his apostolate: "*What I do is discipline my own body and master it lest after having preached to others I myself should be rejected.*"^[23]

The missionary has the whole world open in front of him, but he must never forget that for him, as for all Christians, there is but one path to salvation, and it is *the narrow path* spoken of by our Divine Master. Oh yes, also the missionary can be lost and condemned! And if among us there be some who say that we can be satisfied with mediocre virtues because we are not religious, these are in the greater danger.

Yes, to be a missionary is the holiest vocation, the highest dignity! But also for the missionary it's true that "*he cannot receive the winner's crown unless he has kept the rules.*"^[24] And the missionary who is habitually proud, ambitious, vain or disobedient, does not walk on the narrow path; he does not strive honorably as an apostle of Jesus. The same is true of the missionary who

desires ill-gotten gains; who instead of attending to the various ministries of souls, engages in secular affairs and involves himself in the disputes of the Christian, considering prayer and study to be vain pursuits. The missionary who has promised chastity and yet is not afraid to expose himself to occasions of sin, or the one who never lacks for anything in any place, much less in the missions, is not securely on the path and is in danger of being lost; so is the one who loves comfort too much, who spends time in laziness, frivolous visits and reading, who does not guard his heart from physical desires, who does not make sacrifices in regard to food and drink. The same is true of the missionary who has received the gift of his sacred vocation in vain, who gives bad example to his confreres and the newly baptized by refusing to serve; he does not sacrifice himself for the sake of the people by teaching them, visiting them and encouraging them; he neglects the duties of piety, abuses the Mass and the Office, does not love prayer. He is a missionary in name only!

Also for this reason, we have the strictest obligation, more than the faithful, more than priests in their homeland, more than monks in the cloister, to attend seriously to the work of our sanctification, so that no one can say of us: "*O, how many priests there are by name, how few by action! O, how many priests by external appearances, but with little fire inside with which to illuminate and give warmth! Beware: if few among the faithful are to be saved, even fewer are those among the priests!*"^[25]

11) For The Good Of Souls

Beloved confreres! Pardon me if I insist, if I repeat, if I multiply the testimonies to prove the *necessity that we have to be saints*, since we have been lifted up by God to the divine priesthood and called to the ministry of souls in the missions. Our sanctity is an *indispensable condition* for the happy success of our mission; when we fail in this regard, it is not only to our own detriment, but to that of the souls as well.

I don't need to point out how different the face of the world in general and the missions in particular would be if those called by God in every time for the salvation of peoples would have always attained the height of their mission through the sanctity of their lives and the ardor of their zeal. In regard to the missions in particular, read the grave words which the bishops and apostolic vicars wrote in the text *Monita ad Missionarios* in 1669, during the pontificate of Clement IX:

“We note that the virtues and example of a holy life on the part of the Gospel preachers have always been the most effective in the conversion of pagans, while this conversion has been delayed and impeded when the feet of the preachers of peace were not beautiful, but stained by the mud of the world. Likewise, many important spiritual authors suggest very clearly that the ruin and end of many prosperous or promising missions come from this problem, whether because of the bad example of some missionaries, or because the style of preaching the Gospel did not conform to the Gospel itself, or because of negligence or ignorance on the part of others.”

The missionaries, then, sent to promote the conversion of souls and extend the Reign of God, can also, if they are not saints, become obstacles, curses, ruin for others. What a great theme for our meditation!

12) Preaching And Sanctity

But give some attention to the divine effects which the primary means of our apostolate must have on the people; that is, preaching the Word of God. What is it that has created missionaries, if not this divine command: “*Go into the whole world and preach the Good News to every creature*”?^[26] And we know well that “*it pleased God through the foolishness of the proclamation to save*

those who have faith,”^[27] for which reason the Apostles had this to say: “*We shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.*”^[28]

First, *to prayer*, and why? Because the fruit, the effectiveness of preaching is in relation to the sanctity of the preacher. The saints preached and converted because they were men of prayer. The preachers who are not saints, who don’t pray or who pray little can also be pleasing to hear and gain admiration, but they leave in the listeners an emptiness of spirit. It’s that way here in the homeland, and especially in the missions where the word cannot even be covered in that finery, that learned wisdom with which it can be presented here.

The preaching of truly apostolic men was not an effort of memory, but the fruit of a fervent meditation: the words which came from their lips were flames which illuminated minds and ignited hearts, moving them and converting them, and presenting them to the Lord. Those preachers were men of the holiest life who, remembering the advice of the Apostle to Titus, showed themselves “*as models of good deeds in every respect,*”^[29] and confirmed with their example that which they promoted with their preaching. St. John Chrysostom, when asked how the apostles had such great success in their preaching, responded: “*Contempt for money, rejection of fame, flight from all worldly interests; if they had not possessed these, even if they had raised the dead, not only would they have been of no help to others, but they themselves would have been judged as impostors.*”^[30]

Let us understand this well: the Orientals have precisely this concept of how the man of God must be and how he must present himself. Our Western mentality, with so much emphasis on external actions, and so much importance placed on money, does not favorably impress them as to how conversion to Christianity truly affects someone—and this is one reason that so many pay little attention to our divine message of salvation.

It is good and necessary in the missions to open schools, dispensaries and hospitals, to build churches and homes, especially if all these works are expressions of the faith and generosity of the converted; *but they cannot be a substitute for the preaching and the sanctity of the missionary*, lest the result be sterility and finding out one day that we have built on sand.

13) To Address Paganism

Isn't it true that when one is not holy, one is afraid to speak of Jesus Christ with the same frankness, liberty and above all the faith with which the Apostles and all the holy missionaries of the past have spoken of Him? Beloved confreres, we are apostles of Jesus Christ and like St. Paul, we have received the commission to announce His name to the nations; we have the mission to convert the world and to restore society by preaching Christ crucified. Still today it is true that only in Christ is the salvation of souls and of the world: "*There is no salvation anywhere else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.*"^[31]

Now would it not by chance confirm that, on the pretext that the pagans do not understand the great mystery of Christ... that one must enter indirectly, that one must create a favorable atmosphere by instruction and works of charity... would this not confirm, I say, that such missionaries of today, with these specious pretexts, are relegating the direct preaching of Jesus Christ and His gospel to second place?

Don't pretend that the question is out of line. It's very easy, when one is devoid of the divine, to go after the human. We have the example of some Protestants, who have overwhelmed and suffocated the preaching of the Gospel with the preponderance of their humanitarian and cultural activities. We hope that with our schools and other works a favorable atmosphere is created, and that in this way the so-called "Hour of God" will come. But what if instead we create an atmosphere which makes the

people well disposed and grateful to us, but leaves them indifferent to God and to our sacred mission?

Let us pray to God that He give us the sanctity and the courage of the Apostles, so that we can move to address paganism directly and open some entries into the great organized religions present in the missions. There is no fear of failure, if one is holy and has faith in the virtue of Christ's word. The poor, the humble, the disinherited come to us in great numbers today: they are won over relatively easily. And the others, those who don't need us but have such a great need of God? How many of the educated and ruling class come to the Faith? What is being done for the Buddhists and the Muslims? These people are... well, they are what they want to be; but is the Gospel not for them as well? Didn't our Lord come precisely for their salvation? Or are we afraid that the word and grace of God is not powerful enough to win over the hearts of all?

The Apostles had to confront a pagan world like that which we seek to evangelize today. Christ crucified was a scandal for the Jews and folly for the learned pagans. The Apostles were not afraid or evasive; they didn't resort to building roads, to works of charity, beneficence and instruction. Charity and beneficence they had, but these were the natural fruits of a preached and practiced faith, not a means of entry.

The Apostles and all the holy missionaries preached and presented Christ crucified to the non-Christians because they knew that *only* Christ crucified possesses the virtue of God capable of converting souls and changing the face of the earth. In this regard, the authors of *Monita ad Missionarios* tell us that a missionary betrays his ministry if he cares only about physical needs and refuses to take on the poverty, the suffering, the cross of our Lord; because, as St. Thomas teaches: "*The first principle in the doctrine of Christian faith is salvation through the cross of Christ.*"

Oh, how I wish that every one of our missionaries could say with St. Paul: “*Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom...*” The people want physical help and material relief, and the governments want us to teach and civilize. “...*But we proclaim Christ crucified...Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.*”^[32]

I love our Institute and hold it dear because of its particular characteristic of being genuinely apostolic, reaching out by all possible means to the non-Christians. Maybe we lack many things—we are poor in regard to great means and great works in the missions—but *we are all working for souls!* And this in itself is no small reward. I wish that we would be even poorer, but much holier. We would gain much, we and the missions. How good it would be if we were able to say to our people, as St. Paul said to the Corinthians, that we are rich only in Christ crucified. Our apostolate and all our works of faith would be the purest: “*When I came to you proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power, so that your faith may rest not in human wisdom, but in the power of God.*”^[33]

But if St. Paul planted the faith in this way, *not in human wisdom, but in the power of God*, it was because he himself was filled with God’s power, which is Jesus Christ; praying without ceasing, mortifying his body with acts of penance, he appeared before the people truly as that “*alter Christus*”, since “*for me, to live is Christ.*”^[34] In fact, people can admire the learned missionary, can bless the generous missionary, can fear the powerful missionary, but they will neither revere nor be won over by any other than the holy missionary.

St. John the Baptist did not perform any miracles; all of his authority before the people came to him from his life of penance and holiness. Thus he moved souls to repentance, he confronted scribes and priests and kings,

and everyone revered him. They were attracted to him, “*knowing him to be a righteous and holy man... and felt the attraction of his words.*”^[35]

So here we have, dear confreres, another profound reason that we are greatly obliged to be saints: so that we can truly be powerful *in act and word* in our apostolate, and bring about the goal of our vocation, which is the glory of God through the salvation of souls.

14) The Institute In Its Men

No one can doubt that, if we want to be true missionaries, we must live as saints, regardless of whether or not we are religious, whether or not we take vows. However, someone could still say: if that’s the way things are, why not join some religious group and receive the help which they undoubtedly give in order to reach this sanctity which we see as so necessary?

Now, this is a consequence which does not necessarily follow from what has been expounded here. Just as the secular priest has everything he needs to be perfect as Jesus Christ wants him to be, so we have all we need and more in the Institute to be *holy and perfect missionaries*. We must all be holy in the Church, but not all in the same manner, because not all find themselves in the same circumstances.

For just what is this our *missionary institute*? Can we really belong there, sure that we will find in its ranks the means for self-sanctification and thus for responding fully to the grace of our vocation? Permit me to describe and retrace some features of its particular makeup.

Even given the weaknesses inherent in any institution (no matter how holy and divine) which must perform its actions in this poor world, our Institute is a society of men inspired by the highest apostolic spirit, who have generously and *effectively* renounced all ties to flesh and blood, to all

the comforts and conveniences of life, to all hopes of human advancement and advantage, who forever abandon their homeland, their loved ones and friends to follow their divine vocation as apostles of Jesus Christ. Our Institute is made up of men so dedicated to God and to the interests of the Church that, at the slightest sign from the superiors, they are without exception ready to go into any region, even the most remote, inhospitable and unknown corner of the world; and once there, without asking or hoping for anything, they devote their entire existence to the salvation of souls, which increases all the treasures of which our Lord Jesus Christ has made them the repositories. Finally, the Institute is a company of men who, with their living faith, their invincible courage, their ardent zeal, and fiery love continue in the Church and in the world the legacy of the Apostles and martyrs, and are a constant, living testimony of the divinity of our holy religion.

15) The Institute In The Church

I have thus described the Institute in its men; now what is its particular position in the Church as a missionary society? What distinguishes it from religious institutes? Our Institute distinct from others which would exist even without the missions, does not exist for its own sake; it exists *only* because the missions exist: its interests are none other than those of the missions entrusted to it by the Church.

Our missionaries must obey the Superior General of the Institute and those who represent him in the missions, but this obedience is ordered entirely and uniquely toward the purposes of the apostolate, and no one has the privilege to make a claim against the jurisdiction of the bishops and apostolic vicars of the missions. We go not to found other houses of the Institute but to establish the Church of God; we go to serve the ecclesiastical superiors placed in the succession of Peter to lead the missions, to evangelize the people under their guidance, to lay the

foundations of indigenous churches, and thus to contribute effectively to the extension of God's reign on the earth.

The very houses which the Institute has in Italy are nothing else but houses of the missions: *seminaries*, that is, for the recruiting and formation of evangelical workers to send quickly to the fields which are prepared. These houses would not exist if they did not respond to this purpose. Thus, the Institute as it exists in Italy, is also called the *Seminary of the Foreign Missions*, the same as the great society of the Foreign Missionaries of Paris is called.

In the Institute then, *only one thought* lives; *all burn with a single flame*: the glory of God, the extension of His reign through the apostolate. For this work, some stay at home and prepare the future missionaries; for this work those who are forced to stay home by age or sickness offer their prayers and sufferings.

The title of *Pontifical* is a great honor for the Institute. This noble quality places the Institute and its members in a very direct and intimate union with the holy Church, whose message we must proclaim and whose influence we extend; it puts us in immediate dependence upon the hierarchy, from whom we receive the directives and whose orders we carry out when, having arrived in the missions, we work in the fields entrusted to us. In fact, the missionaries receive the directives for their apostolic work directly from the bishops, and we know that regional superiors cannot involve themselves in matters which pertain directly to the governance and administration of the dioceses, vicariates or apostolic prefectures which are led in everything by the ecclesiastical superiors.

As missionaries in the purest sense of the word, heralds and proclaimers of the holy religion of Jesus Christ, we breathe His universal spirit, and we never sacrifice the general interests of the Church and of souls to the specific interests of our congregation. Like St. Paul, we “*become all things to all men*”

all, in order to save at least some.”^[36] We glory in and are jealous to preserve that spirit of true servants of Jesus Christ, of the Church and of souls, so that we can always say with the Apostle himself: “*Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible.*”^[37]

The Institute, then, does not live on the margins of the Church, but bases itself and loses itself in her, to serve her cause, to sacrifice itself without any earthly reward for the glory of God. This is and must be our Institute. It is superfluous to demonstrate how, living faithfully in it, we can arrive at the highest level of perfection and sanctity. Sanctity is nothing more than the faithful following of Jesus Christ. “*Come follow Me: this is the goal of perfection, since the ones who are perfect are those who follow God with their whole hearts.*”^[38] Now, how can one follow Jesus Christ more perfectly, more selflessly, more persistently than by adhering to what our Institute teaches and practices?

In the Institute then, considered as a perfect society of apostolic men, nothing is lacking; that which might be lacking (and might be lacking in the more venerable religious orders as well) is that which is so lacking in each of us members in regard to the perfection and sanctity needed to live worthily in it.

16) Why We Are Without Vows

But why are our missionaries not bound by the vows proper to the religious state?

First of all, we need to make clear a point which illuminates this whole question: that which we want to be when we embrace this Institute. Our primary and direct aspiration is the apostolate among the non-Christians, not that of entering into a religious state.

Besides, the Institute, *whose primary purpose cannot be other than the sanctification of its members*, nevertheless did not arise to make its members religious, but to place itself at the service of the Church for the purpose of cooperating directly in the spread of the faith and the foundation of Christianity in non-Christian lands.

The Institute, then, desires to form *apostles*; and you can't say or want more than that.

We also need to consider how in the missions we find ourselves in the identical situations as the Apostles and other apostolic men in the first centuries of Christianity. We must be enlivened by the very spirit of the Apostles, have the same love for God and zeal for souls. Now, this should be considered more than sufficient for us to reach our own sanctification.

That's the premise, and also the reality. We know that our Institute was conceived and founded on the style of the venerable and illustrious Foreign Missionaries of Paris. Now it is good to realize that in the beginnings of that Society there was much thought and discussion on the question of vows: some even proposed the imposition of stricter and more rigorous vows than those of the religious. There were diverse opinions, but the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith decided the issue, and it did not impose these vows. Those who were against any vows rightly thought that, given the charitable purpose of the society they wanted to establish and the type of life for which these missionaries were destined, the bond of vows would not be a help to the work. Those missionaries wanted to be, like the Apostles, founders of new churches, fathers of Christianity, educators of many indigenous clergy. They had to

create structures, care for the needs of the poor, like any others who want to build and manage large activities, they needed a reasonable freedom of movement. They also recognized that vows in and of themselves would not prevent the abuses which could eventually arise. A solidly virtuous missionary does not need any bonds beyond those that come from his priesthood in order to remain faithful to his duty, while a lax missionary, even with vows, will always find the easy way out.

“Must not a society,” observes P.A. Launay, “which has as its purpose the foundation and organization of churches modeled on those of Christian countries, as much as possible resemble the makeup of the clergy which govern and direct these churches?”^[39] In these words there is a very profound reason, which makes us think of the divine wisdom of the holy Church, for not wanting the missionaries of that society to be bound by vows.

Given the purpose of our Institute which, like that of the Missionaries of Paris, is purely and exclusively consecrated to the apostolate among non-Christians, the style of a society without vows seemed to our founders to be more conducive to reaching the goal, and therefore also more useful to the holy Church.^[40]

In fact, by not being tied to the bonds of religious life, our missionaries are undoubtedly more agile and maneuverable in the hands of their ecclesiastical Superiors, to the great advantage of the spread of the faith. It is good that, just like priests in Christian countries, the missionary who is truly vowed to the divine apostolate, receives every destination and directive from the bishop whom he serves in the sacred ministry.

In this way, even if the Institute were to disappear for the sake of the life and progress of the apostolate the missionaries would continue to live in a greater dependence upon their bishops, like soldiers under their commander; they are less subject to considering themselves the lords of the

lands which have been entrusted to them to evangelize. Not having institutions or property of the congregation to care for or defend, they are more free, and find themselves more disposed to be united with the directives which the highest authorities impart for the greater development of the spread of the faith. Therefore, it was not an ill-intentioned desire for freedom nor disdain for the bonds of the religious state which inspired our venerable founders to form an institute without vows! Instead, we must firmly maintain that, if vows had been deemed necessary or even useful for the purposes of the institute they were proposing, they would have adopted them, and the holy Church, which accepted us into her service, would have imposed them.

Our fathers, in fact, who in offering themselves so generously to the missionary life were willing to face every kind of struggle, privation and martyrdom in order to preach the faith and save souls, certainly would not have been afraid to bind themselves to vows, if this would have inspired them to greater effectiveness in their apostolate.

But since they were often obliged to live alone, and always in the face of great sacrifices they knew that they already needed to practice every apostolic virtue and evangelical counsel daily. Thus we don't take vows, *but we must always have the spirit of the vows*; we don't take them, *but we must practice them*, exercising those virtues which are their object.

17) The Practice Of The Vows

Now it is important to see whether the evangelical counsels are really being practiced by the missionaries of our Institute. I'm not speaking of the vows of obedience and chastity: we are obliged to obedience by the solemn oath we make, which cannot be loosed except by the Church; as for chastity, the priests are bound to it by the solemn obligation which we took on at our subdiaconate ordination, while the brothers are obliged by a particular oath as suggested in the Constitution.

The question one could ask is in regard to poverty. Now it is here that the missionary state places us in an almost privileged position in comparison to the simple religious of the convent, since by the Constitution and by the very nature of mission life, we are placed in the happy necessity to practice a more perfect and strict evangelical poverty.

Have you seen many missions or missionaries who are poorer than ours? The vow of poverty could sometimes represent a kind of security for one's life. Our missionaries instead, even though they go to the missions without vows, *in practice* forego the use and enjoyment of goods and comforts that they could have had in their homeland; the Constitution forbids them to acquire property in the missions or to make personal use of that which comes to them for their ministry; and even though they retain the right to possess whatever might come to them through family inheritance, they live the same as the poor and nothing earthly impedes them from attending to the work of the sacred ministry, happy if they can contribute to it also that which the Lord has provided them. And is this not the poverty referred to when it was said: Happy are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs? If some one of us has been provided with material goods, to follow the letter of the holy Gospel instructing us to divest ourselves completely, who would stop him from distributing them to the poor or contributing them to some other religious or charitable works? We would say with the Holy Spirit: "*Who is he, that we may praise him?*"^[41]

But we have much more to admire and praise. If we follow our missionaries on their constant apostolic journeys, if we visit them in their poor residences in far-flung districts, if we see the way many are dressed, then we find not the respectable poverty of the religious, but the real poverty of the poor. How many of our missionaries would not trade their miserable mud or reed huts and their poor food for the cell and oratory and food of even the strictest monastery?

Oh! The one who aspires to a truly poor life, to that poverty which is pure penance, need do no more than to become one of our missionaries. How many of our fathers, especially in the mission of India, have never in their apostolic lives seen a mattress or linens!

Listen to what one of our fathers, who was present at the death of Fr. Fontana, has written: “I have just returned from Avinagadda, where I visited the dying Fr. Fontana in the most extreme poverty, on his miserable cot without sheets or pillows, deprived of the most common and necessary things. It was difficult to find among his things a decent shirt to dress him in after death: part of the clothes in which he was buried were those of other missionaries.”

Oh! The poverty of our dear missionaries! Also in this regard they are perfect imitators of our Lord, who one day said to one who wanted to follow Him: You want to follow me? Be warned that “*foxes have lairs and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*”^[42] How many times I myself have witnessed the literal carrying out of this passage in the lives of our confreres, when in their frequent apostolic journeys and visits to the villages, any corner of the hut, any patch in the forest, any bank of the stream becomes their home, their bed, their all. They adapt themselves there with such great simplicity and happiness that you would never even think that they were in bad shape or lacking in anything! I cannot carry on with more examples: there would be too many beautiful and edifying things to say!

18) Let Us Be Perfect Ourselves, But Not Change Who We Are!

St. Philip, who highly esteemed the religious and was quite friendly toward them, did not want vows for his Oratorians, so that they could be a living example to the secular clergy of how they must live in a holy way. For the

same reason, St. Felice of Cantalice cancelled the vow of poverty from the Rule which St. Charles had written for his Oblates. Thus, our founders, for all the reasons brought forth above, wanted our missionaries, without vows, to emulate the virtues and detachment of the most holy and perfect religious, in order to be true missionaries.

The religious state, essentially, is Christianity seen in the fullness of the pure light of the Gospel: religious perfection means the soul's internal taking possession of the doctrine and example of the Incarnate Word. Now, who better than the true missionary can say, "*Behold, we have given up everything to follow you?*"^[43] And so we are content and jealous of our state, because "*when fully trained, every disciple will become like his teacher.*"^[44]

Fr. Launay, cited above, describes the way the question of vows was decided:

"It is the opinion of the Pope and the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, whose authority over the 'Foreign Missions' has already been affirmed, that the society should remain what it was at us origin: an association of secular priests consecrated to the missions by a unique and continued act of free will. Its constitution, while different from those of other religious or ecclesiastical societies, has withstood the test of time and has inspired one of the great bishops of India to say: 'The more I travel, and the more I reflect, the more I esteem our society in its present form, notwithstanding its defects. I am more convinced every day that our Institute is better and more able to work for the good of the missions; it is the one which presents less essential inconveniences... So let's perfect ourselves, but not change who we are.'"^[45]

And this advice can be made just as well for our Institute and our missions: *Let us perfect ourselves, but not change who we are.* This should be our ideal, our program of life. Let us perfect ourselves: we don't have vows, but our missionary life must be the most complete and continuous

actualization of evangelical perfection, since there is nothing that separates us from the most perfect religious. It does my heart good to think and to affirm that our confreres have striven and continue to strive to see and live their vocation in this way. Praise be to God for it!

19) A Wake-Up Call

I invite you to bless God with me and to thank Him for having given us this divine vocation to the missions, and for having guided us to fulfill it within the ranks of this our Institute, which deserves all of our esteem, all of our love. I often meditate on what the Institute has been and is in the life of the Church and I feel taken up by a lively sense of veneration for it, because I see that whole elect band of generous and holy men, greatly endowed with faith by which, in times more difficult than these, they poured themselves out, even unto death. Without counting the martyrs of blood, how many have been martyrs of suffering and hardship! Dear Institute, what a gathering of virtues, of sacrifices, of self-giving, of heroism for souls; what a great fire of love for God you reveal to me in the generous spirits of so many confreres who are now in heaven, enjoying the reward of their virtues and sufferings, seated among the choirs of Apostles! May they pray for us, and obtain for us the abundance of their spirit!

Beloved confreres, let's look now at ourselves on whom has been placed the task we have inherited from those whom the Lord has already called to their reward. We men of today must not be less than the great ones of old. You have understood, especially you young ones, what *our spirit* must be. *If not religious, all are still to be saints: because the more a missionary you are, the more holy you will be.* I won't tire myself with repetition, because this must be the axiom of our life as missionaries. If we have to carry out, among the

millions of souls entrusted to us, a redeeming mission, we must have a proportionate virtue.

I have stressed the many millions of souls whose salvation is to a great extent in our hands, entrusted to our zeal. This is truly a great responsibility! During your days of retreat, make a meditation on this great subject; think about all of our missions, put yourself before all the millions of souls... or even only those in the districts entrusted to you. Measure such a great duty against your own virtue; see what is lacking in your spirit of faith, of prayer, of charity, of zeal and of sacrifice. Are you giving to God that which you promised when you were called to the apostolate?

I assure you that such a meditation, done in front of your mission cross, will produce much good, because it is easy, too easy in the distractions and diversions of our daily life, to lose sight of the personal and collective responsibilities of the vocation we have taken on, those responsibilities which made the Apostles themselves tremble, and about which St. Paul said: *“If I preach the Gospel this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!”*^[46]

20) In Apostolic Love

“I urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received.”^[47] Let there be no discord within you between vocation and life. Let no one, through his own laxity and inconsideration, give occasion by which the Institute would not be held in the esteem and veneration it deserves. This esteem among people, after the grace and goodness of God, is quite necessary to the Institute for the work which it must complete, and it must be jealously guarded and defended. *“We cause no one to stumble in anything, in order that no fault may be found with our ministry; on the contrary, in everything we conduct ourselves as ministers of God.”*^[48]

The fact that we are not a congregation with vows has sometimes been given as a reason that some vocations do not come to us. But we have nothing to fear if we allow our life and our work to respond for us: all need to see that we *live* our vocation and our mission, and then they will come to know and respect our Institute. We must have the highest admiration and esteem for the religious state, but that is not where the Lord wants us. We must be satisfied with the *missionary state*, as it is lived in the Institute to which the Divine Providence has led us, since we know that no program of apostolic life comes closer to the divine exemplar than that which is proposed for our missionaries. We know that the ones who have given proof of great love have achieved a great level of perfection, because every counsel of perfection is contained and absorbed in love.

We are apostles and as such we must live by love, because the *apostle is the result of the greatest love for God and souls*. Thus, let our perfection and our profession be the love of Jesus Christ: from the flame which burns in the divine heart of Jesus, let's ignite our souls in holy love. We nourish this love with prayer and mortification, and we release it as we go in search of the abandoned souls of the poor non-Christians. And if in the laborious search for these souls, our human weakness does not reach the heights to which we aspire, we still rely on love, “*because love covers a multitude of sins.*”^[49]

If sometimes our hearts yearn for the quiet and peace of the cloister, let's retreat to the spiritual solitude of the heart of Jesus who, as our example, fulfilled His mission among humanity but never for a moment was distracted from His intimate union with the Father. Refreshed in that divine solitude by means of prayer, and inflamed anew with love, we say: I would like the silence of the cloister, to recollect myself far away from so many dangers; but for love of Jesus I remain faithful at my post, because I know that to give myself to Him in this way is a greater test of love.

Such was the feeling of St. Paul, who must be the model for all of us. The apostle longed “*to depart this life and be with Christ*,” because he said that for

him “*that is far better.*” But, out of love for the souls of his beloved Philippians, he resigned himself to live in this exile: “*Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit... for your progress and joy in the faith.*”^[50]

This is true apostolic love: let it inspire our life and let’s be content, because higher than this we cannot climb!

CHAPTER FOUR: The Community Life

1) Importance

To speak of community life to members of a missionary society might seem out of place; yet, there is nothing more opportune for us. Our community is not an institution which simply prepares missionaries and puts them at the disposal of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, and then does not care about them anymore. It is a true and real family of priests and lay brothers, united in the same vocation, bound for life to the same common rule and placed under appropriate superiors, neither more or less than any other religious congregation. Thus our missionaries live in community when they are reunited in the houses of the Institute; and they must also live in community in the missions, where two or more are residing in the same place.

We need to make every effort in the missions to preserve what the Constitution prescribes: that missionaries always be sent two by two. This is a point of central importance: the isolated missionary must always be a rare exception.

Cardinal Lavigerie, founder of the White Fathers, saw the community life of his missionaries as fundamental to their apostolate, to the point of prohibiting the opening of any new district where community life could not be established. Note his words: “Never in any case nor under any pretext shall the missionaries be less than three, priests or brothers, in their

different residences... I would rather renounce the existence of the society than give up this central point."

In some missions it is not always possible to follow this rule: the missionaries have been too few, spread out in vast areas. Yet, with better means of communication and better organization of the missions themselves, isolated missionaries are becoming more and more rare, and our bishops desire that in each headquarters of a district there be two or more confreres.

Sometimes our missionaries give of themselves too much, pour themselves out too much for others. It's necessary to balance the active life with the contemplative life, the external life of visiting the Christians with the life of the community, preaching with prayer, work with study. Excessive, feverish activity, totally external, which causes us to put all of our heart, spirit, body and soul into efforts not always willed by God, or not totally willed by God, must be tempered by gathering together and committing ourselves to the interior life through a more perfect practice of community.

Some missionaries are so committed to the work, so enthused about external activities, that they are afraid of the solitude of their own room; they almost seem to have a need to run around, to be always busy, without realizing that time can also be dedicated to prayer and study in the quiet of their room. They no longer pray well, they avoid the Office and meditation, they neglect spiritual reading, visits to the Blessed Sacrament and self-examination; they even feel uncomfortable remaining for a brief prayer of thanksgiving after the Mass! While they are scurrying about so, even if it is in zealous works, they end up losing their freedom of spirit, they are not in control of themselves, they are subject to many defects, they are weakened in piety and exposed to thousands of illusions and delusions. Oh, if only they would follow the golden rule suggested by Bishop Marinoni: "The missionaries must conduct themselves in such a

way that while seeking the salvation of the others, they do not lose sight of their own... The mission which is primary and most dear to the heart of God, that which must give shape to all others, is the assiduous care that the missionary must have for his own soul.” We know that the times in which we live might push us toward excessive activity and produce the kinds of missionaries that have been described; and certainly even more so, this age gives little importance to the practice of community life, such that the young missionaries, without guidance from older confreres, are all too soon abandoned to their own initiatives, to their natural and ungoverned activity. This is what gives rise to imbalances in our work, excessive external activities and individualism, with little sense of submission and mutual cooperation; lamentably, we’ve seen all of these at times.

2) The Duty Of Superiors

The rectors of the houses in the homeland are responsible not only for the students, but also for the fathers who are attached to the house. So also in the missions: the one in charge of the area has care not only of the newly baptized, but also of the confreres who reside there.

A young missionary who is not guided, helped and corrected from the very beginning by the one in charge can be ruined for life. A father attached to a house of formation, even if only as a teacher, if he does not conduct himself according to the rules of community life, can be a scandal to employees and visitors. Just so, every mission has its own rule or tradition of community life as it is lived in the residence: let it be observed faithfully, let it be perfected; *seek to conform it as much as possible to that which is in effect in the houses of the Institute.*

In the houses of formation, the General Directory should be read frequently and observed faithfully: reference should be made to it any time there is a need.

The first care of a superior is to maintain a high degree of tranquility and harmony among the confreres, among whom must reign an amiable spirit of family which opens their hearts and makes community life friendly and pleasant. Goodness, amiability and agreement must prevail in the governing of the Institute, appealing only to faith in order that others might accept decisions and directives, following the advice of Paul to Timothy: “*Appeal to the older man as father... treat younger men as brothers.*”^[51]

To maintain this spirit of family, the superior must keep the fathers up to date on interesting and edifying happenings of the house, the district, and the mission. He must make his projects known to them, consult with them, involve them in his leadership duties as much as prudence and discretion allow. The superior must have loving concern for the health of his confreres. Especially in the missions, he needs to keep watch that they do not wear themselves out too much and lose their strength.

But goodness, agreement and love does not mean weakness, acquiescence or timidity. The superior must still demand that each one does his own duty and does not disturb the good order of the community and activities. If someone neglects his duty because of selfishness, laziness, or dislike of the work entrusted to him, he must be called in and corrected calmly and firmly. If one, two or three corrections do not help, then it will be necessary to inform the bishop or Superior General, according to the given situation. Don’t think that you can solve a disorder by remaining quiet and cold toward the offending person. This is a mistake. Rather, be direct and straightforward: correct the fault and then treat the confrere with even greater kindness.

3) Fraternal Relationship

Community life is beautiful, it is of great spiritual advantage, and for the missionary who has to live so far away from his loved ones, it is a great source of consolation. But it must be enlivened and animated by love, by

mutual kindness, lest the saying be true: better alone than in bad company. Thus, if we seek the good of the Lord, the good of our Institute, let us always make use of the greatest, invincible love, taking as our rule the words of the Apostle: “*Love one another with the affection of brothers.*”^[52]

We have embarked upon the same vocation, we are members of the same family; since we have the same goal, why would we not also be of one heart, as the Apostle suggests: “*Strive to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one spirit as you were also called to the one hope of your call.*”^[53]

Each must hold the other in esteem, seeing the good qualities of his brother. We have to recognize that we too have defects and that our intolerance in living with others can ruin the most beautiful of God’s works. Indeed, a house where love and harmony are not present is very similar to hell. How many efforts have failed because of discord among the missionaries; how many missions have been ruined by this!

It cannot be that way in our little Institute, where we are so few, engaged in an infinite task! *Let us sacrifice everything* to maintain harmony and love; let us especially give up our own preferences, our own views, our own comforts.

“*Anticipate one another in showing respect.*”^[54] We need to have great mutual respect and esteem. Only proud and arrogant people have little esteem for others, always considering them to be insufficient and incapable. But God is not with the proud. Esteem for our confreres makes us very friendly; then the community life will not be any problem for us.

We have to avoid the cursed habit of criticizing, of condemning everyone and everything. The spirit of pride, which is a diabolical spirit, leads us to think very highly of ourselves and very little of others; it leads to criticism, to spite and complaints.

Let us guard against this spirit, and peace will reign in our communities, to the benefit of all our undertakings!

Ill-will, which is the product of complaining on the part of those who should appear to be good, is reflected in our work and our ministry. Inconsiderate words and judgments against confreres can lead to bitterness and even the loss of vocations. Nothing is more detrimental to the life of the Institute than this spirit of criticism.

Those who have the spirit of the Lord avoid any kind of complaining and abstain from rash judgments. If they see something going on in the house which seems not right, they point it out to the superiors, and if necessary ask for an explanation. The superiors will speak on the subject to the extent that they are able, and will resolve whatever is necessary and possible to resolve. In this way, we build up rather than destroy the community.

4) Recreation

Recreation is an important part of community life. Taken pleasantly in common, it indicates a good degree of harmony and love in the community. Recreation serves to lighten our spirits, often weighed down and oppressed by so many worries and by our daily work; it serves to make us feel like a family, and unites our hearts even more.

Let us always seek worthy means of recreation; the spirit of God which always animates us must not be abandoned during the short times of rest and amusement. Let us then, not say or do anything unsuitable: leave aside any unedifying topic, any incorrect expressions, any frivolous talk. Let there be discussions which are uplifting and proper, arising from the exercise of our sacred ministry. In our houses there are often guests and

visitors, as well as employees; indiscretions in our conversations can be damaging to our reputation and that of the Institute.

Bad impressions are also given by those who always speak unfavorably about the missions, about the newly baptized or the non-Christians, in whom they can't see anything but evil. The true missionary holds deep in his heart a true love for his own mission, wherever it may be, and never disparages that which he loves. It is only the lax missionary, seeking to justify himself, who speaks unfavorably about those whom he has not learned to love.

And we must absolutely avoid any kind of provincialism! We are missionaries and we must have hearts as big as the world; we are all brothers in Jesus Christ, so why should we belittle one another with such pettiness? Our beloved Lord was pleased to be born in the most humble of places and lived for a long time in Nazareth, from which it was said nothing good could come. Do we love or esteem Him less because of this? We should never ridicule our brothers with such talk! Everyone is naturally attached to his own birthplace, and to disparage other's area with spiteful or bitter words closes the heart and causes splintering and divisions.

5) To Missionaries On Home Leave

Missionaries who have returned temporarily to their homeland, for reasons recognized by the superiors, depend totally on the Superior General. After a short stay with their family, they should reside in a house of the Institute and be subject to the common rules of that house. To be constantly in other places, even if engaging in publicity activities, is fraught with inconveniences and dangers, unless monitored by the superiors. Missionaries who are roaming about, even on the pretext of making the missions more well known—except for the laudable cases of

fathers who, wherever they go, provide edification and true interest—do more harm than good for themselves and for the Institute.

My beloved confreres, let us hold dear the stories of the old missionaries. It is praiseworthy and edifying when a missionary, after twenty or thirty years of labor, returns by necessity from the mission and, still burning with the apostolic zeal of his youth, still in love with the divine missionary ideal, speaks to the faithful from the abundance of his heart and lived experience. He is an apostle and his words, as simple as they might be, have the grace of an apostle's words.

But today, it seems there has arisen a kind of missionary who considers it his task to wander around, not in order to convert and inspire the Christians, but in order to raise money. Well, missionaries must work in the missions and no amount of money will compensate for the weakening of one's vocation through this new kind of sport. Let us hold high our dignity as apostles of Jesus Christ and have faith. If in a battle, material resources are needed, it is not the soldiers at the front who must go to acquire them, thus abandoning their post.

6) In The Missions

In every well-organized mission station, where there are two or more fathers, there should be a schedule which determines the times for the various activities of the day, just as the times for meals are fixed. Observing the schedule is a great help for one's own spiritual progress and is indispensable for carrying out the community life. The schedule wisely fixes the time for rising and going to bed, the time for recreation, for the practices of piety and for study.

The perfection of the missionary depends much upon his observance of a schedule and a rule of life. Lacking this structure, some might spend the day in *any manner they choose*. These might object: "We are not living in a

cloister; how can we keep to a schedule when we are constantly called upon and have a thousand things to take care of?" Well, let's not exaggerate. We can take care of everything, listen to everyone, attend to the duties of zeal and charity and still be men of order who also find time for the duties we have *toward ourselves*.

The structure, the schedule, must be broad but precise, wisely distributing time among the duties of the mission, prayer and study. The one who goes about carelessly gets up late today and neglects his meditation; tomorrow he loses time in chatter, in reading newspapers, in frivolous visits; he leaves the breviary for the last minute, finds no time to prepare himself well for instructions he has to give, omits a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and just gets by somehow...

The community life in our residences—which can indeed be reasonably and honestly planned and carried out compatibly with the execution of our missionary duties—will bring immense advantages to individuals, to missions and to the Institute. Where it exists, let us preserve and, if necessary, improve it. Where it does not exist, let us establish and maintain it, notwithstanding all the excuses which the devil might tempt us to have.

7) Study

Community life also facilitates this serious duty of priestly life, a duty which can too easily be neglected.

It is deplorable that sometimes the missionary, caught up heart and soul in action, says a firm good-bye to his books, abandoning them to rats and mold. He carries on carelessly in so many things, and due to culpable ignorance, commits so many errors in the exercise of the sacred ministry, for which he will one day have to give an account to God.

To say that in the missions there is not enough time to study is to assert something which does not correspond to the truth. Serious and hardworking missionaries know very well how to find time to attend to sacred studies, and to that of the language! So many of those who can't find time for serious study of the sacred sciences find plenty of time for useless and endless discussions, for manual work, for reading newspapers, magazines and frivolous books, reading which inspires laziness and sensuality and makes them lose the taste for holy things of the interior life.

Study is a duty of our state! It is indispensable to preserve the science which our ministry requires, and to prepare our instructions and sermons well. How awful is the preaching of missionaries who do not study and prepare!

Thus, in the schedule which we must impose upon ourselves and follow when we are staying in the residence, there must always be fixed time for study.

In well-organized missions, the missionaries should get together periodically to study and discuss some points of theology or other sacred science, according to what is prescribed in Canon 131. Our Constitution also suggests that the missionaries gather often for study conferences and discussions, especially in the area of morals.

Canon Law obligates the missionaries in this regard. Besides Canon 131 there is also Canon 129, which recommends that priests not neglect their studies after ordination, and Canon 130, which orders bishops to submit annual exams on the sacred sciences to new priests for at least three years.

8) Fraternal Correction

Among the privations which a missionary will experience in his apostolic life, the most serious and damaging are not of the material order. Too

often, especially in the first years of his work, the missionary needs a friendly voice to address him, to encourage him, and on occasion to reprimand and correct him as well. And sometimes, this voice is not present: the bishop is far away, his nearby confrere is most respectful and silent, his own confessor is terse and dry; not to mention the fact that many have the false impression that the missionary, being a priest, already knows his duty very well.

What a great thing it would be if the priest, after his ordination, stopped feeling the weaknesses of humanity! Then, certainly he would never need counsel and comfort! No, the greatest privations of the missionary are not material; many times he feels the lack of spiritual support, and while he is so dejected he can often harm the souls entrusted to him and the very work of his ministry.

It is true that when human help is lacking, the Lord will not only bestow His grace on those who are doing their duty in a spirit of faith and good intentions, but often will lavish it even more richly, because He knows that it is for love of Him that the missionary has gone to the mission, where there is necessarily a scarcity of external spiritual aid. However, among ourselves, all of us, superiors and confreres, must help, comfort, build up, support and correct one another with great love and holy freedom, because it is needed for our good and it is the will of our Divine Teacher.

So, let us express our love in mutual exhortation and correction as much as possible; and, if we are superiors or confessors, let us consider it a sacred duty of our office, as those who must give an account before God of the souls entrusted to us. This is the most beautiful way to manifest our love for our brothers, as the Holy Spirit says: “*Better an open rebuke than a love which remains hidden.*”^[55]

9) Conclusion

Our society must be nothing less than a single family: although necessarily distant from one another, still nonetheless united in the same apostolate, one in prayer and common action. Those who are in the homeland must be greatly interested in the work, the difficulties and successes of those in the missions; and these in turn must keep up to date on what the Institute is doing in the homeland. It is to facilitate this relationship of holy fraternity, to foster this spirit of family, that “Il Vincolo” has been published.

CHAPTER FIVE: Fraternal Love

1) An Apostolic Virtue For Excellence

I want to touch upon our mutual relationships, urged on by the love of Jesus Christ, meek and humble, for all of you, my dear confreres, so that among us there might always reign *the greatest spirit of love and benevolence* and, as was the case for the Apostles of Jesus, we might always be of one heart and one soul. Such is the precept of the Lord, because love is an apostolic virtue for excellence. St. Gregory warns us: “*Those who do not have love for others should not take up the office of preaching.*” If we do not love one another, if we do not work together for the great ends of our vocation, we will not accomplish anything, as the Lord has told us: “*Every kingdom divided against itself will fall.*”^[56] My intention is only to touch on some practical points about the *spirit of sweet benevolence and mutual collaboration*, which I would like to see animating all the missionaries of our beloved Institute.

Benevolence makes life beautiful and happy because it is the practical exercise of the fraternal love so taught by our Lord. It is the most delicate part; it is like a flood which flows abundantly from our hearts, from our expressions, from our words about our brothers; and it makes all of us better. Life is beautiful, because everything is a manifestation of God’s benevolence. Now, there is nothing which makes us more similar to God than the exercise of this virtue. Only God is rich in generosity, only God gives grace, only God gives happiness; the benevolent person, who aspires to the goodness and love of God, who is generous with his esteem, with his encouragement, in forgiving and forgetting, in giving of himself,

participates in God's divine extravagance and has the mysterious power to spread happiness and love all around him. The spirit of benevolence truly makes us similar to God, because to be benevolent is like giving that which is the best in us, it is like dispensing grace, it is the practice of Christ's command: "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*"^[57] This must be the characteristic of us missionaries, faithful imitators of Jesus, supremely and divinely good, pleasant, friendly, merciful and kind.

For us, being benevolent is a great necessity, because benevolence produces in us and in our confreres that state of happiness which is indispensable to do great things for God. The one who is discontent, who is discouraged, who is touched by a malignant spirit is not capable of enthusiasm nor of generosity.

"*Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart.*"^[58] This is what it means to be benevolent: to be meek and humble of heart, because the proud do not know how to be generous, do not know how to be self-giving, do not have self-control, do not know how to suffer for others, do not know all those things which are necessary to practice benevolence.

How divinely beautiful it is to be kind; how holy and superb is the desire and ability to win over the others, only with acts of goodness, lavishing them with generosity, kindness and gentleness! It is something of great perfection, and it would be worthwhile to study how to attain it, since it is so good and profitable for us and the others.

The spirit of mutual good will is without a doubt the greatest blessing for a community and a mission. Where such a spirit reigns, Jesus is there with all His graces; there one grows in sanctity and progresses in good works; there one perseveres in one's vocation and produces great fruits in regard to souls, because fraternal union, harmony and peace, which are the effects of the spirit of benevolence, produce the indispensable atmosphere for the sanctification of self and others.

2) A Presupposition

But let's be concrete: we will never be truly benevolent toward our brothers if we do not develop a *good opinion* of them. We must make it a habit to think well of our confreres: everything begins from that. It is not a difficult thing, even though it requires much virtue, because the one who habitually thinks well of the other for supernatural motives is not far from sanctity. We think well of others because *kind thoughts are like the thoughts of God*. It can happen that in always thinking well of a confrere we might be mistaken, but this error is quickly forgiven. On the other hand, to think ill of him is almost always a mistake, and this is less easily forgiven.

“Charity does not worry much about making a mistake, when she thinks well even of evil.”^[59] It is clear that good thoughts are never inspired by passion, while too often we have to admit that unfavorable judgments arise from pride or jealousy, and always from great ignorance, for who can look inside another person? Only God can, and for that reason, only God can judge justly. Only God knows how we are made, for He made us. If indeed He sees all of our failures, He also sees all the circumstances surrounding them; if He sees our sins, He also sees our continual efforts to rise up again and do good.

Generally, people look worse than they really are. God sees all the surrounding circumstances of our evil-doing, which we cannot see, and *maybe it's also for this reason that the world, which seems so bad, is still standing*. I know a person who returned to God after forty years of being away from Him and living a sinful life. I had tried in vain many times to bring about a conversion, but she said that she was finally won over only when I told her that I saw a lot more goodness in her than she wanted to portray.

Let us have a good opinion of everyone, and especially of our confreres, even if they have defects and leave something to be desired. If only we

knew how much Jesus has loved them and how dear they are to Him, even with all their faults. If we would only think of how much Jesus has done for them, and also how much they have done and are doing for Him, how many struggles they have overcome, how many merits they have already acquired, how many souls they have saved, and what glory they will receive for all eternity in heaven.

3) Obstacles To Overcome

We will touch only upon the main ones:

a) *Little esteem for confreres:*

People always hold in great esteem the friends of the king, and are not priests the best friends of the King of kings: “*I have called you friends.*”^[60]? If I have faith, then think of how much esteem, how much veneration I must have for my confreres, who are so dear to the Lord! Just think, Jesus gave the sweet name of *friend* even to Judas at the moment of betrayal. Well then, it is unthinkable that we, while we have faith, should have little esteem, little sympathy for our brothers, who are friends of the Lord as we are (and maybe more so), whom Jesus honors with His daily presence! Too often the unfavorable judgments we make toward our weak brothers manifest, not our superiority, but rather our own great misery, ignorance and meanness. God is infinitely wise: “*He knows how we were formed, He remembers that we are dust*” and so “*merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in kindness.*”^[61]

There are those who have already formed a judgment about one of their own brothers, and they don’t even question the accuracy of that judgment; there are those who think that they have a special talent to know and evaluate others and consider this skill a gift from God. The problem is that they have a tendency to point out only the flaws in a person, which gives us reason to doubt whether their insight is really a gift of God or rather the

hidden desire to use the ruin of another in order to build a monument to themselves: “*I give you thanks that I am not like other men.*”^[62] If only they could see and feel the opinion others really have of them because of this habit of making unfavorable judgments and interpretations!

b) Grudges:

Another serious impediment to benevolence is grudges. Who has not experienced that great school of mercy which is the confessional? Why is it that in the confessional we are always inclined toward mercy, even in regard to the greatest of sinners? Because we know that we represent Jesus Christ there, and we must do and think as He would do and think; so when some poor soul comes to us discouraged and fearful because of past sins, we are quick to encourage them and assure them of the pardon obtained, insisting that sins which have been forgiven should no longer be remembered.

We do that for those who have offended the infinite majesty of God. Why don’t we have at least the same thoughts for those who have offended our own infinitely trivial selves? Our brother is not held in esteem because one time he offended us, or one time he spoke badly of us! And we refuse to forget this offense. If we hear someone speaking well of him, we tend to remember and revisit, in our small and mean soul, that offense, that lack of regard and we show by our facial expressions that we do not share the good opinion that others have of that confrere.

How wretched we would be if, when we go to pray before the altar, Jesus would be there remembering all of our infinite past offenses! We would have to flee! Jesus, who treated Peter with exquisite gentleness after his triple denial, and seemed not to remember this most serious failing, demonstrates a great reproof for us!

I know, we form for ourselves a peaceful conscience, and we go to confession and we approach the altar every day. But is this not a great deception? Saint John Chrysostom warns us: “*The mystery [of the Eucharist] demands that we be free from every hostility, even small ones.*” And so, how do we reconcile this duty to be free from even the smallest hostility with certain manifestations of anger, disgust, and rancor which some priests never cease to show in regard to one person or another for some past offense? How can it happen, the saint continues, that we who eat every day of the gentlest Lamb of God, continue to manifest the nature of wolves? “*What can excuse us if while eating, we commit these sins; while eating the lamb, we become wolves?*”

A brother had the disgrace to fall from our good graces! Is it possible that there is no way for him to be readmitted anymore? What if God had this attitude toward us when we have had the disgrace to be cancelled from the book of life? God forgets; do we want to have a better memory than God? Let us not delude ourselves, dear confreres: we cannot be ignorant in this matter. We would be in open contradiction to the Gospel, to our profession and preaching, if we hold anger toward our brother, if we do not have esteem for one or another, if we don’t know how to speak of him without reticence, without revealing a certain aversion. The teachings of Jesus on this point are so brilliantly clear!

c) *A victim mentality:*

Sometimes we make ourselves unhappy because we think that we are held in low regard by confreres and superiors, that we are forgotten or neglected; and we end up considering ourselves victims. A lack of benevolence! If we were more generous, we would find so many ways to give a good interpretation to the words and actions of another, and when we’re unable to give such an interpretation, we would always find a way to excuse the other. Let us reflect how, in considering ourselves the object of injustice, we do a greater injustice by looking at our brother as a persecutor and torturer.

I pray that every one of you commit yourself to being *the angel* of the mission, of the community in which you live, because angels are always bearers of peace. Knowing how much God loves us, angels have great esteem for us and treat us with great reverence and respect; they always suggest to us good and charitable thoughts and feelings. You also should sow good words, always and everywhere; good words don't cost anything and always produce good results. Never join in when you hear unfavorable talk about someone; instead, minimize the defects of confreres when they are revealed in some way. Many disagreements and arguments among confreres arise because of misunderstandings: what an angelic commitment will be yours if you always seek to clarify and overcome them with good words and kindly interpretations!

d) Offensive words and backbiting:

There is nothing which alienates people more than *harsh and demeaning words*. Sometimes they open wounds which can never be healed and which even love itself cannot bring one to forget. Never let such words come out of our mouths; let's never be guilty of repeating them if they have been uttered against another. Let us guard ourselves above all against backbiting and complaining, the greatest enemy of charity!

We must not imitate those who have nothing good to say about anyone. Speaking first of one and then of another, they find something bad to say about each: this one doesn't have the preparation or abilities for his position; that one has never accomplished anything good; the other one is attached to money, and so on and so forth. After hearing them speak in this way, one finds that they criticize everyone: superiors, inferiors, and peers; even if in person they practice courtesy with the confreres, this is more for political purposes than for charity. They are poor, unhappy people, too full of themselves; they can become dangerous members of a

community and can do great harm, when they come into contact with inexperienced youth just beginning the road to virtue.

This backbiting is a vice which every missionary must abhor: it is vile, harmful and diabolical. Noble souls such as we aspire to be must make it a point of honor never to speak badly of anyone and to hold all in esteem, even the weak, even sinners, knowing that if our own faults were brought to light, we too would have much to be ashamed of. Instead, let's make it a rule to honor all others, and especially our confreres, always speaking well of them or, if we can't do so without offending the truth, keeping silent. A generous and benevolent heart always finds the means and occasion to minimize the defects and faults of confreres.

When new missionaries arrive in the mission, there should be someone who kindly takes them around and introduces them to all the confreres, who perhaps have never seen or met them. What a great occasion to promote fraternal unity, to inspire the edification and holy emulation in the newly arrived, presenting the best sides of all the older missionaries and the virtues in which each one distinguishes himself! How deplorable it would be if instead someone considered it his duty to point out the defects of this one or that one, planting prejudice against the confreres and depressing everyone with news which does not contribute to the edification of the new missionaries, who, especially at the beginning, are sensitive to every impression!

e) *Sarcasm:*

Do we like to be witty? Remember that it is difficult for the one who is always joking around to be kind and charitable to his confrere. This is because the jokes often sting, and nobody likes those jabs. The wise guy can be admired for his wit and can be entertaining, but it is difficult for him to be loved. Let us guard against this habit, which does nothing to encourage our confreres and certainly does not help us imitate the love of

our Lord, who never laughed at anyone and never caused anyone to laugh at others.

4) Toward The Superiors

As you are kind toward everyone, you must be so particularly with *your superiors*, who are your true fathers in Christ. Don't sadden your superiors with disobedience, with complaining, with a lack of regard. If you only knew how much they have to suffer in the position they occupy! If you only knew how much anguish, affliction, worries and fears are required for the proper governance of a house or mission! Many times the superiors have a heavy heart, and in order to preserve charity they cannot speak, they cannot give explanations for certain actions and decisions, and they are then unjustly criticized! If superiors, also and perhaps especially the weak ones, were the object of benevolence, of obedient affection on the part of the confreres; if they did not so often see themselves surrounded by distant, distrustful and hostile faces; if they were not objects of complaints and criticism... how much better would they carry out their roles! Oh, what pain to the heart of Jesus is caused by those missionaries who, under the guise of goodness afflict their superiors and never let pass any occasion to condemn or criticize them!

If we have reason to complain in regard to the superior, let's first pray and invoke the light of the Holy Spirit; then we can make our observations and even our reproaches in a frank and direct manner, but always with due respect and loving benevolence. In this way, we will not be tearing down, but building up. Have we not been listened to, and does it seem to us that the issue needs to have resolution? Then we must go to the higher superiors of the Institute. Having done this, let's be at peace, because we have no further responsibility.

But let's guard against sowing or inciting a lack of esteem toward our superiors. This is an entirely negative practice, because almost always in

such cases our passions are at play and dominate us and we end up not building up but rather destroying the community. And this is to the great satisfaction of the enemy of souls, because in the final analysis, it is the devil who defeats us when he can destroy our relationships with our superiors and confreres. We have too often seen vocations lost, communities ruined, missions destroyed by the demon of insubordination and discord. The ultimate irony is that the authors of such ruin always think they are driven by love for the good, by zeal for the glory of God, while instead they have fallen into the danger about which St. Paul warned: *“If you go on biting and tearing one another to pieces, take care! You will end up in mutual destruction!”*^[63] and they are destroyed! Let us be very fearful of the demon of discord and rebellion: even if it does not always cause total ruin, it can still create serious problems and dangers for vocations.

Thus, surround your superiors with the most exquisite benevolence: we call them superiors, but they are really our servants for the love of Christ: *“...they keep watch over you as men who must render an account.”*^[64] Don’t sadden them, don’t embitter them, because you will be saddening Jesus, whom they represent: *“Those who hear you, hear me.”*^[65] There is no doubt that the affectionate, filial respect, the sincere kindness which you nurture toward your superiors, especially if they are not to your liking, will bring the greatest blessings of the Lord to you and to your work, because such behavior on your part implies a sublime act of faith, which Jesus repays generously.

In our reciprocal relations, we must also take into account the part which our *nerves* have to play. Too often we don’t recognize that what we have judged as malicious and evil is simply an explosion of a state of irritability on the part of the nervous system. In the missions, especially in hot places, the nervous systems of missionaries are often affected, and they become overly sensitive and easily irritated. When, because of climate or exhaustion due to overwork, the nerves are tense and shot, it is very difficult to be always loving and benevolent toward one’s confreres.

But in such cases, not infrequently, it takes all our effort to extend pardon, especially if it is a superior. It's true that the superiors are debtors to everyone and should possess a greater sense of control over themselves. On the other hand, if we know that our confrere, our superior, is nervous, we have an even greater reason to exercise our benevolence and consideration by not pushing him to the edge, by calming him and soothing him with gentle treatment and kind words. What material there is for virtue and sanctification even in these cases!

5) Toward The Young

For these we must all have a particular attention and hearts rich in the greatest benevolence and love. It's difficult for the young to know how to be benevolent: rich in enthusiasm, they lack life experience, they are quick to judge and easily perturbed when they don't see that perfection which they pictured in their dreams. On the other hand, the older confreres too easily forget the mistakes of their own youth, and complain that the youth of today are not like they used to be; they find them weak, lacking in initiative, needy.

It is on this point that I would like our relationships to improve continually. How many vocations have failed, how many missionaries for the cause of God and of souls have accomplished much less than they could have, only because they did not find benevolent hearts which, especially in certain critical moments of life, might have understood them, guided them, and encouraged them!

It's true: in the missions, one lives a Spartan existence also in regard to the spirit, not able to find the abundance of spiritual support that is available in Christian countries. And it is certain that young missionaries, especially at the beginning of their apostolic life, need a lot of friendship, good guidance and continual encouragement. If the old found their way by themselves,

they must show it to the young; if in prior heroic times, one did whatever he could and relied on the help of the Lord, today there is some order and organization by which one can proceed, without presuming upon an extraordinary assistance from God when such is not necessary; we can and must help and enlighten one another reciprocally.

If a confrere has need of counsel and comfort, let's not be sparing in good words, especially if they come to us in the sacred confessional. Maybe we'll say things he already knows and could express better than we; it doesn't matter. No one has a greater need for a doctor, when he is sick, than another doctor. Too many times we allow ourselves to be taken up by human respect and deny to our confrere that good word, that exhortation which we give so abundantly to others.

We must give this encouragement, each of us to the other; but that which comes from superiors has a special power and force all its own. In the ecclesiastical world we often hear a certain complaint and I don't know how true it is. They say that when a priest errs, he is immediately reprimanded and punished; but when this priest struggles mightily year after year on the often difficult path of duty, it is rare that the superiors encourage him, sustain him or praise his efforts. Be that as it may, it is certain that, especially for us missionaries who perform a work which is hidden and distant from the eyes of others, sustained only by the power of grace and faith, often dry and unrewarding, leading a difficult life and often afflicted with illness: for us the superiors' encouragement, their understanding and kindness are absolutely necessary, especially during the first years of mission. We should never hear the complaint from our missionaries that their superiors do not encourage them in their initiatives or do not sustain them in their difficulties.

The missionary, especially at the beginning of his career, is not infrequently subject to homesickness, to loneliness, to not understanding clearly what is going on. Almost always he overcomes the crisis, because

his faith is strong, but in those moments how appreciated would be a good word, an encouraging glance!

Most missionaries, endowed with sound judgment and animated by a spirit of initiative, watch the veterans work, pick up the methods and systems easily and jump into the work without much trouble; often, rather than pushed, they need to be slowed down. But some of a more timid and uncertain character, with judgment that is not so sure, need to be addressed and also urged on. The lack of assistance, of affectionate encouragement for these missionaries, who could very well be successful, often leaves them displaced, lazy and inactive. At the beginning they could have been formed and directed well; after a few years of life without guidance they cannot be formed anymore and are irrevocably jeopardized.

In this regard it is worthwhile to remember that the missionaries which the Institute sends to the missions are generally young and just out of the seminary. Yes, they have had a theoretical preparation, but their practical preparation must come in the missions under the guidance of good teachers, of exemplary missionaries. There is no reason that could ever justify sending one who has been in the missions only a few months to a remote station where he would have to confront a new world all alone.

Another reflection: the work of a missionary is the fruit of love, of faith, of enthusiasm. No missionary works for a salary; for what he receives, he would have to do very little. It is the love of Christ which impels him, the love of God and of souls which moves him to give of himself, to do all he can, to sacrifice himself, often without measure. But the missionary always remains human, and he is not without trials and temptations. He is sustained by faith, by prayer, by the holy Mass, but he also needs the understanding of confreres and especially of his superiors!

It's true that much of what a missionary does is the fruit of his own free initiative; if he is overwhelmed, he could choose to do less. But if he feels

sustained by the cordial encouragement of his confreres and especially his superiors, he will give of himself even more and the reign of God will progress and souls will be saved. If instead, he feels nothing but the bite of criticism, if the superior seems to hold what he does in little account and does not occasionally help him with a good word, he loses much energy and there is reason to fear that he will be defeated by discouragement.

By this I don't mean to imply that we work for the approval of men, or for any human satisfaction! *Everything, always, only for God* must be the rule of the true missionary! But it is also certain that a little kindness on the part of the superior toward our work always helps; it is almost like the visible delight of God and His approval. Encouraging words from the general inspire heroism among the soldiers, while indifference smothers their energies; many good works falter for the lack of encouraging kindness.

It must be the duty of the superior to encourage, with his kind and practical understanding, the work and good initiatives of the missionaries; thus they will work even harder and with greater happiness, they will maintain control over their operations, and it will be easier to give them the direction that is deemed necessary. Counsel and even correction are willingly accepted from a heart which has shown that it appreciates our struggle and our intentions.

So let's always be inclined to look with great kindness on the work and the operations of our confrere: let's never be taken by the ugly vice of *envy* and *jealousy*, and let's not be among those who can only see defects and faults in everything except their own efforts. Isn't it strange that while a confrere was equal to us in position and office, we did not have much to complain about him; but once he has advanced beyond us in something, once he has become our superior, we find (who knows how?) more frequent occasions to point out this or that defect; and, if we have to serve under him, we feel a certain intolerance and we find much to complain about his projects,

what he does or doesn't do. What is this? Envy? Jealousy? Pride? It is certainly not apostolic charity! Let us also examine ourselves to see whether our criticism, our ill humor is not the result of the fact that our own undertaking or work has not been as successful as our brother's. Let us be on guard against envy and all its vile and subtle manifestations, so contrary to the broad, generous, noble spirit of a true missionary.

Let us nourish the most generous feelings of benevolence also for *the works of any other missionary institute*, and never let it be that any among us speak of them with little esteem. Love of self so easily blinds us to the good in others! Let us always have open and generous hearts toward all!

6) Toward The Sick

If we must always be good and charitable toward our brothers, we must be so in a special way *when someone is sick*. Oh, what great occasions to practice benevolence and love! Especially if we are superiors of a community, a district, a mission, what great care must we have for one who is ill! The student who has left his family to follow the voice of Jesus must find in his superiors and confreres hearts no less caring and solicitous than those of his mother and sisters. How well remembered is the care which a superior, a prefect, a classmate has shown us during a time of illness! How much this attention brings one to love his vocation in the Institute.

But in the missions, where sickness comes too frequently, where medicines and cures are too often lacking, sick confreres really need care and concern. This is love in action, and sometimes on a heroic level, such as when one faces dangerous challenges and long trips to hurry to the side of a sick confrere. How beautiful is the affectionate help of a superior or confrere when one is suffering and isolated, when one lacks everything except the care of a brother's heart! St. Alphonsus Liguori is said to have been ready to leave everything to go to the aid of one of his confrere,

believing it was more important to help them than to do any other kind of good.

May it never happen that sick confreres are neglected, that they are denied the treatment and cure that they need for the sake of money! The missionary is naturally generous of heart, and just as he is so with others, he loves to be treated in the same manner. Let us remember that whatever we spend for the health of a confrere, especially a missionary who expends himself for the cause of the Lord, will be returned hundredfold.

And if we are the ones who are sick, this is also a great occasion to exercise benevolence and charity! Many times it is difficult to say if we are more upset about our illness or about those who are inconvenienced because of us. It is very difficult *to know how to suffer*, but missionaries are among the few who know how to suffer with dignity and without making themselves more burdensome than necessary.

But it is not always like that. There are also those who don't know the value of suffering and at the same time have little regard for those who care for them and little gratitude for all that is done for them. As missionaries of the cross, let's make friends with suffering; let's conceal our pains, our afflictions, and our sufferings as much as possible, and not make others unhappy by our complaints, our impatience and our exaggerated excuses! When our suffering is presented in such a way that it is an edification for our confreres, then it becomes a privilege for them to aid us, and an infallible sign that we have made some progress in the love of Jesus Christ.

7) In The Ministry

As we are kind with our confreres, let's be all the more so with *the souls who have been entrusted to us*, because we must bring them to God, and there is not a better way to attract them than that of benevolence, kindness, and

love. In the missions what most often opens the door to faith is not the eloquence and intelligence of the missionary but his love. A missionary can be as learned as he wants, but if he is gruff, cold, terse, and aloof, if he deems it unworthy to reach out to the little ones and to the humble, he will not do much good.

The pariahs, the Santal, the Karens and every native of any country are much more attracted by goodness than by the prestige of authority and preaching. Even when conversions come for one of these reasons, it is always the goodness of the missionary which touches the heart and brings the converted to faith in Jesus Christ, whose supernatural image is seen in the missionary.

Especially in this regard the missionary must be *alter Christus* if he wants to win over souls for Christ! The missionary who is meek and humble of heart, who leaves traces of goodness wherever he passes, who reproduces in himself the kindness and the humanity of our Savior, will undoubtedly conquer hearts and produce great fruit in regard to souls. The kindness, meekness and patience of the missionary constitute the great magnet which attracts the hearts of poor non-Christians; they are the characteristics which distinguish the Catholic missionary from the ministry of any other religion.

The missionary is a representative of Jesus Christ, not the official of some earthly king. In no way can maltreatment of the newly baptized and catechumens be justified or tolerated. It is above all in the way we treat the lowest and most humble that we prove that ours is true benevolence, arising from the love of God, the essence of the love which comes from the Sacred Heart, because we see the presence of God in the other.

It is easy to be courteous and serving toward superiors, toward the rich, toward persons like us. There are some missionaries who pass for dedicated and fine persons, always ready to help; but if these people turn away when it comes to dealing with the poor, the sick, the ignorant, the

unfortunate, what must we say? That theirs is not the benevolence and love of the saints, but merely worldly refinement, based on earthly love and self-interest. Let us always keep in mind the spirit which comes from the Apostle, who summarizes everything there is to say about mutual love: *“Love one another with the affection of brothers. Anticipate each other in showing respect... Put away ambitious thoughts and associate with those who are lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”*^[66]

Let us do well, let's treat others well, always well, everyone well; let's pay no attention to offenses, to hurts received, to lack of respect; let's not willingly believe bad things about a brother; let's always know how to excuse, to pardon; let's be without preference; *let's allow ourselves the luxury of being good* toward those who seem to merit it the least. *“Overcome evil with good.”*^[67] All of this is good and divine, because it is acting like Jesus, who is always untiringly good with us. If I am kind to a brother who is sad, burdened, and weak, I soothe his pain and bring him encouragement. With generous treatment, with my richness of goodness toward a lazy and unfaithful confrere, I increase his capacity for work and for doing good.

Maybe we don't have anything to give to our brothers; but we can always bestow in great abundance our optimism, our esteem, our affectionate encouragement: all of this is already a most precious gift, because it is part of the immense goodness of Jesus' heart, from which our own benevolence springs. If we are all inspired by this deep spirit of mutual love and benevolence, it will be a blessing to live together and work in a united way for the accomplishment of the holy purposes of our Institute.

8) Collaboration

Our condition as missionaries too often obliges us to live in isolation. Placed in charge of vast districts and many different activities, as founders of new churches we are used to assuming our responsibilities, to not having much need for guidance, to following our own particular

judgment; in a word, to do for ourselves. Our fraternal relationships suffer from this kind of life, as does the sense of mutual collaboration.

Things in the missions and in the houses of formation are more organized now, and there are more occasions for living together and approaching our work, no longer alone, but in collaboration with other confreres. This can cause a certain discomfort because of the differences in temperaments and views, and even more so I think, because of that independent character which is possessed at least a little bit by all missionaries due to the very type of life we lead, as I have said above. At any rate, it is certainly sad that sometimes because of this the interests of God and of souls, and the vocation itself suffer; these are things which must always be of primary concern for us missionaries. Thus it happens that because of incompatibility of characters, the superior cannot freely assign personnel. One who could do well in a post or office cannot take it on, because the questions arise: "How will he work with others? Can anyone live with him?"

Oh! How the souls and the work of God are deprived of good by those who, even if they are talented, can't be assigned somewhere because of a rigid, stubborn, self-centered character. If only they would think that we are all instruments and not creators, that in the house of God we are servants and not masters, this wouldn't happen! They profess submission and obedience, but they are not happy except in the post or office of their own choice, which is not always the one which contributes the most to the general good of the work. Do the various pieces of a machine choose their own place for themselves? Of course not: each one is placed where it will best serve the functioning of the entire organism. It is so evident, but it is not always understood in regard to our company.

Then there is the person who turns down any office: for this one he doesn't have the attitude, for that one he doesn't have the health; and he ends up living in unfruitful isolation, except to lend himself when he feels

like it, doing for others unofficially that which he refused to take on by obedience to the good of the Church, the mission and the Institute. There is also the one who, due to unsuitable pessimism, finds that the mission or the Institute is not going as it should: this work should never have been started, so and so is not right for this position, and so on. He puts on airs and implies that if he had been placed in that position he would do much better; and in the meantime he sows insecurity, he destroys, he tears down.

May we never have to complain of such miseries, brought on by a lack of docility in obedience, a lack of humility in judgment, a lack of due respect for the abilities and virtues of our superiors and confreres. Let us remember that the incompatibility and intolerance which make it difficult to collaborate with a confrere are nothing more than pride. Are we in a lower position? Let us be docile, humble, flexible, affectionate; let's not strain against the yoke, but be submissive to the one in charge. Are we superiors? We must have a treasure house of goodness and patience. Everyone who occupies a position of direction knows how to appreciate his coworkers and has the art of treating them well and holding them in such consideration that they want to give the maximum service for the common work.

9) Esprit De Corps

Let us try to work united in the position to which obedience has assigned us. Don't forget that the Institute represents one of the most glorious arms of the Church. As soldiers of this powerful army we must march united and in good order. If we do not have esprit de corps, if we are not obedient to the orders of our captains, we will become weak and we will return defeated rather than victorious. The vocations which are lost in all the Institutes for want of a spirit of obedience and fraternal unity are a sad demonstration of this. "*A house divided against itself cannot stand.*"^[68] Shall we be united? We will save souls, we will build up the Church and we will always be victorious: "*A brother is a better defense than a strong city.*"^[69]

This spirit of cooperation must animate especially our dear missionaries who work in the houses of formation. They are preparing the future of the Institute and of the missions. If we work in this area not only with zeal, but in the most holy fraternal unity, holding fast to unanimity and harmony toward the same goal, there are no heights to which the Institute cannot aspire.

It is a common, lively goal that everyone should nourish a great, practical and active interest in the good of the *Institute in general*, that everyone feel united in a healthy *esprit de corps* to foster in any way, whenever the occasion presents itself, vocations, dissemination of our literature, and fund-raising for the Institute.

This interest, promoted also at the cost of personal sacrifices, is desirable for everyone: it is necessary that our missionaries all consider themselves as sons of the same family, whose honor and progress they must have at heart. The Institute and its works should be placed above one's own mission, because only if these are strong will the missions have true progress. Every particular and personal interest should be put aside, as we are ready to take on some sacrifice or inconvenience for the good of the Institute: everything is always done for the good of souls, for whom so much suffering and work is done in the missions. Those who find themselves in the homeland cannot escape the spirit of our vocation: from here, we can do some things for the poor non-Christians, and maybe even more effectively than those in the field, albeit many times with less satisfaction. Only in this way will every house of formation also become a center of missionary animation!

10) The Greatest Wish

May the most sacred heart of Jesus clothe us all with the fire of His divine love, so that in our reciprocal relations we will always radiate love and

benevolence in a spirit of mutual charity and cordial cooperation in the positions to which we have been assigned, for our own happiness, for the good of souls, and most of all for the perfect fulfillment of the command of our divine teacher, Jesus: "*Carry one another's burdens, and thus you will fulfill the law of Christ.*"^[70]

CHAPTER SIX: Love For Poverty

1) Blessed Are The Poor In Spirit

All the members in the Institute aspire to be *true missionaries*, genuine disciples of our Lord, men dedicated and consecrated to Him, giving their life and death, without any restriction or reservation.

This principle is indispensable: anyone who holds something back and is not willing to give *everything* to Jesus, is a missionary in name only. The Church and the Institute do not know what to do with such a man. The true missionary must live the spirit of Christ completely, and be able to say, like St. Paul: “*For me to live is Christ.*”^[71]

The one who cannot say this is not only not a missionary, but doesn’t even belong to our Lord: “*If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*”^[72] Now, what strikes us most about Jesus Christ is His total detachment from the things of the earth. We know how poorly He chose to be born, we know how even more poorly He lived His life and how very poorly He died. The whole life of Jesus was a continual lesson in poverty, detachment, disdain for the things of this earth; He taught this by His birth, by His life in Nazareth, and especially by the cross.

This view of poverty permeates His doctrine, beginning from the first words of the marvelous Sermon on the Mount: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of God is theirs.*”^[73] In fact, we could say that the Gospel is the

book of the renunciation of earthly things and the esteem of heavenly things.

And what does Jesus ask of those who, like us, have been called to follow Him closely? It's important that we reflect about this, because it concerns us personally. To the one who wanted to follow Him, the Divine Teacher commanded: *"If you want to be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor, then come and follow me!"*^[74] *"Anyone who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."*^[75] And when He sent the Twelve out to preach for the first time, what instructions did He give them? *"Take neither silver nor gold, nor copper in your belts."*^[76]

The Apostles understood these instructions well and followed them faithfully, so much so that St. Peter could say in the name of the others: *"We have put aside everything to follow you"*^[77] and received the great promise of getting back many times over whatever was given up, as well as gaining eternal life.

This is the Gospel; and although today it is normal to apply these teachings to religious who make the vow of poverty, we need to recall that it was not always this way. Indeed, a true and real detachment, at least in spirit and emotion, has been and is required of all priests, especially those who, like us, *want to follow our Lord closely*, to be like Him in all things in order to be worthy to spread His blessed Kingdom to all. Thus, anyone who wants to be a missionary (religious or secular) and does not have the spirit of poverty practiced and required by Jesus *does not belong to Him*. Let no one delude himself by thinking that he can reconcile the vocation of priest and missionary with attachment to the things of this world, or the spirit of Jesus with the spirit of self-interest.

The Apostle St. Paul, writing to Timothy, speaks clearly on this point. There were some at that time who *"valued religion only as a means to personal gain."*^[78] But the Apostle admonishes Timothy, telling him that the

Gospel provides great gains of richness in the service of God and that according to the promise of Jesus, one will also have a sufficient amount of material goods to live: “*If we have food and clothing, we have all we need.*”^[79] And he continues with these words, worthy of our meditation: “*Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and a trap... The love of money is the root of all evil. Some, in their passion for it have strayed from the faith... Man of God that you are, flee from all this.*”^[80]

Would a missionary, a true *man of God*, a representative of Christ, who cursed the rich, who had no place to lay his head, who established the sanctity of detachment from worldly goods, ever want to defile his ministry and risk the loss of his vocation by excessive attachment to money? “*Man of God, flee from all of this. Instead, seek after integrity, piety, faith, love... Fight the good fight of faith. Taking firm hold on the everlasting life to which you were called...*”^[81] Let’s take these exhortations of the Apostle to his disciple as being addressed to us and let us remain absolutely free from any attachment to the goods of this world, knowing that those missionaries who in any way want things for themselves little by little lose sight of God’s interests; they are no longer shepherds but *hired hands*, who have *little concern about the sheep*.

The Church has always been concerned about fostering this spirit of detachment in missionaries. We can consider the advice contained in the celebrated encyclical *Maximum illud* of the immortal Benedict XV.

A serious problem which the missionary must take every care to guard against is the seeking of any rewards other than the salvation of souls. We cannot speak too much about this matter. How can one who loves money be totally zealous for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, ready to give up all that he has, including his very life for their sake? It reaches a point where he loses much of his authority and respect before the non-Christians, especially if, as can easily happen, this love of money turns into

avarice; there is nothing more contemptible in the eyes of God and others, nothing more detrimental to the reign of God than this sordid vice.

The good missionary, on the other hand, imitates the Apostle of the Gentiles, who not only could say in his famous exhortation to Timothy that if we have food and clothing we have all we need, but also valued detachment so much that even in the midst of the marvelous activity of his ministry, he earned his food by the work of his hands.

2) The Practice Of Poverty

No one, I repeat, can say that all of this is good only for the missionaries who have the vow of poverty. Dear confreres, the one who thinks in this way is far from the truth. Are you missionaries? Then you must have this spirit of detachment from all earthly things, and you must regulate your lives according to this spirit. Even if you had the vow of poverty, without such a spirit, that wouldn't make you any better. We know that it is not the vow itself which makes us poor.

Is perfection, to which our priesthood calls us, tied to some vow? What about the perfection which is required by our condition as apostles of the Gospel? Before the rule of any religious order, made by men, the Gospel has been and will always be the rule of the order of apostles, made by Christ. We are not religious, but we are apostles, missionaries who want to follow the heart of Jesus completely: this is what is important! So there is no height of perfection which does not pertain to us: the spirit of poverty, of detachment from earthly things, must shape our lives, as it shaped the life of our dear Master and all holy priests.

To some it might also seem out of place and maybe a little ironic to encourage the spirit of poverty and selflessness in missionaries, when they are already so poor. In fact, this has been one of the most beautiful impressions I've had in visiting our missions: the poverty in which our dear

fathers live, poverty which is often pushed to the extreme by their zeal (which we cannot condone, because of the danger to one's health, which is already threatened in so many other ways). We also have a brilliant proof of the generosity and unselfishness among us in the fact that some have freely placed their own resources at the disposal of the theological seminary in Milan.

3) Easy Rationalization

The missionary who fills the ranks of the Institute and gives himself totally to the work of God, should never be worried about temporal goods, neither for the present nor for the future. The Institute and the missions provide for everything.

The Constitution is ample and detailed on this point. It spells out and determines the various obligations of the Institute toward its members, so that *they are always provided for in everything*. Thus, not being worried about material things, they can give themselves without reserve and with maximum unselfishness to the work among souls.

This abundance of instructions which specify the obligations of the Institute toward the missionary for his temporal needs in all times and situations of his life and which obligate the missionary to offer his work totally without charge, represents something like a contract and creates true obligations of justice for both the Institute and the missionary. The Institute is obliged to provide for the needs of the missionary, and the missionary for his part must serve the work of God freely.

If this is the case, it is easy to understand that one of our missionaries can never accumulate for himself offerings which come for the benefit of his ministry and work. I don't know how a missionary could justify this in conscience, unless such money is a family inheritance or a gift of an absolutely personal nature. A missionary who goes to the mission poor,

and then would seek to enrich himself with the stipends of the bishop or other income of the ministry, perhaps thinking to leave the Institute someday and so have something to take with him, would show that he did not really have a vocation, would dishonor himself, and could not live with a clear conscience; because when he entered the Institute and accepted its Constitution he renounced any temporal remuneration for his service. It is to this kind of person that the warning of St. Augustine applies: Be careful, my brother, *“lest that which you try to acquire in order to live, will be the cause of death.”*

I found this point very clearly explained in the “Parvae Regulae” of the Vicariate of Weihweifu, and I would like to quote the relative passage:

[The missionaries] must be very careful that, according to the decrees of the Sacred Congregation, any compensation received for the exercise of the ministry must go to the welfare of the mission... If something above the required stipend is received, it should be used totally for charity, or for repair of chapels, or for buying books they need, without any worry about the future. As no one denies, the mission must in justice take care of the priests who spend their energies and life for the welfare of the mission.

About donations: when one becomes a member of the Institute, the title of missionary might attract donations to him. It can also be, as often happens, that the missionary himself solicits such donations by making the needs of his district known to the faithful. It is clear that when the faithful, moved by the needs of a missionary, make a contribution, they do not intend it as a gift to the person, but rather a means of cooperation for the progress of the missions and the spread of the faith. They donate because they have the tacit guarantee of the Institute and the superiors that what is given will be wisely used for the purposes intended. No missionary then, can take the offerings he receives for himself, and the superiors have every right and duty to intervene in such cases, to see how offerings have been solicited and how they are being used. The instructions of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the faith are most clear about this:

Of the goods given to the mission or to Religious for the benefit of the mission, the bishop has the right to require an account from the Religious missionary as well as from the pastors of the diocesan clergy.^[82]

Again:

The goods acquired with alms collected for the missions are true ecclesiastical goods... therefore: (1) a missionary cannot acquire them on his own authority nor in his own name and then dispose of them as he wishes, (2) not even for the good of the mission can he sell or mortgage the goods that have been acquired, without prior authorization.^[83]

The offerings and donations given to a missionary have the character of ecclesiastical goods; so they must be used according to the intentions of the benefactor and under the control of the superiors. This is very clear, and no one, simply because the offering comes in his name, should consider himself its owner, able to spend it as he pleases or invest it without the permission of the Ordinary, *even if doing so would be of benefit to the mission.*

4) An Ill-Advised Preoccupation

Let's not give too much value to money as a means of the apostolate. We understand well the power of the words *too much*. *The Gospel will not go very far supported by the crutch of money*, and even if it seems to be making progress, such progress will not be true and lasting. The Holy Spirit still converts souls through the prayers, penance and zeal of the missionaries; the Gospel is spread more through the virtue and zeal of the newly baptized than through the work of hired hands. Missionary work, based only on money, clips the wings of the Holy Spirit, and ends up where all merely human endeavors end up, which is not very far.

If we want to be great saviors of souls, let us be enriched by great sanctity, certain that the true apostolate rests in “*the convincing power of the Spirit.*”^[84] If missionaries had always gone out into the world in the way in which the Master taught, there would not be so many non-Christians on the earth today. The natural cannot support the supernatural, and no sum of money nor human industry can make up for a lack of sanctity in the apostolate.

If it were money that brought about the conversion of the world, the Gospel would have told us so. Instead, it seems as if there are some who think that if only there were enough money, they would be able to do everything. But when they have a lot of money and little else—oh, how many demons accompany them! How many times have we seen that where there is money and power but little sanctity, not only are the people not converted, but the missionaries themselves lose their faith.

If it is edifying to see a missionary on home leave from his mission ask in a dignified way (like St. Paul) for offerings from the faithful for the poor, for the orphans, for the work he has left behind, such is not the case in regard to young missionaries who, right after they leave, begin immediately to seek money, solicit donations, and gather addresses of wealthy people. This preoccupation might seem to come from zeal, but it is the wrong kind of zeal. New missionaries should not be overly concerned with material things: as the Apostles said, “*We should concentrate on prayers and the ministry of the word*”^[85] and leave the material needs to those who have the duty to provide them.

I say again: not having the vow of poverty, the missionary has the right to possess, administer and dispose of his own personal goods. But because of his attachment to a mission, this right is subject to the limitations imposed by the needs of the common life, by the good order of the mission and other serious concerns. And the superiors have the right to intervene in the case of a missionary who, even if he is spending his own money, is

leading a life which does not conform to the apostolic spirit; he might be admired by the people, but he is a bad example to his confreres.

It is clearly prohibited by the Constitution to acquire and possess for oneself property in the missions. The Chinese Council definitively states: “*While missionaries and native priests can freely dispose of their family goods, no one can buy land, houses, or other real estate, even with their own money, without permission of the Ordinary, etc.*”^[86]

5) Those Who Want To Be Rich

The Constitution says: “The missionaries should avoid making loans, even from their own family money, especially to the Christians, etc.” Here the concern of the authors is the danger (unfortunately frequent) that in making loans, one ends up distancing himself from the debtor, especially his own Christians. But there is another danger, which is even more serious: that the missionary who gives a loan, naturally at interest, will develop the terrible vice of avarice. This is not to mention other damage, such as bad example, etc.

No missionary in the field can traffic in money, whether his own or not, without permission of the Ordinary, who will consider it *only* when he sees absolutely no danger of avarice, scandal or loss of vocation. We don’t go to the missions to make money, but to extend the reign of God and save souls. The ones who need to be concerned about monetary commitments are the procurators, not the individual missionaries, except in some particular cases which are well supervised and always with the authorization of the Ordinary.

This attitude might seem severe, but it is absolutely necessary that no danger invade the vocation of our dear missionaries. It’s enough to remember the miserable end of one of the Twelve who, because of the spirit of self-interest, committed the worst deed ever to stain humanity. So

let's consider the strong words of the Apostle to Timothy: "*Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and a trap. They are letting themselves be captured by foolish and harmful desires which drag men down into ruin and destruction.*"^[87]

There is also Canon 142 to consider: "*Clerics are forbidden to do business by themselves or for others, whether for their own profit or for that of others.*" In the Directory of the Mission of Seoul we find: "*it is forbidden for the missionaries to gain money through any action or work, or by business dealings or lending. A priest must make profit in heaven by the abundance of good works, increase his heavenly store by gaining souls for God, and never seek money and material comforts.*"

More than any of these exhortations, what should inspire us to the spirit of poverty are the words of Jesus: "*Do not lay up for yourselves an earthly treasure,*" because "*where your treasure is, there your heart is also.*"^[88] We want our treasure to be nothing other than Jesus, and in Him alone do we want our heart to be. We have faith, living faith in the divinity of our mission and in the marvelous promise made by Jesus to His Apostles that they should trust in His Divine Providence: "*When I sent you on mission without purse or traveling bag, were you in need of anything?*" "*Not a thing,*" they replied.^[89] Oh! Jesus is faithful. He will not abandon the one who *seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*. Let's remember the exhortation of the Apostle: "*Do not love money but be content with what you have, for God has said: I will never desert you, nor will I forsake you.*"^[90]

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Obedience

1) Importance

This theme is of great interest to every Institute; but for a missionary Institute it is absolutely of primary importance. Let us look at the obedience which must be present among us, the necessity, the spirit and the practice of that virtue which St. Augustine has called the *greatest, the source, the mother and the guardian of all virtues.*

There is no book about Christian perfection which does not touch upon this topic; still, we need to consider it here because without a great, sincere spirit of obedience it would not be possible for our Institute to exist, for the missions to prosper, for common work to be done. This virtue is the great bond of discipline which must unite all of us; it is the rudder which directs all of our work.

We need to treat this topic also because, especially in this age, the idea of a missionary is more easily associated with a zealous and courageous man than with a truly obedient one. Yes, a missionary must have zeal, a courageous and indomitable spirit; like a soldier he must be a man of valor—his bravery and ability for sacrifice must often reach heroic proportions. But the *highest virtue* is not his zeal, nor his courage, nor his heroism. He will be a good missionary, an invincible soldier of Christ, *only* if he is obedient. Courage, self-denial, and heroism which are not guided by obedience are often a waste of energy, and sometimes pure folly.

A final reason we must address this topic is the need for our young to be educated and formed ever more seriously in this virtue. Thus, this is a project for the superiors and educators of the Institute: to help the young to cultivate and become ever more perfect in the exercise of a virtue which, when it is well understood and possessed, alone will assure them of happiness and success in their missionary life.

So I ask my confreres to read the following with the same desire for good with which I have written it, convinced that the Institute will be, today and tomorrow, what the obedience of its members makes it.

2) Necessity

The virtue for which we missionaries must have a real love, the one in which we must particularly distinguish ourselves, is that of obedience. Because, what are we if we do not perfectly possess this virtue? Disobedience is the exact opposite of a missionary characteristic, while obedience is the missionary's principal characteristic, his program of life, his standard.

We are missionaries in order to re-establish on earth the order which was broken by the first rebellion, to bring people back to obedience of God and submission to His holy laws. Our program is revealed in the first part of the Lord's Prayer: our duty is to make God reign in the hearts and minds of people as He reigns in heaven. The longing of every apostolic heart is just this: to announce, to spread, to make present, to defend the holy will of God, because in that way He will be glorified and souls will be saved; all of this is what it means to be a missionary. As one who restores and preaches obedience, is it possible that he himself would not jealously guard this virtue, would not possess it to a great degree?

We must be thoroughly convinced of the necessity for a missionary to distinguish himself in this virtue, which is so indispensable that *nothing* can

take its place, not even the highest gifts or charisms, not even the gift of tongues or raising the dead. The missionary who disobeys, who criticizes the orders of his superiors, even if no one notices it or thinks about it, ceases to be a missionary of Christ, and in fact places himself in the company of those who resist Him. Thus, St. Ignatius, who wanted to give to the Church a well trained band of apostles, recommended and required obedience above all from his Company: "Let us allow, and I permit you to do so," he wrote, "that other religious orders might surpass us in fasting, in wakefulness and other austerities; but when it comes to obedience, I ardently desire that all those who serve the Lord in this Company be second to no one at all, and that this virtue become the sign which distinguishes the true and legitimate sons of the Company from those who are not."

And St. Ignatius was right, if the Company of Jesus has done so much good for the Church, if it has never been in need of reform, if it is stronger today than ever, if it is therefore persecuted (and perhaps feared) by enemies, the secret is completely in the strict obedience, the rigid discipline which rules its members.

We are not religious, but in regard to obedience no one is more religious than we. We are a company of apostles; our goal, after our own sanctification, is the salvation of souls in the parts of the world to which we are sent. For this, we must be disposed and prepared for every aspect of obedience, always responsive to the orders of the superiors wherever they send us, ready to exercise the sacred ministry where and how we have been ordered. *We oblige ourselves to this with an oath*, in which only the apostolate and obedience are mentioned, so intimately connected are the two: "*I promise and swear to consecrate my whole life for the work of the missions and offer my obedience.*" In this regard, none of us can claim to have an obligation less than that of the most rigid religious.

This obligation is intrinsic to the very profession of the missionary, a consequence of the very fact that we belong to the Institute, whose Constitution we have accepted.

Even before the oath came into practice, our missionaries promised themselves to obedience in no less certain terms, in solemn words before God: *"I firmly promise and affirm that I will dedicate and spend myself until the end of my life for the conversion of non-Christians in the missions entrusted to the Institute, in complete dependence upon my superiors."* Also in this ancient formula of consecration to the apostolate, the profession of obedience followed immediately.

All of us, and especially our dear youth, must understand very well the strict connection between our apostolic vocation and the virtue of obedience. God desires obedience as an essential characteristic of all His chosen ones. Only the obedient are saved. If we want to know beforehand who will be the predestined of heaven, all we have to do is seek out those who obey. If instead, we feel in any way that we are *not servants*, then we are on the road to perdition and hell. Now, if we are called to be the ministers of human salvation; if, as I have said above, it is we who must bring people back to obedience of God's will, we must necessarily *be men of obedience*, such that we must make every effort to conform our will more perfectly to the holy will of God, which we will know and see in the orders, the instructions, and the desires of our superiors.

If we want to be good missionaries, we must study the virtue of obedience assiduously, in order to make the will of God the rule and model of our own will. The will of God is the source and motive of every good; outside the will of God is only evil, sin and perdition. The one who wants to dedicate himself to the apostolate and the salvation of souls must, through a great spirit of obedience, bind his own will to that of God. On the other hand, through disobedience, one finds oneself outside and against the will of God, ceases to do good, and ceases to be an instrument of salvation,

because God cannot bless those things which are against, or even not wholly in conformance with His will.

Therefore, the more we strive to be acceptable to God by perfect conformity to His holy will, the better missionaries we will be; the more we love obedience, the better we will deserve the name of apostles. St. Jerome tells us: "*Giving up money is for beginners, not the more perfect: Thebanus did it, and so did Anthistenes. Giving up yourself to God is the mark of Christians and apostles.*"

3) The Model

But let's begin by looking a little bit at our Divine Teacher, and discovering His feelings and actions in regard to this virtue. Let us (especially us missionaries) not forget that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, incarnated to show us with His human life how God lives among people, so that people can know how to live in such a way that they will be acceptable to the Lord. Jesus does not deceive us, and we, especially those who want to be his apostles, must submit ourselves, adore and imitate His example.

Here's a question: Why did we become, or do we want to become missionaries? To give the greatest proof of our love in following Him in the way of the apostolate, dedicating and sacrificing our Life to promote the interests of His divine Father, working *as He worked* for the salvation of souls. And how did Jesus complete the great work of salvation for the world? Jesus was able to save the world *only through His obedience*. Since disobedience caused us to be lost, obedience had to save us. "*Just as through one man's disobedience all became sinners, so through one man's obedience all shall become just.*"^[91]

Obedience was the means pre-ordained by God and accepted by Jesus to save souls. The obedience of Jesus was the expiation owed for the universal disobedience of humanity. The work of human salvation

consists, therefore, in the great obedience of Jesus. “*Son though He was, He learned obedience through what He suffered, and when perfected, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.*”^[92]

Jesus, the Son of God from all eternity, voluntarily assumed our infirmity, and experienced in the sufferings of His life and death all the painful consequences of the great sacrifice His obedience entailed. Perfected by obedience and attaining glory, He became the principle and the source of salvation for all those who obey Him. May this profound thought of the author of Hebrews illumine our way always!

His spoken testimony. It is the same author who reveals to us how the primordial attitude of the Incarnate Word was one of loving obedience toward His eternal Father: “*On coming into the world, Jesus said: As is written of me in the book, I have come to do your will, O God,*”^[93] and he continues, “*By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*”^[94]

When He descended from heaven, it was not of His own will, but out of obedience: “*I did not come of my own will, but it was He who sent me.*”^[95] And with what enthusiasm He came! “*Like a giant he runs his course!*”^[96] And with what love He went to his death: “*The world must know that I love the Father and do as the Father has commanded e. Come then! Let us be on our way!*”^[97]

Having come into the world, He declared that His mission was to do not His own will but the will of His Father. “*It is not to do my own will that I have come down from heaven, but to do the will of Him who sent me.*”^[98] There was not an act, not a step, not a word in His whole life which was not ordered and directed toward obedience: “*I do nothing by myself. I say only what the Father has taught me,*”^[99] for which reason He could solemnly affirm: “*I always do what pleases Him.*”^[100]

Obedience is such a great part of His life that He calls it His nourishment: “*My food is to do the will of the one who sent me.*”^[101] Even though as the supreme lawgiver, He was not subject to observing the law, still He rigidly affirmed: “*Not the smallest part of a letter of the law will be done away with until it all comes true.*”^[102] Who will deserve to be loved by Him? “*You are my friends, if you do what I command you.*”^[103] He refers to the obedient with the sweet names of brother, sister, mother: “*The one who does the will of my Father in heaven is brother, sister and mother to me.*”^[104] He endures death itself out of obedience to His Father: “*I lay it down freely,*” He says of His life, “[because] this command I have received from my Father.”^[105]

His example. And after these words of Jesus about obedience, let us take a look at some of His examples. How does the evangelist describe the whole hidden early life of Jesus? With three simple words: *Erat subditus illis* (He was obedient to them).^[106] Thirty years of continuous obedience! How great it would be for each of us if at the end of our life we might deserve a similar epitaph: He was an obedient missionary!

For thirty years Jesus led a hidden life, while the world needed Him so much; thirty years, we would say, taken up in absolutely insignificant things, when there was a world to save. Well, the salvation of the world required precisely this hidden time, this time of obedience: it had it, and was saved! Oh, how our own poor love struggles to imitate this great example! This alone should be enough to convince us that if we want to participate in the salvation of souls, there’s nothing else to do but imitate the obedience of Jesus. And Jesus did not stop obeying once He began His public life, nor did He obey only His divine Father. In obedience to His holy mother, He worked his first miracle, even though His hour had not yet arrived. He obeyed even the smallest of the Jewish laws; and while He was preparing His first disciples for the apostolate, He worked a miracle to teach them how much they must avoid giving bad example in the area of obedience. After having shown that He could not be obliged to pay the temple tax, He immediately said to Peter: “*But for fear of discrediting*

them, go to the lake, throw in a line, and take out the first fish you catch. Open its mouth and you will discover there a coin worth twice the temple tax. Take it and give it to them for you and me.”^[107]

But where the obedience of Jesus shines forth most brightly is in His passion and death. When He came into the world, He offered himself as a victim to His Father. The law which would preside over the sacrifice of this victim was that of obedience, complete submission to the will of the Father. Jesus gave Himself and sacrificed Himself, but He did so as the Father commanded. All of the particulars of His sacrifices had been foretold by the prophets, the official interpreters of God’s will; and Jesus, in His passion, did everything possible to fulfill these particulars ordained by the Father.

During His painful agony, the human part of Him feared that most bitter chalice: “*Father, if it is possible, take this cup away from me.*”^[108] But His will, totally submitted to the divine commands, made Him add immediately: “*Yet, not my will, but yours be done!*” His enemies are coming to capture Him; He shows how He could free Himself from their hands; He could, if He wanted, ask the Father to send legions of angels: but no, He desires that the will of the Father, manifested in Scripture, be fulfilled: “*...so that Scripture may be fulfilled,*”^[109] and He is arrested. From that moment, He is totally in the hands of His enemies, whom He obeys like a gentle lamb. Hanging on the cross, He cries: I am thirsty! Why? “*Jesus, realizing that everything was now finished, said to fulfill Scripture, I am thirsty.*”^[110] This was also to fulfill the prophecy: “*In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*”^[111] At the point of death, He could look back on His whole life, as if in an examination of conscience, and exclaim: “*It is finished!*”^[112] Everything had been fulfilled with perfect obedience!

This, my dearest confreres, is the example we must imitate if we want to have a part in the divine apostolate. The example of Jesus must have the power of irresistible persuasion for everyone who desires to love and

follow Him. As mentioned above, we want to be missionaries *like Jesus* and to save souls *as He saved them*. The example is Jesus. He himself said: “*What I just did was to give you an example; as I have done, so you must do.*”^[113] If you want to be true missionaries, be obedient; and be obedient as I was obedient: “*The one who claims to abide in Him must conduct himself just as He did.*”^[114]

4) Nature And Foundation

Let us enter more deeply into this theme and try to see the nature and foundation of this virtue. Obedience is defined as a moral and supernatural virtue which inclines us to submit our will to that of the superiors, inasmuch as they are representatives of God. It is in these last words that we find the nature and foundation of Christian obedience.

Obedience is founded upon the sovereign power of God and upon the absolute submission which every creature owes to Him. It's not necessary to demonstrate here why we must obey God, our creator, our Father and our redeemer. But it would be useful to see why, as a consequence of this right which God has over us, we must also obey his legitimate representatives. Tanquerey explains this point in his treatise on asceticism:

Since the human person is not sufficient unto himself for his physical, intellectual and moral being, God has willed that he live in society. Now society cannot exist without an *Authority* which coordinates the efforts of its members toward the common good; God therefore wills a hierarchical society, with superiors assigned to command, and others whose duty it is to obey. To make this obedience easier, He delegates His authority to legitimate superiors: *There is no authority except from God,*^[115] such that to obey them is to obey God, and to disobey them is to bring on one's own condemnation: *The one who opposes authority rebels against the ordinance of God; those who resist thus shall draw condemnation down upon themselves.*^[116]

The duty of the superiors is to exercise the authority they have as delegates of God, for nothing else but His glory and to promote the common good of the community; if they fail to do so, they will be responsible for this abuse before God and His representatives. But the duty of the members is to obey the representatives as if obeying God Himself: *Those who hear you, hear me... Those who reject you, reject me.*^[117] And the reason for this is clear: without this subjection, there would be nothing but disorder and anarchy in the various communities.

The great principle, then, is this: We must obey our legitimate superiors *as if obeying God Himself*. We must see in our superiors nothing less than the *authority of God*, such that to disobey the superiors is to disobey God in person. This is the great truth, the article of faith which must be instilled in anyone who desires to be in the ranks of the apostles of the Gospel.

St. Paul, who proclaimed this same truth, that there is no authority which does not come from God, recommends to the Ephesians to obey human masters as they would Christ, and explains his thinking clearly: “*Do not render service for appearance only, and to serve men, but do God's will with your whole heart as slaves of Christ. Give your service willingly, doing it for the Lord rather than for men.*”^[118]

Therefore, we must look not at the man in our superior, nor at his gifts, his virtues or defects; we obey not because the superior is good, reasonable and noble: but only because he takes the place and has the authority of God. Just as God desires to be served in the person of the poor and loved in the person of our neighbor, so He wants to be obeyed in the person of the superior.

The same Apostle reminds us that the reward for our obedience will come from the Lord, since it is to Him and for Him alone that we must obey: “*Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being. Do it for the Lord rather than for men, since you know full well you will receive an inheritance from Him as your*

reward.”^[119] And the Apostle Peter puts forth the same principle: “Because of the Lord, be obedient to every human institution.”^[120]

Dearest confreres, we must be well grounded in this divine truth, and thank God for having made it easier for us to subject our will to that of the superiors, by guaranteeing that every act of obedience and submission toward them is also directed toward Him. And at the same time, let us be firmly convinced that nothing could excuse our disobedience: not even the ignorance or lack of virtue of our superiors. The whole merit of obedience is this: Who wouldn’t obey if our Lord came in person and commanded something? We must obey our human superiors, *because that’s the way God desires to be obeyed.* He has willed these intermediaries between Himself and us, and wants to be served by these interpreters, even if they have weaknesses and defects.

And I will say more: The defects, the ignorance, the lacks of our superiors also enter into the designs of God in regard to what He wants for us. Caesar Augustus ordered a census because of his own ambition; Herod ordered the slaughter of the innocents out of jealousy and thus brought about the flight of the holy family into Egypt; unjust judges condemned our Lord to death, Jesus always obeyed: He went to Bethlehem to be born; as a baby He went into exile; He accepted death on the cross, recognizing in the officials and in the unjust judges themselves, the authority of God: “*You would have no power over me whatever, if it were not given to you from above.*”^[121] When He obeyed even the unjust, whose designs were being fulfilled? Only the wonderful, eternal designs of God!

Even if our superiors were as bad as the scribes and the Pharisees, we would still have to obey them: “*The scribes and Pharisees have succeeded Moses as teacher, therefore, do everything and observe everything they tell you;*” the rest doesn’t concern you; “*Do not follow their example.*”^[122] When we see defects and imperfections in our superiors, let us obey them even more perfectly, and

we will have greater merit. Saint John Clima, asked how he could obey a superior with defects, said: *I see the image of Christ in my superior.*

5) A Mystery Of Faith

The doctrine of God's authority in the person of our superiors is true as an article of faith. Indeed, we find ourselves before a mystery. God, in requiring our obedience, asks for the only sacrifice a rational creature can give which is worthy of Him: the sacrifice of one's own will. The one who sacrifices and gives up his own will, his own judgment, on the altar of obedience, really gives his whole self to God. He gives the only thing which God really appreciates, the best part of himself, that which makes him truly human. On the other hand, the one who resists obedience and refuses to offer his will to God, refuses to offer himself; and what good is anything else to God? This is the mystery of obedience.

The saints have seen a kind of Eucharistic mystery in this type of obedience. At the moment that a bishop or any superior is named and invested in his jurisdiction, God immediately shares His authority with him, and at the same time His power, His care for souls, His heart. The appearance of the superior thus invested with God's authority, like that of the Eucharist, remains weak and humble; but this superior still represents God for us and still must communicate God's sovereign will. The Eucharist has been given to us for the nourishment of our souls, to give us the life of God; superiors have been given to us to show us the path of duty, to let us know the will of God for us, to clear up any doubts we have.

Do you remember the scene of St. Paul's conversion? Knocked off his horse on the way to Damascus and converted, he asks Jesus this question, the great question for the whole life of every Christian, of every missionary: "*Lord, what do you want me to do?*" And Jesus responds: "*Get up and go into the city and there you will be told what to do.*"^[123] Paul could have indulged himself in more questions: Why should I go into the city? Why

don't you tell me, Lord, what you want me to do? Wouldn't that be much simpler? Maybe it would have been simpler, but it would not have been in accord to the divine plan by which God wants to speak to us through the superiors. And it is in this that the Lord deigns to reveal His normal Providence, for our greater merit, and also for our absolute certainty.

An inspiration in prayer, an interior voice, a direct revelation from the Lord, does not have the quality of absolute certainty: they might be mind-games or diabolical illusions. Only obedience to our superiors assures us of absolute certainty in every case, in every situation in which the soul finds itself. How grateful we must be to the Lord for having arranged it so!

St. Teresa had a vision in which it seemed to her that the Lord was commanding something which was not in complete accord with what she had been commanded by her confessor. She decided to obey her confessor, saying to the Lord, "Even though I know, my God, that you are speaking to me, and I have the greater will to obey you, still it is not a matter of faith that you would speak to me directly, but it is a matter of faith that my God speaks to me through the mouth of my confessor."

And St. Margaret Alocoque: "God is my teacher and director. But He wills that I do nothing without the consent of my superior. He almost desires that I obey her more than I do Him."

So let us have the faith of the saints, and let us see in the superiors only the person of Christ. "*You took me to yourselves as an angel of God, even as if I had been Christ Jesus!*"^[124] Let us have this kind of faith and we will be blessed.

6) Whom To Obey

a) *The Pope*. We already know quite well in theory the doctrine of our faith in regard to the divine institution of the Church and the hierarchy by which

it is governed. Therefore, we owe our fullest, most absolute and unconditional obedience, our most humble and affectionate submission to the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Pope. The Constitution has these beautiful words in this regard: “*The Institute glories in professing unlimited devotion, profound attachment, love and veneration toward the Supreme Pontiff. Thus all the members will distinguish themselves by an absolute submission and filial obedience to all the directives of the Holy See.*”

It’s not necessary to elaborate upon these clear words which reflect the feelings of all the venerable superiors and fathers who have gone before us and remind us of the dear tradition of absolute and pure loyalty by which our united Institute has always distinguished itself. I will only say that the word *Pontifical*, by which our Institute is honored, is not simply a noble title, but an expression of our particular and practical attachment to the Holy See, with whom we must always be of one mind and one heart, at every time and in every circumstance, thus certain to be one with our Lord as well.

And we naturally extend this attachment and submission in a particular way to the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, upon which the Institute depends, as is spelled out in our Constitution.

b) *The Superiors of the Institute.* Here I am speaking of the authority of the Superior General over the whole Institute and the obedience due to him, of Regional Superiors and their delegates, and of superiors of individual houses. It’s enough to recall what St. Paul recommends in this regard: “*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over you as men who must render an account.*”^[125]

Let us reflect and especially bring our youth to reflect on the whole meaning expressed by these words. We superiors—St. Paul says—continually keep watch over the good of your souls, as a task given to us by God; that means that if you, because of the negligence of your superiors,

should in some way fail, they will be held responsible for this in front of God.

So the superiors have the burden and responsibility of their position. And what responsibility? The greatest of all, St. Thomas says, is that one must render judgment on the lives and actions of others, when one is not sufficient in oneself to render such judgment.

Then let us think about the words that follow in the passage cited above: *“Act that they may fulfill their task with joy, not with sorrow, for that would be harmful to you.”* Here St. Paul prays that we, aware of the burden which weighs upon our superiors, might obey in such a way that they might carry it not with sadness and tears, but with joy. Otherwise, the Apostle says, *it would be harmful to you*: both because disobedience complicates the work of the superior, impedes the good and brings damage to the community, and because the Lord will punish us for such disobedience.

My dear confreres, meditate always on these words of St. Paul! And I say this to all, near and far! Here in the homeland people normally see the bishops, prelates and superiors only in terms of the greatness of their position, the honors surrounding them and the advantages of the office. They are thought to be always happy and privileged. This is a superficial and erroneous idea: few people consider the pain and suffering, the sadness and tears which certain duties carry with them. However, it is true that in the homeland, authority is generally surrounded by a certain lustre and offers certain advantages.

But dear confreres, you know how our superiors live in the missions and in the homeland: for them, the cross is totally the cross; it has no lustre and even less advantages; so how much more should we be understanding, patient and lovingly submissive to them!

If in a community there is not that attitude called for by St. Peter, “*obedience to the truth and fraternal love,*”^[126] the position of the superior is unsustainable and a real martyrdom. Indeed, what would be the position of a superior who had to govern a house or mission with members who were unkind, who could not stand the opinions of others, who cared only for their own comfort, who were quick to criticize, strict with others but indulgent with themselves? Wouldn’t the position of such a superior bring one to tears? Could such a mission, such a community merit divine blessing?

Let it never be that way among us! Let us see in the superiors our fathers, those upon whom God has placed the heaviest cross, all for the love and service of us. Let us commit ourselves to be, as I said before, understanding, patient and lovingly submissive with respect to them, so that they can carry their cross *with joy, and not with sadness.*

c) *Ecclesiastical Superiors.* The Constitution says: “Upon entering the mission, the new missionaries immediately place themselves in the hands of the bishop, vicar, or apostolic prefect, professing perfect obedience and submission to them.” And again: “The missionary must guard against any opposition in regard to the views of the bishop, any criticism about the work of confreres, or condemnation of the approved methods of the mission. He will write often to the bishop... to reveal his doubts and fears, his difficulties and needs, entrusting himself always to the bishop’s decisions and advice.”

Let us never lose sight of the nature of our Institute: we are purely and simply a society of missionaries. One enters our Institute with the exclusive and specific purpose of dedicating himself to the conversion of non-Christians in the missions. If someone must spend some time in the homeland, it is only to cooperate in the common work of this apostolate as it takes place there. Considering who we really are, apostolic missionaries,

it is natural that our superiors are the bishops, vicars, and apostolic prefects of the missions: they are our ordinaries.^[127]

The ecclesiastical superiors of the missions have the responsibility for evangelization in their territory, and the full authority to direct the apostolic work of the missions.^[128] It is also clear that this authority does not come to them from the superiors of the Institute, even if they nominated them for the position, but directly and exclusively from the Holy See. Thus, for what pertains to them as ordinaries, they are not under the jurisdiction of the superiors of the Institute, but depend solely upon the Holy See.^[129]

Canon 329 says “*The bishops are the successors of the Apostles and the appointed leaders of particular churches by divine authority. They govern with ordinary power under the Pope’s authority.*” We missionaries make our own the vow of St. Pius X that the *reverence and obedience* solemnly promised to those whom the Holy Spirit has placed in governance of the Church might always grow and increase. Without obedience to our ecclesiastical superiors, the zeal of the missionary could not be perfect and fruitful, because it would lack the blessing of God. This blessing will be all the more abundant, the more the missionary knows how to obey, giving up his own way of seeing things, abandoning and conforming himself to the directions and dispositions of the only one who has the responsibility for evangelization in the mission, and for the works directed toward it. If there were obedience in the missions, everything would proceed in peace and there would be much consoling progress.

We have seen how the bishops, vicars and apostolic prefects of our missions are our ordinaries. It is worthwhile to remember that it was to these that the missionaries promised solemn obedience on the day of their priestly ordination. On that memorable day the bishop, after having consecrated them priests, took their hands in his and asked: “*Do you promise respect and obedience to your ordinary?*” They responded, “*I promise!*” We must see this as more than a simple ceremony; it was a formal promise which

was made, a solemn commitment taken before God and the Church. From that response flows an absolutely special obligation of obedience toward those who govern us in the missions.

For this reason Bishop Marinoni required of the missionaries the most unlimited obedience to our bishops. In the original Rule, he prescribed: “The missionaries will accept *as given by God* that place or office to which the superior sees fit to assign him. They will not appeal to their age or other titles in order to take precedence over their confreres, recalling what the Apostle taught: ‘*Let all parties think humbly of others as superior to themselves.*’”^[130] What wisdom is contained in this paternal advice, which our dear missionaries should never forget!

As far as our particular destination is concerned, let us try to receive, as if it came from the very hands of Jesus Christ, whatever position or office is assigned to us by the authorities, whether it involves direct evangelization of non-Christians, or aids that effort only indirectly. The ecclesiastical superior can assign his missionaries to any task, office or position that is useful for the good of the mission, from the villages to the city, from the seminary to the procurator’s office.

Once in a place, let us not try to change. St. Francis Xavier admonished against this in one of his letters: “There is no place which does not produce boredom or weariness at one time or another, and except for those who are very obedient and resigned to the will of God, everybody would love to trade places with somebody else. This restlessness often comes from our spirit of independence and the feeling that we are being treated worse than the others. Believe me, the one who lacks the spirit of obedience can move around as much as he wants, but he’ll never find rest. If you have a fever, it’s impossible to find a comfortable position.”

It is admirable—indeed it is one of the most beautiful characteristics of our Institute—how obediently all of our new missionaries always receive

their destinations to a given mission. May this generous, great and beautiful spirit accompany them all throughout their lives! They can, certainly, reveal their desires and difficulties in regard to a position, transfer, etc. But having done that, let them leave the decisions to the wisdom and will of the superiors. Let none of us deserve the rebuke which St. Bernard gave to a certain Ogerio who, after much insistence, obtained exemption from an office to which he had been assigned: *“Permission which is forced is not really permission but violence. I congratulate you for having achieved dispensation from this office, but I’m afraid that God will be dispensed from you. Answer in truth: are you more concerned about your own comfort or the good of others?”*

When by revealing only a part of a situation or affair, or by using undue pressure or showing restlessness and unhappiness, we succeed in getting a change of position or some permission from the superior, let's not pretend that we are obedient. The one who does this, St. Bernard says, *“deludes himself, he pretends to obey the superior when actually the superior is obeying him.”* And there are also these golden words: *“Though you run to and fro, you shall find no rest, but only in humble subjection under the rule of a superior. Fancy and continual changing of place have deceived many.”*^[131]

Finally, the missionary who wants to be perfect in obedience must not make distinctions between obligatory rules and simple directives, between orders or the counsels of the superiors. With a great heart, he submits himself to everything, because in all the different manifestations of the superior's will he sees nothing but the will of God. Such must be the only rule of life of one who is totally dedicated to God and to souls.

We must confess: the missions would have been spared much trouble, and many vocations would have been saved if, casting off that materialism which often causes us to see only the *humanity* of the superiors, we would have followed the wise advice of Bishop Marinoni, who exhorted us never to forget that the ordinaries of the missions govern in the name of the Vicar of Christ, and that the proper attitude of sons is obedience and love;

it was in these great virtues that he always wanted his missionaries to distinguish themselves.

7) The Duty Of Superiors

These recommendations are addressed in a most particular way to the superiors and fathers in our houses of formation, from the smallest to the greatest. It is these, the rectors, spiritual directors, teachers, all the way down to the simple prefects, who must educate the young in the religious and loving practice of obedience.

And they must do so first of all by example, conforming themselves totally to the dispositions of the major superiors. What disorder there is when a vice-rector does not conform himself totally to his immediate superior, but wants to do everything on his own, according to his own view! What confusion when a rector ignores, or causes to be ignored, the directives of the general directorate, given precisely to obtain uniformity in the educational and disciplinary system of our houses!

This recommendation to the superiors is most opportune, because in an institute like ours it can easily happen that offices of direction are entrusted to fathers freshly returned from the mission field, perhaps unaware of the methods and customs currently in use. If, ignoring the rules and directives of the major superiors, everyone wanted to make his own personal mark on the work to which he has been assigned, it is easy to see how many problems, how much disorder we would find.

And speaking of the superiors, I'd like to report here the exhortation made to them by the venerable Fr. Chevrier: "It's necessary," he says, "that a superior be filled with the Spirit of God. It's necessary that a superior know God's will at every moment, and that he bring the members to carry it out. What a duty! What a responsibility! What an intimate union with Jesus Christ this man needs, to the point that he doesn't say or do anything

apart from what Christ wants to see being done by his members. With what care a superior must study Jesus Christ, His divine word, His doctrine, His spirit, in order to govern each house, each person, each individual soul according to Jesus Christ! He needs total disregard for himself; he needs prayer, study, counsel.”

And to the superiors I would recommend that you have the heart of a father if you expect obedience from your sons. “*To the elders among you I make this appeal. God’s flock is in your midst, give it a shepherd’s care. Watch over it willingly as God would have you do, not under constraint. Be examples to the flock; not lording it over those assigned to you.*”^[132]

To fatherliness and kindness, we can add humility. It takes a lot of humility to obey well, and it takes no less humility to command well. “*Be not puffed up, but with the guests be as one of themselves.*”^[133]

To avoid a harsh, imperious manner does not mean, however, that one must be weak in demanding the execution of the orders which one must give. The wisdom of the superior consists in precisely this: knowing how to combine kindness with firmness in order to obtain the easy cooperation of all the members, maintaining respect for authority and the faithful execution of obedience.

8) The Constitution

Everyone must dedicate himself to the observance of the Constitution. As the word itself indicates, this is the constitutive Rule of the Institute, giving it its own distinctive character; determining its way of governing, the conditions of recruiting and formation of its members, the nature of the bond which unites them, their rights and duties; and precisely establishing the purpose of the Institute and the methods to fulfill that purpose in the missions. It is the fundamental law of our society.

If there have been periods of uncertainty and decay in religious institutes, it has been when there was little attention paid to the observance of the Rule. It has been said that Pius X declared that he was ready to canonize, without any other formality needed, any religious who always faithfully observed the Rule. And in fact, if sanctity consists in living according to one's own vocation, then God has provided all the grace necessary for our sanctification, because to live according to our vocation simply means to live in faithful observance of the Rule.

We are just as obliged to observe our Constitution as the religious are to observe theirs. Our Constitution follows and guides the missionary, besides in the work of his own sanctification, also in the practice of his zeal and apostolic ministry. Ministry itself remains subordinate to the primordial duty of faithful observance of the Constitution.

This means that the ordinaries of the missions, in the exercise of their authority over the missionaries, should respect the prescriptions of the Constitution and try to make their particular regulations coincide with them. This does not mean that the authority of the ecclesiastical authority is diminished in any way, since the Constitution of the Institute has been devised and approved by the Holy See in view of the greater good of the missions.

But to observe the Constitution, one has to know it and study it. That's why it is prescribed that every missionary have his own copy, which he should read at least once a year, during his spiritual exercises; and it is recommended that, even though it is not binding under the penalty of sin, every member of the Institute consider the Constitution as the expression of divine will in his regard, the particular means of his own sanctification, and that of those entrusted to our care. And finally, it is prescribed in the year of formation, and then in the succeeding years of preparation for the missions, that the superiors not neglect regular courses of explanation on the Constitution and Directory of the Institute.

9) Deviations

How I wish I had the pen of a saint right now, in order to effectively exhort you to hate and keep far away from any manifestation of disobedience, from the spirit of complaining about and criticizing the superiors and their orders. And I'm not just speaking to the missionaries in the field, but to all the members of the Institute, great and small.

Nothing damages the missions and the Institute as much as resistance to the will of the superiors, and especially the spirit of criticism and complaining. As soldiers of God on the front line, we must feel very strongly within us the duty of unconditional obedience toward our commanders. Every criticism, every resistance to authority works to break down and weaken our company; it is a betrayal of the cause to which we have given our lives. And that is not too strong a phrase. In the military world, there is no other way to describe any action intended to weaken the discipline of obedience in an army which stays at the front or goes to meet the enemy.

This is a very important point. It is an evil action when someone in a mission or a community, having been informed of an order, directive, or a simple intention of the superiors, incites the others with talk of the difficulties, inappropriateness, etc. The one who does this unduly substitutes himself for the superior, whose reason he doesn't know; he sows a spirit of rebellion and does a disservice to his confreres for whom obedience becomes more difficult, so that they might lose the merit they might otherwise have had. What to say then about someone who does this habitually? More than once entire institutes and missions have been thrown into great convulsions by these evil tongues, with immense damage to souls. It is a diabolical action, which reminds me of the first instigator of disobedience on the part of Adam and Eve: "*Did God really tell you not to eat from all the trees of the garden?*"^[134]

Let us especially avoid criticizing the acts and directives of our ecclesiastical superiors. Leo XIII admonishes: “*To evaluate and criticize the actions of bishops in no way belongs to individuals. At the most, in some important matter of dissent, it is permitted to bring the entire matter before the Roman Pontiff; but this should be done prudently and rarely.*”^[135]

Let us always see God in the person of our superiors and let us also be convinced that every lack of obedience, every resentment of authority, every complaint against the superiors and their orders is made not to the man, but to God in whose name they govern. “*Those who reject you, reject me.*”^[136] The Hebrews complained against Moses and Aaron in the desert, but they responded: “*What then are we? Your grumbling is not against us, but against the Lord.*”^[137]

Now I hope that no one will say: This is all very beautiful, but let's be reasonable. Are our superiors infallible? Can't they make mistakes too? I would say to such one: My dear friend, you are absolutely right. Yes, the superiors can make mistakes: but still, except in cases where the superiors order something which is clearly impossible, or against the law of God and the Church, or beyond the limits of authority fixed for them in the Constitution—except for these cases—you will always be wrong to disobey. The superiors are not infallible; they can and do make mistakes sometimes; you, however, will always be infallible if you obey, and you will always be mistaken if you disobey. You don't have to answer for the errors of the superiors, only for your obedience or lack thereof.

I repeat: let us see God in our superiors, and let's not discuss how reasonable their orders might be. Faith reminds us that the persons given authority in the Institute and in the missions have, along with the burden, the grace of the state; a little humility convinces us that the insights of the superiors might surpass our own; charity leads us to believe that the superiors are motivated by the best intentions for our good and for the

progress of the Institute and its works; prudence makes us reflect that the superiors, in acting and ordering as they have, might have reasons which they cannot and must not say: they see what would be best to do and to order, but the best is not always possible for them.

And neither should anyone say that this emphasis on obedience is making us too much like monks. No one is trying to turn us into monks. Our Institute must be able to offer to the Church—as it has done and continues to do—evangelically perfect examples of true and holy missionaries. I'm not afraid that we are becoming too much like the religious; rather, I'm afraid that some superficial and ill-advised opinions, based on the fact that we are not religious, will lead some not to treat the missionary life with the seriousness it is due. And so the one who vainly fears that he is becoming a religious, is piteously deluded about being a missionary. *To be a missionary, and a missionary of our Institute, requires a perfection of virtue which is second to none.* And I say this especially in regard to the most characteristic of the apostolic virtues: obedience. The more we are truly obedient, like Jesus Christ, the truer missionaries we will be.

10) The Guarantee Of Success

We are apostles of Jesus Christ and entrusted to our care is a task that is absolutely formidable. Millions and millions of souls look to us; the holy Church which has entrusted us with missions looks to us; Jesus, who has honored us with the gift of our sacred vocation and expects great zeal from us, looks to us.

If we are obedient, we will not fail in these expectations, because we will be capable of great things. *If we are obedient, we will be able to count on God, and God will be able to count on us.* Reflect upon these words.

Let us remember the teaching of the saints. St. Teresa said that one of the best favors, for which she had to give thanks to God, was the great desire

she felt to obey. St. Vincent de Paul said that the whole good of a creature consists in doing the will of God, and this cannot be accomplished any better than by the practice of obedience. St. Bernard says: *Give up your own will and you will not be condemned.* St. Philip liked to say that no obedient person is ever damned. As for us, we not only want to avoid damnation ourselves, we also want to save many souls from damnation, and *because of this* we want to be very obedient.

The Lord has called us to be fishers of men. We will catch many if we obey. Remember the two fish miracles in the Gospels. In the first, St. Peter says to Jesus: “*Teacher, we have been hard at it all night, and have caught nothing.*”^[138] In the other, which took place after the resurrection, St. John tells us that “*all through the night they caught nothing.*”^[139] To what can we attribute the marvelous catch which so amazed them? To nothing else but obedience: “*If you say so, I will lower the nets.*” They obeyed, just as they did in the second instance when they were commanded, “*Cast your net off to the starboard side and you will find something.*” In these details described for us by the evangelists, there emerges a mystery into which we must enter deeply: *the mystery of the fruitfulness of our apostolic ministry when it is guided by the virtue of obedience.* Oh blessed mystery of obedience, which assures the success of our missionary life! “*And they caught such a great number of fish that their nets were at the breaking point.*”^[140] “*They made a cast and took so many fish they could not haul the net in.*”^[141]

I close with the wish that these passages bring to mind. Be obedient missionaries, like Jesus, who “*became obedient unto death,*” and you will save many souls, you will sanctify yourselves, and the Lord will reward and glorify you together with His obedient Son: “*Because of this, God highly exalted Him.*”^[142]

CHAPTER EIGHT: Constancy in Trials

1) A Lesson To Be Learned

All of us have shared and continue to share struggles and pains with those who have suffered and are suffering for the cause of the Faith and for whom we fervently pray.

Well, “*We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called.*”^[143] Let us try to draw some profit and some learning from these sad misfortunes, which are not the last we will experience, so that we can endure them courageously and with a spirit of faith, like true apostles of Jesus Christ.

This profit and learning should consist, for the young who are preparing to go into the field or who have just arrived there, in a more lively attachment to their holy vocation; for those who have been in the midst of the fray for years, a totally tested fidelity to this same vocation, seeing all the present difficulties as nothing else than the verification of what our Lord predicted to His apostles for all time: “*They will persecute you as they persecuted me... You will suffer in the world. But take courage! I have overcome the world.*”^[144] Let us see what kind of spirit we need when suffering the trials the Lord sends us.

2) The Crucified Jesus And We

One day, one of our beloved bishops wrote to the Superior General: “Tell the young men that they must come here well grounded in the love of Jesus Christ crucified, ready for anything: for inactivity, for disillusionment, for every persecution, suffering and privation. We are in times when we can expect any surprise. Let them come provided with great peace and a spirit of faith.” Another recommended: “During the formation of the young, it is necessary to take away from them the illusions they might have about the missions. If they really want to save souls, they must be prepared for hard, continuous work, among rough people: monotonous and often apparently sterile work. And then there are the tribulations, the privations, but not the ones that we expect.”

To the young and to the veterans, these venerable recommendations of our esteemed bishops are an invitation to be and to prove ourselves worthy of our own divine vocation in the face of trials; everyone considers such a vocation as heroic precisely because the life of a missionary, more so than that of a priest in the homeland, implies great renunciations, contradictions and sufferings. If we missionaries do not understand the cross, then who should understand it? There shouldn’t even be a need to address this issue: all of us in the Institute have the full and correct understanding of all that is included in the sublime vocation of an apostle of Jesus. Jesus asks us every day, “*Can you drink the cup I shall drink or be baptized in the same bath of pain as I?*”^[145] And trusting in His grace, we would all answer: “*We can.*”

None of our missionaries should arrive in the missions without having entered deeply into the mystery of divine redemption, which was not accomplished without the cross of Jesus, just as it does not continue to be accomplished among souls without the crosses and sufferings of His apostles. On this point we must have the same attitude as our Lord who, in order to glorify the Father and to save souls, “*humbled Himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross.*”^[146]

Anyone who is dedicated to the salvation of souls must expect suffering; how much more so for the missionary, whose only purpose is to give new children to God and the Church in non-Christian countries! Children are not brought forth without pain. By dying on the cross Jesus has brought us forth to new life; it was at the foot of the cross that Mary became our mother. In the supernatural order, pain and often even death, are the source of fertility. *“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.”*^[147]

The cost of souls is blood: to save them demands suffering! The one who does not understand this doctrine is better off to stay home: you cannot become a savior of souls at any other price.

3) Without The Shedding Of Blood...

The passion of our Lord for the salvation of souls did not end in His divine person, but continues in His missionaries and in all the ministers of the Church, according to the doctrine of St. Paul: *“Even now I find my joy in the suffering I endure for you. In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ for the sake of His body, the church, of which I have been made a minister.”*^[148]

All of us must have a clear, practical understanding of this fundamental doctrine, as clear and practical as that of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Knocked from his horse on the road to Damascus and converted to the apostolate, favored by the highest revelations, destined to minister to the Gentiles, he knew immediately what portion of pain was reserved for him in the apostolate. *“I myself shall indicate to him how much he shall have to suffer for my name.”*^[149] Every missionary who arrives in the mission must have a profound awareness of this doctrine, like St. Paul who professed to

know nothing else but this: “*I determined that while I was with you I would speak of nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*”^[150]

St. Paul and all the holy missionaries after him founded their hopes for the fruitfulness of their ministry among souls upon the amount of pain suffered for them. To the Philippians, the Apostle writes: “*I want you to know that my situation has worked out to the furtherance of the Gospel. My imprisonment in Christ’s cause has become well known throughout the praetorium here... Most of my brothers in Christ, taking courage from my chains, have been further emboldened to speak the word of God fearlessly.*”^[151] And to the Thessalonians, he spoke even more clearly: You know, he says, why my coming among you has borne such rich spiritual fruit: “*Fresh from the humiliation we had suffered at Philippi, we drew courage from our God to preach His good tidings to you in the face of great opposition.*”^[152]

If, then, many of our missionaries have also suffered and continue to suffer; if some have endured prison, hunger, thirst and every kind of humiliation and degradation, passing days and months in real agony, often beaten and always threatened with death; if plunder, devastation and fire have destroyed and continue to destroy houses, churches and institutions which it took years of hard work and considerable resources to build; if we see our Christians being lost, our ministry becoming increasingly difficult and dangerous; if we find ourselves persecuted, hated and despised, with no one to turn to for help, with even the right to demand justice and protection denied to us; if it has seemed to us that many martyrs, many sufferers have not always been justly recognized, that help came too late or not at all; then we have every right to hope that our missions and the Institute to which they are entrusted will be able to say with St. Peter: “*Rejoice in the measure that you share Christ’s sufferings... Happy are you when you are insulted for the sake of Christ, for then God’s Spirit in its glory has come to rest on you.*”^[153]

It can seem crazy to have such a hope, but this is nothing other than the philosophy of the apostolate, this is the policy of God. If we can understand it, if by living as holy missionaries we can cooperate with it, we will have the final victory, which is not necessary for us to see with our eyes in this life. Our Institute represents the Church; it is a living part of the Church in the missions entrusted to us as representatives of Christ on earth. Working in the Church and for the Church, the Institute and its missionaries are called to fight, and perhaps even to fall; but the Church does not fall. To her and to all who have the honor to suffer and die for her, belongs the final triumph: “*Take courage! I have overcome the world... The jaws of death shall not prevail against it [my Church].*”^[154]

Besides, don’t we belong to that courageous company of the Church’s soldiers which goes to the front line, to win over the whole world for Jesus Christ? Aren’t we members of the chosen order of Apostles, the first evangelizers of peoples? And when they founded the first churches, how was it that the faith was planted among the people? At the cost of martyrdom and blood, always. For this reason the Church sings of them: “*These are the ones who planted the Church with their blood when they were on earth; they drank the chalice of the Lord and became friends of God!*”^[155]

None of us, then, should marvel if there is suffering in the missions, if today in some places there is extraordinary suffering. It means that everything is going perfectly. If there is suffering, there is redemption. Haven’t we wanted, don’t we want to be redeemers, saviors of souls? Should we be surprised if today the Lord requests a greater amount of suffering for their salvation? For the seed of faith to grow in non-Christian lands often requires a downpour of blood. “*Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*”^[156]

4) Mystical Longing

And which of our missionaries has not foreseen that faithfulness to his vocation might require suffering and even martyrdom? Who among us has not accepted, even desired this glorious possibility? Certainly, all of us members of this Institute were sincere when we declared these words on the day of our departure for the missions: "I have resolved," we said to the Lord, "with the help of your grace, to offer myself at the cost of any sacrifice, any struggle or sadness, even at the cost of my life for the sake of those unfortunate souls to be purchased by the blood of redemption. Blessed will be that day when it is given to me to suffer much for so holy and loving a cause. But even more blessed the day in which I will have been found worthy to shed my blood for it, and to meet death amid torments!"

Maybe we won't have the occasion nor the good fortune to shed our blood for the faith! But are we any less martyrs in front of God, if we endure all the sufferings which the faithful fulfillment of our vocation and perseverance in the missions bring to us?

Dearest confreres! I admire, love and venerate our Institute because more than anything else it is a society of those devoted to martyrdom: not a martyrdom of blood, which ends in a ready and glorious death, but very often a prolonged martyrdom, hidden, painful, slowly (and sometimes not so slowly!) sapping the strength: the precious, generous, holy existence of so many of our members. And we can say about faith what Tertullian said about chastity: "*it is more difficult to live with chastity than to die for chastity.*" Yes, it is a slow martyrdom, but not less meritorious and great to the eyes of God, that which our missionaries endure every day, subject as they are to so many pains, so many privations, so many storms, so many illnesses which very likely would not have afflicted them had they stayed in their homeland.

Read our necrology: not many have had the fortune to shed their blood for the faith. But so many have given their lives little by little for the faith;

so many have sacrificed and shortened their lives, overcome by fever or attacked by cruel disease! The first of our number to die was the catechist Corti, who left for Oceania on March 16, 1852; by March 17, 1855 he had already offered to God the holocaust of his life. After him, how many of our confreres fell, young victims of their love.

Not a lot of blood has been spilled for the faith, but so many lives have been broken *for the cause of the faith*, to offer to God the supreme proof of one's love with the complete and total immolation of self. If it is true that "*there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends,*"^[157] then we have every reason to nurture the highest esteem and veneration for this Institute of ours, which has given and is still giving to God, such undisputable proof of the most perfect love.

Our missionaries have made a not insignificant contribution to the spread of the faith with their preaching, their untiring zeal, with their many works. But their most precious contribution is without a doubt the amount of suffering and immolation they have offered and continue to offer to the Lord for the salvation of the souls entrusted to them. Let us consider these things because it does us good to do so. Especially our young members should consider them, and measure their forces; that is, their ability to love and thus to sacrifice themselves for the Lord.

The Institute requires men of uncommon temperament; above all it requires hearts which are generous and inflamed with genuine love for God. Vocations which are not based upon the foundation of a great love for God are false vocations and will not endure the trials. We know this: "*Simon, son of John, do you love me? Lord, you know I love you. Look after my lambs!*"^[158] Look at what the Lord asks of us before entrusting his souls to us!

Think of our venerable bishops and missionaries in China! For years they have endured hard trials without any signs of weakness: no one shrank

from danger, no one has deserted his post. I recall with great edification our fathers in Hong Kong who, just liberated from the hands of the communists, did not want to leave their posts to come to the place where I was during my visit, lest their enemies think they had deserted and abandoned their Christians. And in all of our missions, if it does become necessary to leave a place for a short while, as soon as the storm has passed, they return. If someone has to return home because of exhaustion or sickness, he has no other desire than to regain his strength quickly in order to return to his people.

When he was about to leave for his exile, St. John Chrysostom wrote to his people: “*No one can take me away from you. What Christ has joined, man cannot divide. Not even death can separate me from you. I am ready to be killed a thousand times for your sake. This is not a favor for me, but a debt that I owe: a good shepherd always lays down his life for his sheep.*” These are also the sentiments of our missionaries; this is their sense of duty, the allegiance to their vocation, the love they have for the souls they have brought to Christ.

If there is one thing which has edified and sustained us in the midst of so many difficulties, it is the strong and generous spirit with which our dear confreres have suffered and are suffering. I could write beautiful things in their honor, but I don’t believe I should offend their modesty, not even for our edification. It’s enough to quote part of the letter which His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of the Propagation wrote to Bishop Balconi to express his high esteem for the visible behavior of the fathers in that tortured mission: “*One can with good reason say that these missionaries have become a spectacle to the universe, to angels and men alike.*^[159] Hunger, war and sickness have devastated them like a hailstorm does to the crops of rich soil, planted with so much sweat and care by the farmers. But it is in the face of tribulations and dangers that the virtue and power of the missionaries have stood out. *The Lord has tested them in fire.* And truly the missionaries have given shining examples of steadfastness, of faith and love during these sad months. ...In the midst of such squalor, the example of the heroic

strength of your missionaries...while constituting pure glory for the Holy Church, cannot go unrewarded by the Lord.”

We can be thankful, then, that the Lord has willed to ask of the Institute also this new proof of love and faithfulness. “*Therefore*,” we can say with the Apostle, “*I am content with weakness, with mistreatment, with distress, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ; for when I am powerless, it is then that I am strong.*”^[160]

Beloved confreres, it is in these years of suffering for our missions that we must refine the love which we owe to our divine vocation. *When we are powerless, it is then that we are strong.* I said we must refine our love, because the tendency today is to materialize everything, even the most holy and noble ideals. The lesson is providential: it brings us closer to the cross of Christ, that which alone explains who a missionary is, that which inspires him, sustains and crowns him. How poor a missionary, how poor the young aspirant who has any other vision of his vocation than that of Calvary; who can read many books but not his crucifix; who has other aspirations and intentions than the ones of the Apostle, who did not hope nor glory in anything but the cross of Jesus Christ: “*May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”^[161]

So then, let us take heart: *when I am powerless, it is then that I am strong.* If the Institute suffers, that means that it is strong and acceptable to the Lord, it means that it is useful for the glory of God and the good of the Church. Yes, useful for the good of the Church and of souls. The endurance and constancy of our missionaries even in the midst of such storms, such struggles, so much suffering, has been a great testimony given by the Institute to the faith, to the Church, to the Lord.

Our newly baptized have been able to know us better; Christians and non-Christians alike can see that we do not shrink from persecution, that we do not act in our own personal interests, but because of a mandate received

from God and sustained by a power which is beyond the human. Wars will pass and storms will calm down, because that which is violent does not endure. In the end what will remain is a firmer faith which we have preached and a more intimate link which binds us to our people. Thus, as always in the ways of God, new life is born of death; sacrifice must come before glory; from suffering, from pain comes the power for victory: “*When I am powerless, it is then that I am strong.*”^[162]

The most eminent apostolic men succeeded in great undertakings when they had passed through great trials. So let us not be discouraged! Beloved confreres, if your vocation does not waver in the face of that which the missionary life might yet have in store for you, you will be able to say with St. Paul: “*I place no value on my life, if only I can finish my race and complete the service to which I have been assigned... In all this we are more than conquerors because of Him who has loved us... I bear with all of this for the sake of those whom God has chosen, in order that they may obtain salvation... In Him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything.*”^[163]

If these feelings dwell in our heart, then let us all thank the Lord, because this is a great, great grace which He has given to us, and let us try to be always more worthy of it, because in the end there are not and will not always be crosses: “*If only we suffer with Him so as to be glorified with Him. I consider the sufferings of the present to be nothing compared to the glory to be revealed in us.*”^[164] And for our further consolation, let us never stop meditating on these words: “*If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; where I am there my servant will be. If anyone serves me, him the Father will honor.*”^[165] But Lord Jesus, “*To whom shall we go?*”^[166] “*Whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*”^[167]

5) Engaging Testimony

We want to persevere in our vocation, in our place of battle, to the end of our days: this is certainly our common attitude.

I said that I love, admire, and venerate this Institute of ours. But how and why? On what is this love and special admiration of mine based? What makes me esteem and love our Institute is the great generous spirit with which it lavishes itself without measure and without return for the cause of the faith, for the salvation of souls, for the greatness of the Church, but especially so that Jesus Christ might be known, loved and served by all people. There are many ways to give oneself to God; but I've never seen and I can't imagine anyone who could give themselves more than our many missionaries.

And so it was no surprise for me to find the following words as I was going through some old documents. They were written by an Apostolic Delegate of India, Bishop Zaleski, to Bishop Caprotti of Hyderabad on July 24, 1893:

“Your excellency would do well to join Bishops Pozzi,^[168] Tornatore,^[169] and Raimondi^[170] in urging the superiors of St. Calocero^[171] seminary to exert themselves energetically in order to develop this seminary as much as possible. An Institute which has given so many distinguished missionaries is too precious for these missions to be allowed to remain in this diminished state. The superiors should do everything possible to develop it ever more. I have written in these terms to His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, asking him to take this Institute under his protection and support it with all of his authority.”

And the Delegate adds: “The Missionaries of Saint Calocero, because of their self-denial, their zeal, and also their prudence and wisdom in carrying out the work of the apostolate, have always been among the best missionaries in the world! Thus, I desire so much to see this Institute enjoy great development and growth.”

We don't know if we, the missionaries of today, deserve to be held in the same consideration. Our venerable predecessors certainly were the kind of men to have left such an honorable memory of themselves; and those of us fortunate enough to have known them and follow in their footsteps must attest that the eulogy was well deserved. Not in order to receive praise, which would be a small thing, but in order to be worthy of our family name and preserve its patrimony, we must all try to instill in ourselves and conserve in the Institute those virtues, those characteristics which made the apostolate of our predecessors so much appreciated.

CHAPTER NINE: Mental Prayer

1) Introduction

Mental prayer is indispensable for a missionary to be able to respond to his divine vocation, to be sanctified and to save many souls. I am convinced that, even if we are missionaries by vocation and ordination, we will not be holy missionaries without the practice of prayer.

May this writing be blessed by our Lord, and bear much fruit for the good of my confreres. Everyone should read and take it to heart: what I say are not so much my own words, but the expressions of the feelings of the saints, which I have been careful to collect, because only the saints can address this issue well.

2) The Heresy Of Action

I often seriously reflect on that which is called the *problem* of converting millions of souls, on the state of the missions today, on that which we missionaries are called to give in order to attain the conversion of these souls. I reflect on that which we really do attain and I cannot help but think: if we were more holy, really holy, maybe things would be much better! We have more men, and they are working hard, perhaps harder than ever but what are the results in the missions today, in relation to the energy committed, the money spent and the amount of work and initiatives?

Most certainly there are some results, but are there as many as there should be? Why are we still so very far away from the goal? Why do we always work at the margins of the societies, while the great blocks of non-Christians are not affected? Oh! I think that the world would be so much better, the spread of the faith so much more advanced, if priests *were more united to Jesus Christ*, if they trusted less in their own work and activity, and *allowed the Holy Spirit and His grace to work*, by a life of greater prayer. “*Together they devoted themselves to constant prayer.*”^[172] Each one of us must experience Pentecost all over again. The anonymous author of “*Oportet Illum Regnare*”, speaking about priests in the homeland, asked the same questions and came to the identical conclusion. I will summarize what he says in the chapter entitled “The Heresy of Action.”

Why is it (he asks), that so many meetings, conferences, and congresses, so much printed material, so many rich liturgical functions, do not affect the religious life of the faithful in the way one would hope?

Often we are too afraid to put our fingers into the wound, and so we try to explain this by making more plans and agendas, which are too often sterile and inconclusive. The reason for this malady, the deep and true reason, is unique and evident: *the center of gravity has been displaced!*

Didn’t St. Paul say that *only* Jesus must be at the center of one’s life: *In Him everything continues in being?*^[173] This is not just a simple sentence: it is a theological formula which is absolutely precise and undisputable. Since everything was created through the Word, so everything, especially in regard to souls, finds in Him its only source, the ultimate reason for being and doing. Everything necessarily rests upon Him and works through Him. Every violation of this law cannot but frustrate the marvelous order of Providence and lead us to sterility.

And to think that for some, these arbitrary violations have become almost habitual! They so easily forget Jesus, cast Him aside... and it goes without saying how much souls suffer because of this. They begin to neglect prayer... With a crazy kind of logic, in order to save more souls, they cast off the foundations of the interior life to give greater attention to the so-called indispensable demands of the ministry, to intensify and better organize the work of the apostolate. "It is purely and simply the life of an animal," St. Vincent de Paul would say. As a corollary, it is an agitated fever, which often leads to neurosis.

Say to such a priest: you would do well to spend a little time in meditation, and he will answer: Oh, leave me alone; don't talk to me about that! I'm tired, I'm busy. I agree with you, but what do you want from me? I don't have a free minute. There's no time for the essentials.

Then distaste for spiritual things sets in, the habit having less to do with the Lord; and then...? They say calmly: when all is said and done, am I not *leaving God because of God?* What a huge error: this is really leaving God because of the devil. Oh yes, the devil has no fear of certain Catholic works which are based upon clamor, confusion and self-love; he lets us do them, he helps us... and he laughs at us. It is the interior virtues and prayer which bother him the most. But at least, one thinks, there are only a few who believe this nonsense. Only a few? They are legion!

Jesus said to pray *always, without tiring*, and instead they *never* pray, with the feeble excuse that *action* is a prayer. Instead, it is the practical denial of our neediness; it is the sacrilegious exclusion of grace from human life... The worst thing is that this theory is making inroads among the young priests, and if God does not put a stop to it, who knows where we will end up? It is an undeniable fact that all of us know some of these *consecrated* persons, who no longer know how to speak the words of Jesus, because their own conversations with Him have become so rare and so cold: *they are full of activity and empty of God.*

Is the author exaggerating somewhat? Let's hope so! But let's also examine ourselves a little and see if this *heresy of action* has not already crossed the sea and arrived in the missions, where it could find fertile soil, because there is so much to do there, even more than in Christian countries. It is not my intention to institute such an examination. Each of us has to do it for himself. Here, on the authority of the true apostles, I limit myself to recalling the bases upon which must rest true zeal for souls, if one wants to perform works which are serious, meritorious and capable of bearing much fruit.

3) The Soul Of The Apostolate

As apostolic missionaries, missionaries by nature, we must be men who are distinct from all others. We are on earth, but each day we deal with the things of heaven; we are men, but we live and work only for the interests of God; we operate in time, but it is to eternity and for eternity that our view, all of our efforts and struggles are directed. We must therefore be men who are more celestial than earthly, moving about in a heavenly atmosphere, dealing with the things of heaven, starting from the holy Mass and communion which we receive each morning.

God, souls, heaven, hell—these are things we can't see or touch; yet our lives must be based on them; by vocation and profession, we must be concerned with them for all of our lives! What brings us to *see*, to *feel* this supernatural world as we see and feel the material world which surrounds us? Nothing else but faith, kept alive and burning by the assiduous practice of mental prayer. The man of prayer, immersed as he is in supernatural light, has clear vision, so that he can see in earthly things, the things of Heaven: “...as if he were looking at the invisible God.”^[174]

Mental prayer, then, is one of the bases upon which the zeal of the true missionary rests. The other base is mortification. On these foundations,

our Blessed Lord based His apostolate, and it would be folly for us to try to do otherwise: “*No one can lay a foundation other than the one which has been laid.*”^[175]

In this regard, the precious work *Monita ad Missionarios* has these incisive words: “*In view of the fact that a missionary is only an instrument in the hands of God, he cannot achieve anything by himself unless he is united to God through prayer and unless he applies himself to doing God’s will; how can he achieve anything by himself if he does not hear the voice of the One who sends him? How can he carry out God’s plans unless he learns of them through prayer? How can he act as a mediator between God and people if he has not learned in prayer how to bring about such reconciliation? How can he nourish his people unless he himself first drinks the pure milk of divine wisdom through contemplation?*” (Chapter 2, Article 2)

The assiduous practice of prayer, then, is indispensable for a missionary: without it, as far as being a missionary is concerned, *he may be called alive, but he is really dead!!!*

4) The Word Which Converts

Why is it that so often the word of holy missionaries, simple and unadorned, converts souls, penetrates and sanctifies them? And why is that so many other times the Word of God remains sterile and leaves people just as it has found them? It is because the latter, not having been drawn from heaven in the fervor of intimate union with God, does not have the grace to penetrate the heart of the hearer, *because it has not penetrated the heart of the preacher.* Holy missionaries bear fruit in terms of souls because they give themselves over to prayer, and their words have the fruitfulness, the virtue of God’s Word. Before speaking about God to his people, the good missionary, in his prayer, speaks about his people to God, and then says to the people that which he has heard and drawn from God: “*I only tell the world what I have heard from Him, the truthful one who sent me.*”^[176] All of the great missionaries who have saved so many souls have done this.

My dear confreres, we often complain that we are not satisfied with our Christians; we lament the hardness of heart, the indifference of the non-Christians. Shouldn't we blame ourselves for this, for not being close enough to God in prayer. It's no wonder that people don't listen to us, if we don't know how to listen to God, if it bothers us to spend time with him in prayer, if we can't stay one hour in front of the holy tabernacle. "The fruit in the listener," says Fr. Lallemant, "depends ultimately on the virtue of the preacher and *his intimacy with God*: in a quarter hour of prayer, he can receive more thoughts which are likely to move hearts than in a year of study."

In our ministry, we too often forget our own natural and innate neediness and insufficiency. Poor missionaries! How uselessly we run around, how vainly we complain, if we are not men of prayer! We can preach to the ears of the body: "*We speak to the ears of men*," St. Augustine tells us, but "*it is God who enlightens the mind, who moves one to act, who builds*." In order for our preaching to move hearts, it must be truly *divine*, made so by the Holy Spirit, which must fill us; and we receive the Holy Spirit especially during prayer.

St. John of the Cross addressed these words to the preachers of his time, words which could very well be applied to any missionaries of today who love work more than prayer: *Let those who, taken up in the fever of activity, think that they will save the world by their preaching and other external works, reflect a moment and understand... that they would be much more useful to the Church and dear to God... if they would devote half their time to prayer... Without prayer, everything they resolve to do is just so much noise...: they do little more than nothing, often nothing at all, and sometimes even evil.*^[177]

5) The Power To Move Hearts

As saviors of souls, our task is not so much to illuminate the intelligence as to move hearts, to subdue them, to conquer them and submit them to God. One can understand the immense difficulty of this undertaking. On the other hand, if we do not succeed in this, why are we missionaries?

To submit souls to God: what a divine mission! A subject most inspiring for me to reflect upon is this: how difficult it is for God to become the absolute Lord of a person's heart. Everyone of us, without considering the sinners and the non-Christians, can recall his own story in this regard. May we come at last to place this heart of ours *completely* at the feet of Jesus!

Now, beloved confreres, let us not delude ourselves: we will not have the virtue to move the heart of God, to move the hearts of people, if we are not men of great prayer. The whole secret is here. It is this which has made the great apostolic men, the great missionaries, fruitful.

Bishop Marinoni, in the beautiful novena to St. Francis Xavier, says: "Prayer must be the flame of the missionary's heart: with prayer, he soothes God's anger with humanity; by it, he moves the resistant person to return to God. Prayer was the omnipotent weapon Xavier used to convert so many peoples, so many poor non-Christians."

From mental prayer the missionary attains that fervor of zeal, those generous impulses, that divine anointing, which neither eloquence nor study can give, and which make them such shepherds of souls, leading them to God. It is God who speaks through the mouth of the missionary who prays, as He spoke through the mouth of St. Paul: "*Christ, as it were, appealing through us.*"^[178] St. Vincent de Paul, St. Philip Neri, the Curé of Ars, and so many others, without the pretense of great eloquence, but inspired by meditations on the things of heaven, were so powerful in bringing souls to God that they could not be equaled by the greatest orator.

The man of prayer also has the power to move the heart of God: he can ascend to such power that his prayer becomes almost infallible, when it regards the salvation of souls. The examples of this are notable: God wants to punish the wickedness of His people. Moses prays, he implores; the angry Lord does not listen. Moses prays some more; and God then asks Moses not to pray to Him, to let Him be, because He's had His fill of them: *“Let me alone, then, that my wrath might blaze up against them to consume them.”*^[179] But Moses doesn't stop: either pardon them, he says, or cancel me from your book too. Oh, the omnipotence of prayer, exclaims St. Jerome: *God is won over by the prayer of His servant!* This is a great example for us missionaries, when we want to obtain the grace of conversion for souls. Many times one prays, but very coldly, and with little faith, and one doesn't attain what is prayed for! And then one says: I have done my duty, and is satisfied with that!

The missionary who prays is not just a personal servant and humble subject of God. He is a priest, a minister and authorized mediator! He has a *mission*, the mission to save souls. There is a great difference between the supplication of a humble subject and the discourse which a minister presents to the king: more than making a request, he discusses, and explains the reasons for his petition in terms of the sovereign's own interests.

Blessed Cafasso says: “Ah, if a priest were to be penetrated by this quality and armed with this faith when he prayed! He would say: Lord, I am your minister; I am the very one to whom you desired to entrust the mission of representing you on earth, of saving souls, of forgiving sins: now I am here in front of you to discuss these very affairs. Now tell me, would God ever send away empty-handed one who spoke to Him like this about the things that God Himself has assigned to him, and in which God wants him to succeed?”^[180]

6) There Are Missionaries...

And Then There Are Missionaries

Oh, what a difference there is among missionaries! You can tell immediately by his speech, his judgment, his behavior, who is a man of prayer and who is not. In the former you generally find more deliberation in words and opinions, more charity, more firmness of purpose and above all, more decisiveness and direction toward God in all the actions and circumstances of life. The difference lies completely in prayer.

The man of prayer lives and breathes in an atmosphere of faith; he considers and evaluates all earthly things from a supernatural perspective, and he is moved by supernatural motives in all his actions. The missionary, a man of prayer, has a way all his own to view the struggles and efforts of the apostolate, the success or failure of a project, life and death. He sees more with the eyes of the spirit than with those of the body, and he does not allow himself to be dazzled and overly enthused by all that which, even among our own projects, makes too much noise and relies upon the crutch of human industry, calculation, praise and approval.

The missionary who does not pray and is not familiar with God, is always agitated; he might work a lot, because he has many natural gifts and an active character, because he loves action; but he relies too much on his own abilities, his own cleverness, his own policies; and too often it happens that through his activity and work, he sadly verifies the saying: "*It shall perish altogether, whatever is not born of God.*"^[181]

Yes, he works; and often he works for the salvation of souls and the establishment of Christianity. But, lacking a spirit of faith enlivened by prayer, he treats the ministry and work of the apostolate like an earthly occupation, with only human views and methods: he relies too much upon earthly means and his own abilities. *In such a state of soul he doesn't even see the necessity for prayer*, and he can end up, like Martha, complaining about and

criticizing his confrere, who gives (as is his duty) priority in his daily affairs to prayer and other acts of priestly piety.

And since I have recalled the Gospel story of Martha, I want to make another reflection. Generally, we say that Martha represents the active life and Mary the contemplative life. Jesus responds to the complaint of Martha: “*Martha, Martha, you are anxious and upset about many things; one thing only is required. Mary has chosen the better portion and she shall not be deprived of it.*”^[182] This *one thing required* is contemplation, which is also called the *better portion*. If contemplation is *necessary, and the better portion*, how could the missionary be dispensed from it?

But, someone will say, we have embraced the active life...! I tell you: no! We have embraced the apostolic life, which is the *complete* and truly perfect life, because it is the life followed on earth by the Son of God. A purely active life does not exist. Mary chose the better *portion*: we have chosen the whole, which contains, principally and necessarily, the *better portion*, which is prayer. The missionary is Martha in contemplation, Mary in exterior action. The missionary who wants to do only the part of Martha is reprimanded by our Lord, is not blessed, and accomplishes nothing.

7) Money And Miracles

It is said—and because it is said so often we all believe it a little bit—that we do not do more because we lack the means. What we could do with more money...! I would be tempted to say that to the *heresy of action* we could add the *heresy of money*. I would like to know when our Lord, or the holy Apostles, or any of the truly apostolic men, ever gave money the importance that some give to it today, going so far as to consider it an indispensable means of the apostolate, almost a *sine qua non* condition for converting souls!

You can also hear it said sometimes, as a justification, that the Apostles had the gift of miracles, and today you don't see miracles any more. I say instead that the Apostles and all the truly apostolic men prayed as well: they had and still have today the grace of the Holy Spirit with them, and the more dedicated they were to prayer, the more abundant was the grace. It is only this grace which converts souls.

In regard to miracles, then, it is not that their time has passed: what has become rare are men capable of obtaining them. Cottolengo and Don Bosco are men of today and they performed miracles because they prayed and were holy. So it is not that the arm of God has shortened: it is our faith which has decreased. The Gospel retains all of its virtue intact, and only needs someone to take it seriously, as Saint Francis of Assisi and so many others have done.

In this regard St. Ambrose, commenting on the instruction given by our Lord to his missionaries (*Mt 10*), says: "He established how one must preach the Kingdom of God: without walking stick, without purse, without shoes, without bread, without money; none of these worldly things are needed by the spiritual man; and the more faith one has, the less he needs the support of these things." In another place our Lord says that all the material needs of the apostle and the apostolate will be provided, when *first* one seeks the Kingdom of God.

The missionary dedicated to prayer *obliges* the Holy Spirit to work and so brings about *true conversions*, and creates *solid Christians*. The missionary who doesn't have a love for prayer, who wants only to work, is attached entirely to the support of material means: he builds churches, he opens schools, and maybe attracts some people to the faith. But what a difference in the attraction, and above all what a difference in the quality of the Christians! The former one sanctifies the material things, which are combined with the virtue, faith and the zeal with which he works and animates his converts; the latter also builds things, but his work is done to

be seen, and his Christians are cold; they follow him as long as he has power and the ability to help them: if one day because of sickness or disagreement with his superiors, the missionary must leave that place, the one who replaces him will inherit quite a weak legacy.

8) Prayer And Conversions

There is a very intimate relationship between a missionary's spirit of prayer and the quality of the Christians he baptizes. Do our new Christians and the non-Christians who surround us see in us *one sent by God, the man of God, the priest*, or nothing more than the Westerner, the man who is capable, educated, influential with the authorities, and who dispenses money? Do people come to us because they are attracted by *our spirituality, the fruit of a life of prayer*, or only in the hope of a wholly earthly and material advantage? What is there that rises up in us and distinguishes us from other Westerners in the eyes of the Buddhist, the Hindu, or the Moslem? Do they see us simply as the ministers of the religion of those who are all about progress, business and money? That's the way it will be if there is no sign of an interior life because of little or no contact with God in prayer, if they see us only working externally, so different from their own priests who, while non-Christian, tend by nature toward solitude and asceticism.

Oh! The missionary who is truly a man of prayer: only he can appear before the people as a messenger of God, *as having a mission which is truly for them*. He, like St. John the Baptist, can stand before the crowd and shout: “*Reform your lives! The Reign of God is at hand,*”^[183] and like St. Peter he can say: “*You must reform and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the Holy Spirit.*”^[184] St. John came out from the contemplation of the desert, and St. Peter from that of the Cenacle.

The missionary, inflamed in prayer by the fire of the Holy Spirit, *truly converts souls* and makes of them *true Christians* who, burning with the same fire, in turn become apostles of the faith within their own circumstances. This is how the faith spread in the beginning. This, and *not in any other way*, is how the *true and spontaneous spread of Christianity* can be brought about today: when the missionary, totally a man of God, *united for life with Him, communicates life to others*, when he is no longer a stranger to the souls of the non-Christians but an apostle, who makes apostles out of each of his converts.

Lacking this spirit of prayer, as I have said and repeated, the missionary might make some conversions, might establish some Christian communities, but they will be communities which are maintained by and dependent upon our help, *without the intrinsic virtue of life and expansion*. This is an issue of capital importance, which requires the attention of my confreres. Isn't it true that very often our newly baptized are completely lacking in zeal, convinced that the means of converting people to Christianity is in the hands of the mission treasurer? That is how the faith expands when it is carried by human arms: not very far. And how to go much farther? In the arms of God, who alone can go far! But because God lends His arms to us, we must live strictly united with Him: "*He who lives in me and I in him will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing.*"^[185]

9) For Our Sanctification

Up to now we have been considering the practice of prayer as indispensable in making our apostolate fruitful and in sanctifying the souls of others. Now I feel the duty to speak of mental prayer as a means to secure our *own personal* sanctification.

St. John Chrysostom says: *When I see someone who does not want to learn how to pray, who does not feel a strong and fervent obligation to do so, I realize right away that*

he lacks any noble quality... Anyone who does not pray to God, who does not desire greatly to speak with God, is dead, is without any kind of intelligence; in fact, to dislike prayer is a most evident sign of madness.^[186]

These are very grave words expressed by the great doctor of the Church; if they had come from any other pen, we might be tempted to say that they were exaggerated. But they are not, and we need to consider them well.

If we do not love and practice mental prayer, the saint tells us, we have no goodness in ourselves. This is very serious, and has a very simple reason; *without prayer there is no union with God, and without union with God, there is no consistency in goodness.* Now what characterizes all the great saints, both in heaven and on earth, are these two great prerogatives: union with God and consistency in virtue.

What is it that keeps us so far away from the perfection required by our state? It is inconsistency in the practice of goodness: we are eternal beginners, because we are so easily and so often defeated by the difficulties we encounter on the road to virtue, by the temptations of the devil, by the seductions which surround us on every side. And where does this inconsistency come from, if not from a lack of union with God?

The practice of prayer, a life of prayer: this is the secret for our sanctification. Prayer helps us to remain united with God, and God then grants us a share in His unchanging nature, giving us consistency in the path of goodness. Thus, without meditation, there cannot be any true goodness in us. As Cardinal Bona confirms: “Without the practice of meditation, no one can reach perfection, *except by a miracle of God...* Moreover [without it] no one can do anything good.”

One day, with all the generosity a creature is capable of having, we dedicated ourselves to God. When we entered the clerical state, when we embraced the missionary life, when we received the sacred orders, when we

proclaimed our oath, when we effectively left everything and everyone to bring God to souls, we did nothing else but renew and make more absolute, total and perfect the consecration to God which was already present. Every one of us can truly say to the Lord: "*In the simplicity of my heart, I was happy to give up all things!*"

Now it is certain that our sanctification depends upon consistently maintaining the qualities of this great sacrifice; we cannot retract that which we once offered with such great generosity. But how can we succeed in this *every day of our lives*, without prayer? Aren't we sufficiently aware of our own weakness and inconsistency?

Prayer keeps alive in us that supernatural light which illumines our mind and strengthens our will in time of trial. When this light has faded, then we have wavered on our course; when, living only materially in the missions, we have not lived as holy missionaries, but confused the notion of true virtue and sacrifice.

To live always at the height of our vocation and thus to be holy, to be able to persevere on the path of virtue in a life of self-denial and to rejoice in the sacrifices imposed by the apostolate, absolutely requires us to live a life of union with God, remaining faithful to our daily meditation.

Sometimes I hear: But isn't it enough to say the Mass and to recite the Office? Yes, it would be enough, to say the Mass *well* and to pray the breviary *well*. But the issue is really this: if we don't lead a life of prayer, it is very difficult to say the Mass in a holy way, or to remain reflective and devotional in the recitation of the breviary. The fact is (and we have all experienced it!) that the Mass is celebrated well when preceded by a good meditation and a reflective praying of the breviary is easily done by one who understands mental prayer. The one who habitually neglects mental prayer abuses the Mass, the Office and any other practice of piety.

But it can be worse for you! What is the source of certain failures, of certain indecisive lives, also among those who are consecrated to God? It is a lack of reflection and dissipation of energy. In meditation, a person takes on the ability to collect his thoughts, which preserves him from the temptations of the body and the senses, and thus from sin. Thus, St. Alphonsus, great psychologist that he was, has these two related sentences in the appendix of his “Morale”: “*Meditation and mortal sin cannot exist together. Meditation is a moral necessity for priests.*” The psalmist has also seen this truth: “*Had not your law been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction.*”^[187] “*There is no God before him: his ways are corrupt at all times.*”^[188]

St. Theresa, whom St. Alphonsus calls the great model of mental prayer, gives us this strong warning: “*The one who neglects prayer does not need demons to push him into hell: he goes there by himself!*” And it is to hell that even missionaries can go, if they habitually neglect their prayers. A missionary without prayer is without light and walks in darkness: he is without fervor, without zeal, without love and fear of the Lord. Isn’t this the way to damnation?

This is why the saints always placed prayer in the highest priority among their duties and could not live without it. Suarez respected prayer more than science, and used to say: “I would prefer to lose everything in regard to science than to lose one hour of mental prayer.”

Let us give ourselves with greater commitment to the practice of prayer, beloved confreres, and we will see the love of God and the desire to do His will visibly grow within us: we will feel our hearts inflamed with zeal for souls; the holy Mass, the Eucharist, will become our paradise here below, and the world with all its clamor and vanity will serve only to annoy and disgust us. St. Alphonsus, exhorting his missionaries, said: “*Ah! If we meditate well at the foot of the cross, we will obey more perfectly and suffer with greater resignation.*” Oh! The precious fruits which are harvested by the faithful practice of prayer and adoration!

10) Practice Of Prayer In The Missions

a) *Where should we pray?*

If we want to pray well, we must choose, as much as possible, a place far away from noise and distraction. “*Go to your room, close your door and pray to your Father in private.*”^[189] St. Jerome gives this advice: “*Choose a suitable place, far away from noise, where, as in a port, you might be protected from the storms of worries and distractions; let your study of God’s word be so strong that thoughts of the future replace the worries of today.*” And don’t think, he says, that by going off by yourself, you are cutting yourself off from your people; quite the contrary: “*We don’t say this in order to take you away from your people, rather, it is so that in that place of prayer you might meditate and learn how you can better give yourself to them.*”

Our room, and the church (before the faithful arrive) are good places for reflection and meditation. But it is indispensable that the place be away from disturbances and distractions, if we want to get anything out of it. The Gospel is our teacher. Our Lord always loved to pray in solitary places: “*Jesus was praying in seclusion...*”^[190] “*He went off to a lonely place in the desert, where He was absorbed in prayer.*”^[191] Where did He invite his disciples, to teach them the practice of prayer? “*Come along to an out-of-the-way place.*”^[192]

I have said that this solitude is indispensable because it is here that the Lord speaks to the soul, it is here that the Holy Spirit operates; in solitude He strengthens, He glorifies his disciples and teaches them His will.

b) *When should we do our meditation?*

The best time is in the morning. The prudent and ordered missionary reserves for himself, for his own soul, the first hours of the day. Our Lord

preferred nighttime for prayer; but we find that He also prayed in the early hours of the morning. “*Rising early the next morning, He went off to a lonely place in the desert, where He was absorbed in prayer.*”^[193] The prophet David did the same thing, as we read in many of the psalms. For example: “*Before dawn I come and cry out... My eyes greet the night watches in meditation on your promise.*”^[194] Naturally, this means that we have to get up earlier: this is already a beautiful act of mortification, fidelity and love for the Lord.

When I was in the missions, and I was making the first visit to the villages with Bishop Tomatore, I saw that holy old man rise from his bed at the first cry of the rooster, light a candle, take out the volume of Da Ponte which he always carried with him, and remain in devoted meditation until it was time to begin his ministry. What edification, what a practical lesson the sight of this gave me!

And when there is no time in the morning, nor throughout the day, there is always the night. “*Ministers of the Gospel can be so caught up, as the Apostles were, in preaching, that not a portion of the day remains free for them because of the continuous and important work they are engaged in. Well then, however much time the work of the day took away from prayer, let them take that much time away from sleep, so that they can rejoice even more that after a full day's work they still have something to offer to God at night.*”^[195]

Just as we never neglect our meals just because we can't take them at the normal time, so we cannot omit our meditation on those days that we are not able to do it at the usual time. I know, there are many excuses used to justify the neglect of our prayers: the ministry, worries, travel, ill-health, the heat... Well, it's a simple question of being convinced of the *necessity* of this holy practice, if we want to carry on well, just as we are convinced of the necessity of food for the life of the body. If there is this conviction, the time will be found. So when one is tired or in ill health, one can do a little meditative reading.

In fact, this is the truth: it is really the missionaries who are busiest, most hardworking and zealous who give a greater amount of time to prayer. The lukewarm, the lazy, those who have time for so many useless things, never find time to collect themselves and to pray. Believe me, it is not a question of time.

c) How much time should we give to meditation?

In times less gentle than today, when people ran around less and accomplished more, the missionaries gave a lot of time to prayer. In *Monita ad Missionarios* (1650), I find: *Though the whole life of a missionary should be a continuous prayer and he should not be distracted from the intimate presence of God at any time, nevertheless, every day he must dedicate a special time to be with God at least two hours.* And in a precious manuscript of Bishop Marinoni (October, 1850), which contains a complete outline of the Rule for our missionaries, I find this thought of the holy co-founder on this point and the practice of his confreres: *The life of a man who completely severs all his relations with the world and all that is dear to him must be, more so than in any other state, a life of the spirit and of faith. The missionary who does not have a strong relationship with God and a lively interest for His glory and the good of souls, not only lacks the attitude necessary for his ministry, but also ends up in a kind of empty and intolerable isolation. His work is not always surrounded by that devoted kindness, that air of fervor and applause which accompanies a priest working among intelligent souls and sensitive hearts. This kind of human comfort can somewhat sustain one's zeal, even if it is not founded on God and on love. But the missionary among non-Christians cannot and must not always hope for this...*

Bishop Marinoni continues with other wonderful premises and then comes to this conclusion:

For all of these reasons, which must be the material of frequent meditation for missionary students, it is important that they have solid dispositions of pure love and fear of the Lord, of sincere zeal and secure control of their passions! To such purpose—

beyond the different exercises of piety—one is to engage in mental prayer for an hour each morning and a half hour after dinner.

This is what was prescribed in the Institute in regard to prayer when the students were all priests; and they adhered to it rigidly. In fact, I find in the same manuscript, where the daily schedule of the house is given: “After rising, an hour of meditation... *this is never to be shortened and never omitted*, not even on holidays, though there be a great gathering of penitents in the church.”

Now, to some missionaries, whether in the missions or in the homeland, I ask: would it be too much to spend a whole, continuous hour in meditation every morning? I don’t intend to impose a duty or give an order: “*I give my opinion...as one who is trustworthy.*”^[196] All the spiritual teachers say that mental prayer, in order to be effective, must not be too short in duration: God does not send down His fire when we are in a hurry, or before we have everything ready for the sacrifice. “*Let those who can understand, understand.*”^[197] Prayer becomes burdensome and annoying when we rush through it, or when we make it a little more than a period of spiritual reading. *But believe me, when it is done well, an hour passes all too quickly!* It can happen that after a half hour of meditation has seemed too much, an hour seems almost too little.

It would take too long for me to list the amount of time the missionary saints gave to prayer: it’s enough to recall St. Francis Xavier. No struggle, trial or journey could ever keep him from his prayer. He got up during those hours intended for rest in order to dedicate himself to prayer, often spending the whole night at the foot of the cross or before the Blessed Sacrament.

11) To Our Young Confreres

A special word to our dear young members, who desire to arrive in their field of mission with all the fervor and enthusiasm of youth, and the joy that comes from having achieved a goal. Oh, what danger there is for them to be taken up by an ardor which is often too natural and human, and which can cast them into a state of dissipation, made even worse by the novelty of a new place and new activities!

Our missionaries of today, more than ever, need to cultivate their interior life of prayer, which is their main means of support. They need to follow the example of our Lord. As He began His public life, He didn't jump immediately into His divine ministry. Rather, He was "*full of the Holy Spirit*"^[198] and was declared by God as His chosen Son; then He retreated to the desert, where He spent forty days in fasting and in the highest state of contemplation. He had already spent thirty years in a hidden life, while the world had been waiting for centuries for His word, and He retreated once more to prepare himself in prayer. My dear young confreres, *how important it is to begin well!*

How terrible it would be for you, once you leave the seminary and are no longer bound by a schedule, if you were to allow the practice of mental prayer to be neglected, or if you were to practice it only when and how you feel like it! In the retreat preceding your ordination and departure, the first thing you must decide is how you will conduct your prayer life when you get to the missions. You must do this very specifically: decide when you will pray, how much time you will devote to it, how you will accommodate this need during times of travel, or during your period of language study. And during the first years, when you are more free, you must *set up your own schedule and habit of prayer*, which will become your strength, your nourishment, and the source of the greatest joy of your life. How well we must pray during those first years, when the non-Christian world around us seems so daunting, when we are so filled with zealous desire, but feel so small and inadequate! It is then that we must take the time to dedicate ourselves to the practice of prayer.

Monita ad Missionarios, cited above, insists strongly that the immediate preparation for the life of holy ministry include great attention to prayer: “*For this reason the missionary, as soon as he steps foot in his mission, must turn himself over to Christ, the Shepherd of all, to receive a blessing from Him. And, as soon as possible, he should try to go on retreat, in which he can receive everything he needs, to dedicate his people to Christ, and to offer himself completely in order to lead them to Him.*”

12) By Praying, You Save Yourself

Let us love our meditation! It alone contains the secret which gives joy and happiness to our missionary life, because it transforms us, transfigures us, makes us more like God. If we are faithful, if we do not begrudge the time spent in meditation, then the Lord will repay us with great generosity, and we will find ourselves so filled with love that we will wonder how we ever could have neglected it in the past.

Coming out of meditation, in which we are enlightened to the eternal splendor of God and His eternal truths, we can more easily see Jesus in ourselves and in others; we see Jesus in everything and we have no other desire than to please Him and to use all of our power for His glory.

If we are faithful to our meditation, it will be easy to remain faithful to all the other practices of piety, it will be easy to live in that spirit of constant prayer, which is the attitude with which the faithful missionary of Jesus must live and work.

At the beginning of his precious treatise on prayer, St. Alphonsus wrote that he would have liked to have printed as many copies as there are Christians in the world, so that no one would lack the understanding of how important prayer is for salvation. I make a humble request: that each

one of us examine himself in regard to prayer, and responding according to his conscience, make his own plans for improvement.

The Constitution says that our missionaries *must continually nourish their spiritual lives through holy prayer*. If we are to give this holy nourishment to our people, let us remain at the highest level of our vocation, and we can be assured of success in our apostolic endeavors. For the Institute to fulfill its great mission in the Church, it must be made up of men who are “*fervent in spirit...persevering in prayer.*”^[199]

The more we love, the more we pray. Let this be our slogan. If we are men of prayer, we will become a great force in the world for the coming of Christ’s Kingdom. If we find ourselves insufficient, the insufficiency will be in prayer.

We might grow in number, but what good is that if we do not also grow in sanctity? God makes to prosper that institute in which there is a great dedication to prayer and the interior life in order to serve Him and bring about His glory. To grow from any other base is to grow into ruin. So it is necessary for all of our missionaries to cultivate a life of prayer, and for bishops, regional superiors and house rectors to keep watch as much as possible lest there be serious neglect in such an important matter.

And now there’s nothing left for me to say, dear confreres, except to pray that all of you take these words to heart and allow them to bear fruit. For my part, I will never fail to pray that the Lord will give to all of you “*gifts in keeping with the riches of His glory. May He strengthen you inwardly through the working of His Spirit. May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may charity be the root and foundation of your life...that you may attain to the fullness of God Himself.*”^[200]

“*You, beloved, grow strong in your holy faith through prayer in the Holy Spirit.*”^[201]

CHAPTER TEN: The Spirit Of Sacrifice

1) Co-Workers Of Christ

To keep the spirit of our Institute intact and genuine and to insure the effectiveness of your apostolate, which must be one of total self-denial, I want to speak to you about the spirit of sacrifice. This topic goes against our nature, just as the cross goes against our nature! Still, only in the cross is salvation to be found; and only in love of the cross, in the practice of mortification, in the spirit of self-denial can we find the secret of our sanctification, the success of our apostolate, and the meaning of our society of apostolic men for the Church and for souls.

It is only in the spirit of sacrifice that the true happiness of the missionary can be found as well. Jesus is the author of salvation, and we—as unworthy as we are—have been given the mission of bringing that salvation to souls: we are *missionaries of redemption*, and to us has been entrusted the sublime duty to effect and complete that ineffable mystery of universal salvation; to us has been given the mission to bring Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him, to wash them in His blood, to enrich them with His merits, to extend the blessed Kingdom of God to the whole world.

Our missionary Institute does not have any other reason to exist than this: we have joined it because, by divine choice, we are ministers of redemption. Our little lives, our poor existence, have been linked by Jesus to His own life, to His divine action. And so it is upon our dedicated life,

our ministry, and our zeal that the salvation of many souls depends; it is up to us whether the salvation brought about by Jesus Christ will be extended to more souls. What a great thought, what a tremendous responsibility, what a magnificent honor to be thus associated with the Son of God and to be instruments for salvation in His hands! Great, tremendous thoughts! Can we, *with Jesus and like Jesus, be true redeemers of souls, true missionaries?* This is the question which we, trembling, must ask in regard to our spirit. And it seems to me that a comforting, reassuring answer comes from the lips of Jesus crucified: *You will be worthy cooperators and will continue my redeeming mission if you know how to be worthy sharers of my passion, if in your ministry you can have my spirit of sacrifice, of self-denial, of mortification.*

2) Missionary: Priest And Victim

What is a missionary?

He is a man chosen by God to continue on earth the life, work and passion of Jesus Christ. Jesus came into the world to offer worthy praise to the heavenly Father and offer Himself as a victim of expiation for the sins of humanity. This is the core of the life and the redemptive mission of our Lord. It is a misunderstanding of the missionary vocation to accept only the active part of one's ministry by teaching, preaching and baptizing, without also accepting the passive role of being a victim for Jesus, a victim with Jesus for the conversion of souls. So, if we want to be worthy cooperators of Jesus, like St. Paul and all the great apostolic men, we must learn how to live and offer ourselves as victims for the salvation of souls.

We are not sent by some business firm, nor by a church which is only interested in establishing charitable institutions or making conversions for the sake of statistics. As missionaries of redemption, we are called to be redeemers, to make atonement and reparation, to be men of sacrifice, because that is where redemption is to be found: in the expiation and

reparation of Jesus' sacrifice throughout His whole life, culminating in the supreme sacrifice of the cross.

Could there be a missionary who does not sacrifice; could there be an enemy of the cross of Christ, who pretends to be a minister of divine redemption? Our only weapon is the cross: the cross which redeemed the world, the cross which gives redemptive value and power to the sufferings, penance and mortification of all Christians, but especially of us priests who want to work for the salvation of souls. *The redemption of the world, which began without us, by the inscrutable plan of God will not be completed without us.* Let us think about this and meditate on it: we will be missionaries, we will save souls in proportion to how much we participate in the wounds and sufferings of the crucified Christ. Are we detached from creature comforts and unafraid of mortification? Then we will undoubtedly be great saviors of souls. It is not I who make this claim: St. Paul, saying that he completes in his own flesh the sufferings of Christ, assures us that he does so to obtain the salvation of many souls: "*for the sake of His body, which is the Church.*"^[202]

3) "If One wishes To Come After Me..."

Nothing worthwhile can be accomplished on earth, even outside the religious realm, without involving sacrifice. The apostle, when all is said and done, is worthwhile to the extent that he has the power and grace to sacrifice himself for his work, for the sake of the souls entrusted to him. It was from the cross, even more so than through His preaching, that Jesus won the hearts of people and attracted souls to Himself.

So that this truth might always be in our minds and hearts, when we depart for the missions, we are given a *crucifix*. Why not a Bible, the Word of God which it is our mission to announce? Because we want to make clear that, just as the world was redeemed by the cross of Christ, it is also through the cross, the cross of the missionary, that this redemption is

extended to God's people today. The missionary of Jesus Christ will not save many souls if he is not willing to be crucified, if he is not a man of sacrifice, ready to suffer.

Two of our bishops wrote to me: The secret of a missionary's success is completely in this: if he comes here motivated by a great spirit of sacrifice! If this is lacking, everything is lacking.

St. Paul, as I have already mentioned, reminds us missionaries that the passion of Jesus is not yet complete: it must be completed by our passion: "*In my own flesh, I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ.*"^[203] And thus Fr. Lacordaire sums up the priesthood in this beautiful way: *the sacrifice of a man, joined to that of God.* But if everyone must carry the cross, how much more so the missionary must consider as addressed to himself the words which Jesus used to call his chosen ones: "*if one wishes to come after me; he must deny his very self, take up his cross and begin to follow in my footsteps.*"^[204]

4) The Essential Requirement

I'm speaking to you of this great theme, because *necessity impels me to do so.* All around me I see great progress and beautiful new things, also in the missions; but I have one great fear: that all of this which is new, more dynamic, more scientific, more *spectacular*, and thus more conformed to the spirit and tastes of the day, will lead our missionaries to give less importance to those solid, serious, fundamental and evangelical principles which must be the foundation of a true Christian apostolate. And the most important of these for the missionary is precisely this: the spirit of sacrifice. And since it is the principle which is most difficult and unappreciated by our nature, it is also the one most at risk to be set aside or neglected. And if that were to ever happen, it would be the end of our missions and our institute. It would be said of us what was said of the sterile fig tree in the Gospel: *Why should it clutter up the ground?*

Monita ad Missionarios teaches that just as one's own sanctification is not achieved except through sacrifice and prayer, the same is true in regard to obtaining the salvation and sanctification of souls. As our everyday experience tells us, when the missions are founded on this basis, we can be sure of their success; when they are built on other foundations, we can be equally sure of their failure.

“This can be more evident and clear if we follow Christ into the solitude of the desert, where He prepares Himself for His mission; He in fact separated Himself from the sight of men, and trained that most innocent body by fasting, sleeplessness, other sufferings and prayer. Thus He left an example to those who would preach the Gospel that they base their preaching on the same foundation.” And it continues: *“In fact, only by struggle and bodily suffering will the apostolic works grow and produce fruit to God’s glory, as the Apostle says: ‘Death is at work in us, but life in you.’^[205] That is, death is at work in our mortal bodies, but in our daily dying, spiritual life is born in you.”*

As the grain of wheat does not give fruit unless it falls to the ground and dies, but instead remains just a grain, so too the missionary, if he does not die to himself by means of sacrifice in order to live for God and the other, undoubtedly remains alone, and the field of his missions will be sterile.

These great truths must always be remembered by all of our missionaries and by those who work in the formation of our students. The apostolate demands robust character, strong temperament, resolute will; it rejects weak or fastidious spirits, or those excessively concerned about their health. In the missions, these produce very little; they have a thousand excuses and at the first discomfort they request to go home.

Look at the kind of missionaries chosen by Jesus Himself: *It was not the weak and delicate, but tough fishermen that He chose as Apostles, men accustomed to endure courageously all kinds of difficulties: strong winds, the heat of the sun, winter’s cold and other troubles, so that they would be unafraid to go through many dangers and hard work for the salvation of the souls redeemed by Christ’s blood.*^[206]

Good Christians believe, and rightly so, that the life of a missionary is austere and filled with privations; this is, thank God, the life led by our admirable confreres in all of our missions. I just want to warn against a certain *modern* spirit which can infect us, at first without our even noticing it, prompting us to make small concessions in order to attain greater progress later. Let us preserve the sacred heritage of tradition and practices left to us by our greatest and holiest predecessors, convinced that the Gospel never gets old, and Jesus Christ is always up to date: “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.*”^[207]

5) For One’s Own Sanctification

Now if we really want to be holy, let us look at our model, Jesus Christ. He was the holiest of people because He sacrificed the most. We cannot delude ourselves: the process of our sanctification is one which includes separation, detachment from all material things, and “violence” against our very selves. In the Gospel we read that the Lord requires always and only renunciation from those who would follow Him. *The Imitation of Christ* summarizes the work of our sanctification in these beautiful words: “*One improves more and wins fuller grace, the more he overcomes himself and mortifies himself in spirit.*”^[208] There is no other way to become holy here in the homeland, and there is certainly no other way to do so in the missions, where the danger of being lost is perhaps greater, if one does not practice self-sacrifice.

Foolish and unworthy of the name missionary is the one who, fresh from the seminary, believes that he is now unrestricted, free to enjoy those small satisfactions and liberties which the seminary rules denied him. Such a one does not begin well, *and let’s hope that he doesn’t end even worse!*

If it’s true that we must always practice self-sacrifice, the necessity is even greater in the first few years of our mission, when inexperience and the

novelty of a whole new world, which naturally stimulates the curiosity, can lead to serious dangers, or at least to a waste of time and energies. Even on the ship which takes us to our mission there are grave dangers, if we are not careful to be dignified, reserved, in control of our senses, always conscious of being apostles of Jesus, sent as representatives of the Catholic Church.

Yes, our apostolate must begin on the ship, where everyone is watching us, and where we can provide edification for everyone, especially with the dignity of our bearing as ministers of God. Together with common courtesy in our behavior, let us avoid the places of entertainment on the ship, or frivolous persons, or anything which is not Christ-like and which does not lead to the edification of others and the peace of our own conscience.

The spirit of sacrifice must characterize our process of personal sanctification for our whole lives. Great sanctity is made up of small acts of faithfulness; but to be faithful, really faithful, we must be familiar with and accustomed to self-sacrifice, because while Jesus is generous, He is also demanding. There may be some who think that just going to the missions is already a great sacrifice, enough for everything. This is a fatal error, which has caused the failure of many vocations! We must carry the cross every day: “*...take up the cross each day, and follow me.*”^[209]

Thus our daily life must be ordered and structured. In the residence, we should have a schedule and be faithful to it. We should fix the time for rising, for prayer, for work. Without this order, imposed and maintained by self-sacrifice—because order and discipline always come at a cost to oneself—one becomes lazy, time is lost and life is wasted.

Don’t fall into the error that I have called fatal (and I don’t say so lightly): to believe that once you arrive in the missions you are dispensed from a rigid discipline in the ordering of your daily life; or to look down upon and

consider such activities as study, small acts of sacrifice, self-control, reserved behavior, and faithfulness in the practices of piety as things only for beginners or novices. To live without order, without discipline, inevitably and fatally leads to a weakening of the spirit and inconsistency in one's life: because—let us always keep this in mind—if our natural life is not lifted up through a spirit of sacrifice to the height of the apostolic ideal, very soon the ideal will come down to the level of our natural life. And thus it could happen that there be a missionary who is more fussy, more concerned with his own comfort than is a common middle-class person, less dedicated to study and work than many priests in the homeland. Why? When the spirit of sacrifice is missing, one lives a wasted life; the sublime missionary ideal is lowered to the level of an empty life, devoid of sacrifice; we might still believe ourselves to be missionaries, but what poor missionaries we would be!

6) The Precious Jewel

What is the brightest splendor of a priest? What lifts up the missionary in the eyes of non-Christians? The purity of his life. But this is also the virtue which is most threatened! And that's why the spirit of sacrifice is so indispensable, because without sacrifice there is no purity.

One can pray, but *without mortification of the senses and avoidance of the occasion of sin, prayer is not sincere, and thus has no right to be granted.* The missionary, advises Cardinal Mercier, must be able to sacrifice his senses, his imagination, the affections of his heart, when these would take him toward something or someone which could lead him away from God. You promised chastity when you were betrothed to Christ and the Church; make sure that your purity remains complete and immaculate, and you will be holy: you will have, as a gift from God, a great moral influence on the people you have been sent to save, you will have the grace of great spiritual fruitfulness and you will bring many souls to God.

But, my dear confreres, do you remember the famous phrase of St. Ambrose? To maintain one's purity is a *martyrdom*, and requires from you in an absolute sense, the same spirit of sacrifice which the martyrs practiced: "*Chastity is not praiseworthy because it is found in martyrs, but because it is that which makes martyrs.*"

You must be very strict with yourselves to avoid any occasion of sin. Never give in to compromises or to small concessions in this area. If we place ourselves in the occasion of sin, we fall, because when we are in a place where the will of God does not want us, God is not with us. If we are voluntarily and deliberately in a situation of temptation, we are alone: alone with the tempter, alone with our passions, alone with our own infinite weakness; and so inevitably we *must* fall.

The reserve which the missionary must practice in regard to persons of the opposite sex can never be exaggerated or overdone. Our weakness is infinite and that of women is no less so, even those who are pious and consecrated to God. In the missions, even more so than elsewhere, the people are easily inclined to observe and judge every relationship which the missionary can or must have with women; and so it is necessary that one be greatly reserved, even to the point of inconvenience, in order not to give scandal, nor to expose one's own virtue to danger. We not only have to avoid evil, but also anything that might give the appearance of evil. "*Avoid any semblance of evil,*"^[210] the Apostle admonishes. The missionary is an object of great interest, especially in the midst of non-Christians and Protestants, among whom the chastity to which he is committed is something mysterious, often unbelievable. The world, then, low and evil in itself, is strict and demanding with us; and that's good. "*Keep careful watch over your conduct.... for these are evil days.*"^[211]

When I think of the dangers which surround your virtue in the midst of such a corrupt world, of the danger that you might neglect your interior life, I fear for you, for the souls which can be scandalized, for the work

which can be destroyed by the bad example of a missionary who is weak in this area. I fear the damage that the weakness of one can bring to the work and efforts of the others.

Always be united to God through faithfulness to your duties of piety! Above all, embrace self-sacrifice, and keep away from the occasions of temptation.

7) For The Success Of The Apostolate

Today, missionary life tends to assume a more modern tone. But there are some aspects of modernity to which the spirit of the Institute cannot adapt. Just as in the formation of our missionaries prime importance is placed upon the acquisition of apostolic virtues, so also in the missions the success of our work and the salvation of souls depend upon these same virtues, much more than other means or arty human contrivance. Even if we can now go to the missions by airplane, we cannot send souls to heaven by the same means. You understand my meaning.

The one who does not love Jesus Christ and is not crucified with Jesus Christ through holy self-sacrifice, even if he is totally modern in everything else, lacks the power to communicate, does not respond to the needs of souls, nor touch hearts, nor move wills. Why? Because apostolic ministry is something totally divine, the work of the Holy Spirit, who does not communicate with those who do not sacrifice, to those who are practically enemies of the cross! The missionary who wants to bear much fruit must be like St. Paul, who never gloried in anything other than the cross of Christ: "*I was determined that while I was with you, I would speak of nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*"^[212]

Before coming to Jesus Christ, it's necessary that the non-Christian nations must gather around the missionary, just as people gathered around John the Baptist, a man of penance and complete detachment from the

world. Certainly the missionary apostolate has many powerful and useful means at its disposal: schools, charitable works, prayer and preaching. But believe me, if the conversion of non-Christian people is to occur, it will be brought about primarily by the one who embraces penance, the one who faces the people with the emblem of the crucifix. The great saviors of souls have always been those who have embraced sacrifice. With schools, you can illumine the mind, but with the example of a sacrificial and penitent life, you convert the heart. Fr. Faber has said that if England is to be converted, it will not be because theological disputes have been won, but because of the sacrifice and evangelical poverty of her priests.

Suffering and sacrifice have a power which neither God nor people can resist; thus we see that many of the holy missionaries even had the gift of miracles and won over many souls. The world was purchased by the cross, martyrs owe their victory to suffering, confessors and virgins owe their crowns to their sacrifices, and the victory of Christianity in the world was paid for by the blood of thirty popes and countless martyrs. In this and no other way will our missions be successful. We have the visible example of our Lord, who began to reign after He was on the cross: *“...once I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.”*

8) For Agility In Our Work

Everything that we are, our spiritual abilities and the strength of our bodies: everything is placed at the service of God for the apostolate. To serve God in this sublime ministry we need great agility and readiness to move. Without this vigor and readiness of body and spirit—which is impossible to have without self-sacrifice—you cannot be a missionary, because the one who is always looking for his own comfort becomes the slave of a thousand needs and does not enjoy that sacred liberty which comes from being truly detached from material things.

It might be that we are men of prayer, with a certain degree of structure in our lives; but if we are not serious about self-sacrifice, we lack the qualities necessary for carrying out our sacred ministry. There are some missionaries who are naturally prone to order and elegance, who surround themselves with many meaningless things, creating needs and comforts which make it difficult for them to move when duty calls, when it is necessary to leave the comfortable life of the residence and the security of their own room, for the nuisance of a missionary journey, perhaps in bad weather or any of the discomforts that come with ministry to people in non-Christian countries.

Oh! The beautiful lessons which true missionaries give us: always prepared for any struggle, always cheerful and smiling in the midst of discomfort and privation in the ministry; because they are familiar with self-sacrifice, as true apostles, they are happy with whatever poor roof might cover their heads, or whatever food Providence places before them!

A distant memory: one of those impressions which always remain in the mind of a young missionary. I was at Leiktò in the rainy season of 1896. Water, humidity, the smell of mildew everywhere: in the residence, an old shack made of wood, life is uncomfortable, but at least there is a roof; but outside, in the dense forest, it is absolutely awful. Constant, uninterrupted rain for more than a month; it's like living in the middle of a raincloud: you can barely see the poor village. Few people travel in this season.

Water runs off the trees; water splashes off of the high weeds through which you often have to force your way; treacherous puddles of water, rivers to wade across, not to mention the steep and slippery footpaths, the leeches and the other dangers which hide in those mountains. But here comes a man asking the missionary to visit a sick person. He comes from a distant village, about four or five hours away by foot. In the residence is Bishop Tomatore, intent upon mending an old umbrella. He listens kindly

to the messenger, calls to Brother Genovesi to prepare the hosts and wine for Mass, puts his few things into a basket, which he covers with a waxed linen, and off he goes, preceded by the man who acts as his porter and guide.

I, the new missionary, watch in admiration from the veranda as the old bishop cheerfully begins to climb the slope of the mountain, holding the umbrella in one hand and leading the stubborn donkey with the other. I watch and reflect and commit the scene to memory: even today, it sometimes comes back as if it were happening again. I think about the example of that man, to whom sacrifice had become a habit, which he seemed not even to notice anymore.

The lives of true missionaries are all like this! Thanks be to God that this spirit has always been alive in our Institute: we must jealously preserve it and transmit it as our most precious heritage to our dear youth, at home and in the missions. To this purpose we must apply our strongest exhortations and especially our example, “*to turn the hearts of fathers to their children,*”^[213] so that they can follow in theory and in practice the apostolic life which our predecessors have begun.

9) “Your Light Must Shine Before All...”

Speaking of examples: we have a great duty to shine forth like the most radiant lanterns, illuminating the Church by which we have been called to be pastors and teachers. If the spirit of sacrifice is that which guarantees the success of our efforts, then this success will certainly be diminished by examples of a life of little sacrifice.

Remember that the missionary must be *the virtue which preaches the truth*, in the manner of Jesus: “*If I do not perform my Father’s works, put no faith in me.*”^[214] We must be able to present this same challenge to those we want to attract to the truth.

We are the salt of the earth, but it can happen that our conduct makes this salt lose its flavor, and then “*it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*”^[215] We know that sometimes it does happen that the listeners can say to the preacher: *Physician, heal yourself!* The light of truth is contained above all in the example of the missionary’s life, as our Lord has said: “*Your light must shine before all so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your Heavenly Father.*”^[216] So make the words of St. Paul your own: “*We avoid giving anyone offense, so that our ministry may not be blamed. On the contrary, in all that we do we present ourselves as ministers of God.*”^[217]

In the missions, it is inconceivable that the ministry of God would not be treated seriously and with modesty. For this reason too, we must exercise self-sacrifice, remembering that our model, St. Paul, was even ready to renounce eating meat in order to avoid scandalizing his neighbor: “*Therefore, if food causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I may not be an occasion of sin to him.*”^[218] This restraint which we place upon our intemperate spirits, this edification which we give to our neighbor, will bring praise and growth to our religion and to the Church which we go to represent and spread.

I remember the favorable comments expressed by Protestant people when they saw the friendly seriousness and reserve of the Catholic missionaries traveling on the same boat, how they stayed away from the places of play and entertainment. And good people, sensitive to this kind of serious behavior, naturally see in the missionary something more than human, to which they feel attracted and which they treat with reverence and respect.

We go to the missions to preach Jesus Christ. We preach Him above all through our example: this is the kind of preaching that must last as long as we live. The good example of our lives will give power and value to the words we preach, because then, as true “*examples to the flock,*”^[219] we can say

with St. Paul to our newly baptized: “*Be imitators of me. Take as your guide those who follow the example that we set.*”^[220]

But also in the homeland, within our houses as well as outside them, we have the grave responsibility to be good examples to everyone, and to do nothing which would stain the high opinion that people rightly have of missionaries. In this regard, I exhort everyone with the words of St. Paul to his beloved Titus: “*Nor may you yourself fail to set them a good example. Your teaching must have the integrity of serious, sound words... If it does, no opponent will be able to find anything bad to say about us.*”^[221]

Dear God! How will You judge us if we do not live in conformity with our vocation, to the height of our sublime mission, for which we are held in such esteem by Your people, who make so many sacrifices to provide for our needs and our work? Those who sacrifice the most hold *us* in esteem! And wouldn’t it shock the good faithful people if we were better dressed, better housed and fed than many of our benefactors, and yet still appeared preoccupied with our own comfort and security?

As our personal sanctity is founded upon the spirit of sacrifice, so on this same spirit is founded the mission and the sacrificial virtue of the missionary. The one who does not know how to sacrifice does not know how to save! St. Paul was destined to be the Apostle to the Gentiles; he had the mission to carry the name of Jesus to both Gentiles and the children of Israel. But our Lord said, “*I myself will indicate to him how much he will have to suffer for my name.*”^[222] St. Paul understood God’s plan for him, and so he was happy to share in the crucifixion of his master; he rejoiced in being permitted to participate in His suffering, in order to become more and more like Him, even unto death: “*...likewise to know how to share in His sufferings by being formed into the pattern of His death.*”^[223] Paul knew that only in this way, with this attitude, would he be able to win over many souls. A true disciple of the God who is crucified for the salvation of His people cannot do otherwise than learn how to walk in the footsteps of the Master,

especially if he has been bestowed with the honor to participate in the redemptive action.

10) Non L'io Ma Dio (Not I, But God)

The missionary's spirit of sacrifice must manifest itself particularly by giving up, when necessary, one's own judgments, one's own will. When the will is well ordered, the whole person is well ordered, and when one's judgments are submitted to those of the superiors, there is harmony, peace and success in one's enterprises. It is precisely in this way that the spirit of self-denial can assure the fruitfulness of our apostolic efforts, while the lack of it will bring the saddest kind of failures. I cannot stress enough how important it is for our educators to communicate this point to the young. St. Ignatius used to say: "*To deny one's own will is more valuable than resurrection from the dead.*" And we all have seen just what happens to a young missionary who, even with every other good quality, has never learned to submit his judgments and will to the orders and views of his superiors.

It is necessary, then, that we learn how to be *strong* enough to master ourselves when God requires the sacrifice of our will, and *docile* enough to be always ready to submit our own judgments to those of the superiors. This is the most difficult part of the sacrifice which our spirituality demands of us; but if there is not this sacrifice of self, no other kind of penance, not even martyrdom, has any value.

So let us declare war on pride and selfishness. When it is *io* instead of *Dio* that we are concerned with, it's then that disorder enters our lives and we face all kinds of difficulties, which can end up in real disobedience and rebellion. To dislodge this *io*, it takes spirit and practiced self-denial, because it is self-denial which creates hearts that are generous and capable of great sacrifices: when one has this kind of attitude, life goes on joyously and is filled with great blessings of goodness. The heart of a missionary

trained in and accustomed to self-denial is a great instrument in the hands of God for the salvation of souls.

The virtue I'm talking about reveals the goodness, the sanctity of the true missionary. The true missionary desires only the will and glory of God: the missionary who is not able to renounce his own judgments and submit his will cares only about his own views, his own opinion, his own victory. The humble and obedient missionary works in peace, happy in his position, happy to be anonymous, not desiring any praise or distinction. The one who is inclined to remove himself from the direction of those who, whether he deems them worthy or not, represent God, does things for show, so that people will admire his wisdom and insight. And even if he works hard, he goes to great lengths to show off his own initiatives and abilities, his own greatness! If instead he were to be convinced that only God is the basis of the true apostolate, that only He is the source of any good we are able to accomplish, that God cannot bless that of which He is not the author: oh, then he would see just how much foolishness there is in our vain presumptions, in our imagined independence.

Cursed human weakness which sometimes infiltrates even those hearts which most desire to be completely in God, and spoils the apostolic activity and the most beautiful efforts of their divine character! The humble missionary, who has learned the spirit of obedience and renunciation of his own views when they do not conform to those of the superiors, sails in a tranquil sea; he welcomes direction, and in everything he does he gives glory to the Lord, certain that the suggestions of the superiors, which represent the will of God to him, are the surest guarantee of the goodness and fruitfulness of his own work.

11) A Great Question

The big question is this: why do we not make the kind of progress in our spiritual life that should be expected of priests who celebrate the holy

sacrifice of the Mass every morning and unite themselves with Jesus Christ in Holy Communion every day? This is indeed a very serious and interesting question. We *must* try to give an answer! And the answer is this: primarily because we tend to avoid self-sacrifice, we don't want to deny ourselves, and we prefer the small satisfactions of material comforts to the love of Christ! Above all it is because we are not able to overcome those secret hostilities, those grudges which we hold on to (sometimes without even realizing it) for years, building up resentment against Jesus Himself, manifested in our neighbor and brother.

We should tremble in the face of the Masses we celebrate, the Holy Communion which we receive *every day!* What kind of account will we have to give! The holy Mass is a *sacrifice*; Holy Communion is Jesus, offered to the Father as a *victim* for all. We celebrate Mass and receive Communion, and then we flee from the prospect of sacrifice and being a victim: that's why we progress so little in sanctity!

So, let us be generous in sacrifice, in mortification, in battling our pride, our sensuality and vanity, our self-love; then Jesus Christ will reign in our hearts. He expects only that we *remove the obstacles*, but we often fail to remove them because of our limited self-sacrifice. Maybe there are too many things in our lives which are still not completely subjected to Christ: our will, our judgments, our senses, our activity. It is because Jesus does not reign supreme over our hearts that we fail to become holy! Let us put everything at the feet of Jesus, and He will reign over us in love and we will dwell in Him, as is fitting for apostles.

You must understand this very well: to insist so much on the spirit of sacrifice and self-denial is to declare war on sin, on that which brings disorder to our lives, on that which is able to kill or make sterile our spiritual life, our priesthood, our mission. Our rebellious senses, our freedom which resents constraints, our prideful and conceited judgments, are all great obstacles opposing our sanctification. And so, I'm not talking

about self-sacrifice for its own sake, but indeed for our sanctification, for the sake of our spiritual life and our work. It enables us to die to sin and its effects, but to live for God in Christ Jesus, just as St. Paul has said: “*Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus...so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal bodies.*”^[224] If we are apostles, the life of Christ must necessarily be revealed in us, so that those who see us, see the image of Christ. People will see Jesus Christ in us if we are, like St. Paul, nailed with Jesus on the cross. “*I have been crucified with Christ*”^[225] through a life of sacrifice: “*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.*”^[226] Thus shall we live, thus shall we bring about great conversions, thus shall we approach a high level of sanctity.

12) The Secret Of Happiness

The final, most comforting and consoling word, is a word of hope, of love and of joy. It was the sacrifice of the cross that exalted Jesus on earth and in heaven, and it is likewise sacrifice which gives nobility to the missionary and makes him admired by other people and angels. The missionary is great because he is the most beautiful imitation of Christ crucified.

And if nothing has glorified God more than the cross of Christ, then likewise nothing glorifies God more than the sacrificial life of missionaries, spent completely so that God’s name might be sanctified, that His Kingdom might extend to all people, that His will might be done on earth as it is in heaven. After this, there is the reward, the glorification, eternal happiness.

There is also, however, great happiness here on earth for the missionary who is willing to take on the sacrifices of his vocation. “*As we have shared much in the suffering of Christ, so through Christ do we share abundantly in his consolation,*”^[227] says the greatest missionary of all, who also says in that same letter to the Corinthians: “*I am filled with consolation, and despite my many afflictions, my joy knows no bounds.*”^[228]

What is the key to this mystery? It is the great love lavished by Jesus Christ upon His faithful missionaries: Jesus cannot wait to reward us in heaven; rather, conscious of our weakness and fragility, He wants us to have a small taste now of that inexpressible joy reserved for us in paradise. This is something incomprehensible to the world: that one can be joyful in the midst of suffering. The cross, sacrifice, mortification and the like are distasteful words to those without faith or those who have closed their hearts to the outpouring of divine love. But not to us, dear confreres!

Of all the advice I give you, I think that this is the most precious and comforting. Yes, the most comforting and encouraging because, as *The Imitation of Christ* attests: “*In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection against our enemies, in the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross joy of spirit, in the cross the height of virtue, in the cross the perfection of holiness.*”^[229]

You are not exactly beginners in the ways of God, and so you know that the secret of living each day of your life in pure joy, of beginning to enjoy something of paradise here on earth, is found precisely in love of the cross, in voluntarily embracing sacrifice out of love for Jesus Christ.

You know the divine contradiction, or rather the wonderful rewards promised in the Gospel: “*Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*”^[230] And it is in voluntarily carrying the cross, in losing ourselves for Jesus Christ and His love, that we find our true peace and happiness. “*Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light.*”^[231]

To go to the missions is to go to suffer; but to go to suffer in the missions is to go to pure joy. How to explain this? The explanation, I repeat, is

found in the infinite goodness and generosity of Jesus' Most Sacred Heart. All the saints and truly apostolic men have experienced this and continue to experience it. There is no kind of person who is more truly happy than the missionary, who remains happy even in the midst of difficulty, persecution and illness. "*The apostles for their part left the Sanhedrin full of joy that they had been judged worthy of ill treatment for the sake of the Name.*"^[232]

The story is told that before St. Francis Xavier left for the Indies, the Lord revealed to him the crosses and struggles which lay in store. Xavier was not afraid: "*More, more!*" he exclaimed, "*this is not enough!*" That's the generosity of an apostle! And his reward? When he was in the missions such was the fullness of divine consolation with which the Lord filled his heart that he had to cry out: "*Enough, O Lord, enough! I cannot carry any more.*" That's the generosity of God!

Oh my dear confreres, the Lord is great, generous, lavish in His rewards! He will repay you abundantly for your sacrifices, your self-denial and penances, which make you fit and prepared for the toughest challenges of the ministry. It is an eternal truth: blessed are those who sacrifice, who suffer for the sake of justice, for the sake of God. "*Blessed shall you be...on that day, rejoice and exult, for your reward will be great in heaven.*"^[233]

And with this divine guarantee of happiness and joy, I close and wish you this farewell: Let us continue forward toward God, to whom there is no better way than the one I have just indicated to you, the way in which our divine model Jesus Christ has already walked: "*Did not the Messiah have to undergo all of this in order to enter into his glory?*"^[234]

CHAPTER ELEVEN: Perseverance In Our Vocation

1) “Until Death”

One of the characteristics held most dear by our predecessors was that of perseverance. *To die in the missions*, to persevere until death in the field of the apostolate which Providence had entrusted to each one, was the common aspiration of every missionary who, to be worthy of the name, must give himself totally and forever: this, and nothing less is the apostolic ideal which has been pursued by the Institute since its foundation.

And this must always be the attitude of our missionaries! No one can enter with the thought of being a missionary for ten or twenty years. We are missionaries for our whole lives, *until death*. We must always be very protective of this aspect of our apostolate, which is also its most beautiful crown. “*The value of good works is to be found in perseverance.*”^[235] We cannot give to the Lord in half measures, nor count the cost of our giving: even the best that we can give is really very little!

If we don’t give ourselves forever, we don’t give ourselves completely. What kind of love, selflessness and zeal can be present in one who knows that he will leave after a certain number of years? Are we hoping for a nice retirement or even a position of honor in the homeland; is that why we would want to return there?

Our missionaries return from the field only when—and the cases are quite rare—the superiors call them for some other work which is considered

necessary for the common cause, or for serious reasons, whether of health or the glory of God. Otherwise, they should remain in their place until death, when God will call them and give them the crown of justice.

And there is good reason for this. If the vocation and profession of the missionary apostolate is one which brings honor and esteem, it also imposes obligations of conscience and responsibility which cannot be ignored. We need only speak of the oath, by which we solemnly promised the Lord to dedicate ourselves *for our whole lives* to missionary work: this is a solemn obligation which cannot be violated except for serious reason, and for which we will have to render an account. And we can also remember that our vocation did not come from our own initiative, but rather from heaven: “*I chose you.*”^[236] Thus, it’s easy to understand how seriously we must take our obligation, to be sure that we do not desert the Lord and frustrate His plan of mercy for His people, a plan which includes our own calling and is based upon our faithful and constant response.

We know that in the missions, there are often many trials. We must be well-prepared to face them, and with the help of God we will be able to endure and overcome them. But we can *never* look back. Our teacher Jesus Christ tells us through the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah: “*I have not rebelled, have not turned back,*”^[237] in the face of buffets and insults. And let us also remember these demanding words: “*Whoever puts his hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the reign of God.*”^[238]

2) Absolute Devotion

When we are tempted and feel weak in our commitment and perseverance, let us dwell upon one other very serious and important consideration. We are not religious; we have not taken vows which allow us to remain in the religious state whether we go to the missions or not. We did not enter the Institute in order to become religious. We did so only in order to dedicate our lives to the missions, to work for and

obtain the salvation of poor non-Christians. And this commitment was perpetual: “...*for my whole life.*” The Institute has absolutely no other purpose: either you are a missionary who goes and stays in the missions, or you have no reason to be a part of it.

Certainly there is a place in the Institute for superiors, for teachers, for all the personnel needed in the education and formation of the young; there is also a place for those who are sick, or in need of rest and recovery. But if a missionary were to tire of his mission, lose his vocation and think about returning home to take up residence in one of our houses, such a one should rather request dispensation from his oath and find a diocese to accept him, because the reason for which he is a member of the Institute no longer exists. Those who have faltered in their missionary vocation are certainly not the ones to educate future missionaries.

Thus, let us always include a prayer for perseverance in the vocation among our daily intentions, asking for the grace which confirms and crowns all the rest and which will give success to our whole lives, because to leave our mission without serious reasons, or to refuse to return there when it is our time and duty to do so, is to ruin and confuse our very existence. The Lord does not bless such a one; he remains displaced and often carries his regret, the punishment for his own infidelity, throughout his whole life. How can one be peaceful if he knows he is someplace that the Lord did not will?

3) Ruinous Illusions

The enemy of souls uses every trick to attack and weaken the fidelity of the missionary: missionary life is difficult in itself and he would never be lacking material for his temptations. Let’s imagine that a missionary finds himself in a place where it is difficult for him to feel settled, or where the Lord has allowed him to see few results of his efforts, or where he has personal problems with confreres or superiors. Now here comes the

enemy to instill discontent and dangle before him visions of a more fruitful ministry in the homeland.

But what a deception! We think we can do more good at home? But if the Lord has called us to be missionaries among non-Christians, then the supposed good that we think we can do at home, the Lord never asked for, nor does He want! So the ministry in the missions seems dry, without much fruit? But only God can measure the good that is done in working for others: we can only be sure that our work is never useless if we are where God calls us to be. So we have problems with superiors and confreres? But have we been as humble, obedient and charitable as we should be?

To leave the mission field because the work seems dry, because it is difficult... But isn't it really because we've lost that initial fervor that we came with, because we're looking for a more comfortable life, a more "developed" society? Have we thought about what kind of temptations await us at home, once we've deserted the field assigned to us by God? The one who remains where obedience requires him to be has the right to expect the help of God's grace; but the one who flees, like Jonah, from the mission entrusted to him, what else can he expect but a shipwreck and failure? What right would he have to expect God's grace?

To remain in the mission and see little fruits of one's effort is certainly a difficult and painful thing. But we have to reflect upon our Lord himself, in His earthly life. So that we would not be discouraged when the same thing happens to us, and for other divine reasons of His own, He could report very little visible fruit of His ministry. His true followers were quite few, and of these, how many remained faithful when put to the test? And yet, no one would say that the long hidden years passed in Nazareth nor the few apparently ill-fated years of His public life were sterile and meaningless!

The humiliation of not being able to achieve all the conversions one would like, the suffering and lack of comforts, the resistance of the temptation to give up and go home: all of these produce great merits and contribute to the good of our souls and those of others.

To leave one's post in the missions because you feel you are not doing any good, and to imagine that you will be able to do more good at home!!! But if you leave your mission because of faintheartedness, because you feel that you haven't been able to do much, what awaits you at home is nothing else than a general sense of disrepute. People will think that you have returned because of an inconsistent character, or some kind of weakness, or because you have lost your beautiful vocation. This is the opinion that priests and the people have about missionaries who return without good reasons, even if they never tell you so to your face.

So let us always hold on to this precious aspect of our apostolate and let us be persevering, remembering that "*...the one who holds out to the end will be saved.*"^[239] And if it seems that there are not many results from our work and our sacrifice, even then—especially then—let us persevere, following the beautiful words of the Apostle to the Corinthians: "*Be steadfast and persevering, my beloved brothers, fully engaged in the work of the Lord. You know that your toil is not in vain when it is done in the Lord.*"^[240]

The persevering work of a missionary is never useless in the eyes of God, even if it seems sterile to us! The Lord often grants to the one who perseveres that which seems to be denied to his first efforts. All of our virtues deserve reward, but it is only by perseverance that we really earn it. So let no one be discouraged: if God has chosen you and sent you to the missions, it is not for nothing; it is in this way that He wants us to be holy; it is in this way that He wants us to be saved.

Another consideration: let's say someone is discouraged because he feels useless in the missions, and he looks homeward. He might say: "I'm not

very talented; I don't have much aptitude for languages, nor much spirit of initiative; my confreres work very well and have success; I accomplish little or nothing. Maybe I was never really called to the missions, and that's why I don't feel well, why I'm not happy, why I'm always discontent." Well, I have just one question, which requires an honest answer: is there any blame on your part? If your conscience does not accuse you of any blame, you can be calm and tranquil. The Lord is allowing you to participate with Him in the trial of the cross.

But if there has been some negligence on your part: if, for example, you did not really apply yourself well to language study, if you resent visiting the Christians of your district as often as you should, if you seek after too much comfort, or you don't like to associate with the natives, above all if you are cold in spirit and pray little: if these are your problems, then you must realize that going home will not cure you. If you feel displaced in the missions, you will feel even more displaced at home, plus you will be filled with remorse for your infidelity. Your "illness" can actually be better cured in the mission, by applying yourself seriously to your duty and renewing your spirit. You already have the doctor in Jesus Christ, present in the Blessed Sacrament: hurry to Him!

4) The Great Secret

In a letter from Bishop Volonteri to Bishop Marinoni we read these beautiful words: "Oh, if only all missionaries practiced true devotion to the Blessed Sacrament...there would very seldom be thoughts of returning to the homeland; they would appreciate the greatness of our vocation; and the weight of the yoke and the cross of Jesus Christ would not be so heavy and insupportable. But, no matter where they go, they will find that the whole world is not enough to fill up the emptiness of their hearts, if they do not seek and rest in the will of God."

Jesus is present in the Eucharist! This is the secret to perseverance in our holy vocation. He has given Himself, and continues to give Himself to missionaries, wherever they go, wherever they find themselves; He does not leave them alone and without comfort, but shares in their poverty and solitude. He gives Himself to the missionaries forever, without reserve or regret, so they can complete the sublime work of redemption and sanctification, of mercy and love. And so it must become second nature to us to remain faithful to this Divine Friend, who has so honored us and who has the right to receive our service, however and wherever He wills! In front of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, it is so easy for the missionary to renew the offering of his whole self to God. Gift for gift!

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the gift which missionaries enjoy and appreciate in a particular way, because it's almost as if the Lord is obliged to be more generous with them; but also the gift of yourselves is graciously accepted by Jesus, because it is only for Him that you live, work and suffer in order to extend His reign and bring about His glory. For this reason, you can be happier even than the saints in heaven, who cannot give any more of themselves to God by way of merits and sacrifices.

5) Precious Elements

Sometimes the enemy approaches an older, tired missionary and whispers to him: What more is there for you to do in the missions; why stay there and be a burden to the others? Now what's done is done: you've paid your dues. Leave the work to the young!

Listen as the late Bishop Giacomo Scurati refutes this diabolical illusion: *You are never useless in the missions! Even if you are old, sick, or weak, if you still have the spirit of sacrifice, you do very well to persevere in your place, because you can always pray and aid in the work of others with your example and advice. You show your people that you truly love them, unto death, and not only as long as you feel well. You increase the esteem and affection for our religion by being priests who are real*

fathers of their people; you also increase the esteem for the apostolic ministry by remaining faithful until the end, and not abandoning them to enjoy your last days in the homeland.

Poor missionaries who do not enjoy the experience and example of zealous older missionaries! The good example of the veterans is an irresistible force on the spirit of the young. In Burma the example of the old and venerable Bishop Tornatore did more to form the spirit of young missionaries than any other kind of study, when there were not so many precepts and rules. If you asked him something the answer was: Do as we have done; *be imitators of me*, as St. Paul said. The same has been true for all of our missionaries when the example of the old has been such a great teaching for the young, and has served to form and preserve those holy traditions of the apostolic life, which constitute the most precious heritage of our Institute.

So let us remain at our post, even when it doesn't seem like we can do very much anymore. The young should appreciate the presence of an older missionary as a great blessing from God. Recently the missionaries involved in formation work have lamented the absence of proven and veteran missionaries in their formation programs: "We lack," they say, "those treasures of experience, those moderating influences, those great sources of example, comfort, and encouragement which you have in your missions in the persons of older missionaries. This is a precious element which cannot be replaced, and which we hope to have in the years to come."

6) For A Spiritual Renewal

Our Constitution says: "The Superior General, when he prudently believes it to be appropriate, may grant a missionary, after a certain number of years of mission work, permission for a relatively long period of rest in the homeland or elsewhere." This article (which was not in the original rule), was proposed and approved almost as a complementary prerogative

of the Superior General, considering the possibility of one's coming home for a simple rest. But it met with little enthusiasm from the majority of the Chapter Fathers, who would have just as soon left it out. Our missionaries have always felt the same way, and I can't think of anyone up to now who has requested to appeal to this article only in order to *rest*.

I hope that it will always be this way. Coming home temporarily for less than serious reasons can easily become a permanent situation. Not to mention the fact that when missionaries who are not sick return, it causes surprise and creates an unfavorable impression, giving a poor image of our vocation, as if one can leave his post with such ease.

[Today, with easier transportation, and with the purpose of allowing the missionary the possibility for spiritual renewal (perhaps with the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, for example), the Constitution allows a home leave after 10 years. The great advantage for the missionary and his future work is sufficient justification for breaking with the traditional rigor in this regard.]^[241]

7) Taking Care Of Oneself In The Missions

In the case of serious illness, one should contemplate going home only if this gives realistic hope of cure. If the illness is curable in the mission, or if unfortunately it cannot be cured even in the homeland, then to return is not advisable.

The superior of one of our missions wrote: "Today, many illnesses can be cured just as easily in the missions as in the homeland. In the cities there are plenty of good hospitals and health centers, doctors, and all of the most modern medical advances." If not in one's own mission, there are always places in nearby missions which are pleasant enough for recuperation. Doctors, who are ready and willing to do what pleases others, often prescribe a home leave for missionaries, when actually they

would find that after a couple of months in the mountains or at the sea, they could return to their place completely cured. If the missionary has a homeland, it is his mission.

In case of chronic or incurable illness, we must provide the poor confrere with all the comforts he needs and assist him with the utmost care. This could end up being somewhat of a burden to the mission, but charity toward the sick is one of the richest fonts of blessings.

How admirable are those confreres who have been struck with incurable illness but still do not want to abandon their mission! How they inspire us with their great example of patience and fidelity to their holy vocation, and especially with their prayers and suffering! I cannot help being deeply moved whenever I remember our dear Fr. Virginio Cornalba, who suffered from an incurable illness and yet remained faithful to his post for 12 years. What a bountiful example, what heights of prayer! What an accumulation of merits for himself, blessings for his mission and graces for the non-Christians is produced by the wonderful example of faithfulness to one's own vocation.

And speaking of illnesses, I want to repeat to all of our dear missionaries the recommendation St. Theresa gave to her sisters: "Take care of your body out of love for God" and, I would add, out of love for souls, out of love for your mission and the Institute. When, however, whether in the missions or in the homeland, the Lord visits us with some sickness, let us endure it in a way that is worthy of missionaries, without being too demanding and ill-tempered. St. Vincent de Paul used to say to his priests: "*Let us remember that also illness and afflictions come from God. Death and life, health and sickness, everything comes by order of His Providence; and, in whatever way it comes, it is always for the good and for the salvation of the person. However, there are those who suffer their afflictions and illnesses with impatience, and this is a great wrong. Others let it be known that they desire to change their place, under the pretext that the air is better elsewhere... They are men attached to themselves, with frivolous*

spirits, who want to avoid any kind of suffering. To flee from that state in which the Lord wills us is to flee from one's own happiness. Yes, suffering is a state of happiness which sanctifies the soul."

The Constitution allows that “if a missionary is unable to bear the climate and burdens of a particular mission, he can, with the consent of the appropriate authorities, be transferred to another.” This is a wise directive, devised in order to avoid the repatriation of missionaries who, not able to remain in one mission, could nonetheless serve quite well in another. Before hurrying to the extreme of repatriation, it would be good to keep this rule in mind.

8) Duties Of Superiors

It can happen, especially in the case of vocations which are a bit weak, that the relationship between the missionary on temporary leave and his ordinary becomes cold. The ordinary expects that the missionary, once his leave is over, will be conscious of his duty and ready to return to his mission. The missionary for his part has perhaps felt some coldness in the relationship with the bishop and interprets it as an indication that he is not wanted.

In these cases, lest the devil be victorious, we need to appeal to charity and duty, remembering that just as one's own vocation is nothing to trifle with, so too others' vocations deserve the greatest solicitude, respect and reverence. Those of us in authority need to remember our grave and sacred duty to consider our confreres as the most precious treasure which the Lord has entrusted to us, and as those for whom, more than any others, we must have care and give an account.

Like St. Peter we have been given the express mandate to strengthen our brothers. And, again like St. Peter, there is not one of us who is without our own sin, perhaps so that we can better sympathize with the weakness

of our brothers. We superiors must sustain the vocations of our missionaries with our encouragement, with our understanding, with our counsel, with the generosity of our hearts, with our paternal love; and if that is not enough, even with maternal love and goodness.

The Lord Jesus Christ is rich in examples and teachings on this point. Is there anything He did not do, especially after the resurrection, to encourage, to comfort, to confirm his frightened and faithless disciples? What loving, incredible lessons! How many sweet, paternal exhortations! And if He acted in this way...

I pray that at the end of my days I, and all the other superiors of the Institute, can say to the Lord: "*I guarded...those you gave me. I kept careful watch and not one of them was lost.*"^[242]

9) "To Die In The Missions"

Let us make our own the feelings expressed by a great missionary of China about this important issue of perseverance in the missions:

"The missionary must die in the missions in order to make clear that he does not have any recompense here below for his sacrifice. If in the future, better means of transportation will create a new kind of missionary with a round trip ticket, who comes to work only for a given amount of time, these missionaries will lose much of their prestige... Even in Europe, people will stop admiring these missionaries, because the sacrifice which wins hearts, even the hearts of unbelievers, is the sacrifice which continues until death, death in the missions, like the self-surrender of our Lord, which conquered heaven and earth with a sacrifice of obedience unto death, death on a cross" (Life of Fr. Gonnet, S.J.).

And it is until death that we also want to persevere, my dear confreres. *To die in the missions!* Let this always be our plan. *To die in the missions* is a pledge of certain salvation, because it is the most evident proof that one

has remained faithful to the end. Persevere always; if the enemy sometimes tempts you to desert, to abandon the souls for which Jesus gave His life, remember the example of those who have gone before us, and say with the great Maccabee: *“Far be it from me to do such a thing as to flee. If our time has come let us die bravely for our kinsmen and not leave a stain upon our glory.”*^[243]

CHAPTER TWELVE: The Noblest Mission: The Formation Of Missionaries

1) Introduction

Dearest confreres, just as the strength of the Institute and of its missions is to be found in the *missionaries* who work with such great zeal and self-denial in the field, so the future of those missions and of our community rests completely in our seminaries and apostolic schools^[244]: “*The hope of the harvest lies in the seeds.*”

Without missionaries there are no missions; without holy, well-trained, courageous and numerous missionaries there is no conversion of souls nor foundation of new churches! These churches will have apostles and pastors only if we train them.

What a responsibility; what an important work! Indeed, it is the noblest, most difficult and most essential part of our apostolic duty!

All of those who collaborate in this great work must feel the responsibility of their mission, the importance, delicacy and merit of their activity. If it is a great thing to form Christians, how much more sublime it is to mold apostles! This is an absolutely divine occupation: the first Apostles were formed and educated by our Lord Himself, and perfected by the visible action of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, I exhort all rectors, spiritual directors, professors, prefects, and anyone who has any kind of position in our houses of formation to be always aware of the supreme importance of their mission, and never to be lacking in effort and prayers, vigilance and care, good examples and exhortations, so that all of our students can cast off the old man and put on the virtues and spirit of Jesus Christ.

2) Necessary Conditions

a) Profound conviction about an evident reality

It is a mystery why our Blessed Lord has deigned to need missionaries in order to convert souls; but the fact is, He does need them, and if we have been chosen by Him, *He needs us too*. For this reason, because “*The Master has need [of us]*,”^[245] as poor and weak as we are, we must always seek to be effective and worthy bearers of the triumphant Christ among the souls entrusted to our care.

Let us remember that the Catholic nations have not yet been released from the obligation given to them by God to provide men to the Church for the spread and organization of the faith in non-Christian countries. Let us recognize that now and for some time to come, the recruiting of personnel for the foreign missions should be the primary and most urgent goal of all our public relations. The vocations are there, as many as are needed; they just have to be stirred up by *prayer and work in a great spirit of faith*. As regards the local clergy, oh how we wish that there were already enough to take over the work of the foreign missionaries! But we, *who know the missions well because they are our life*, should consider it a betrayal to the Church and to souls if we reduce even by a little bit our zeal in recruiting and forming new personnel, because we know that the missions need them and will continue to need them for some time.

Missionaries are necessary to the Church now more than ever, because never before has the world been so open to the preaching of the Gospel. As for us, our Institute has more reason to exist, more need to be strong and effective today than when it was founded; if for no other reason than the innumerable souls which have been entrusted to its care, the great opportunities for conversions which Providence has placed in our fields of work, and the important activities which our members have undertaken up to now. Of these, the most sensitive, the most in need of attention are precisely the seminaries for the formation of local clergy, necessary to prepare for that day which we would like to think is near, but which we must recognize is still far off, especially in certain areas.

I make these observations so that none of us, whether we work in the missions or in the more delicate position of preparing new personnel, ever fail in zeal and fervor, in diligence and patience. Let us move forward, preserving that ancient spirit and missionary enthusiasm of our forebears.

Let nothing turn us aside; let nothing distract us. With our gaze and our hearts fixed upon Jesus Christ, let us be as unshakable as He, and as His Gospel! Let us avoid any kind of modernism which might decrease in us the true spirit of the Institute, which is totally and genuinely apostolic. Let us carry on, even if slowly and heavily, toward our great goal: the salvation of many souls, the establishment of the Church in the lands entrusted to us to evangelize, the triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ.

b) Overwhelming kindness

The *rectors of the houses, the spiritual directors* and all those who have responsibility for the formation of our youth must exercise the most delicate kindness while accompanying and sustaining vocations which, in the long period of preparation, are exposed to many crises and temptations. This is truly a delicate and sublime ministry, requiring a heart which is more than paternal, a gentle touch and a favorable view. If the

young are won over by a paternal heart, they allow themselves to be guided and formed, and they will proceed unperturbed toward the goal. If instead they are not surrounded by great kindness, they always remain a bit estranged from the superiors and the Institute; they will always find reasons to be unhappy; they will not allow themselves to be completely known; and they might easily give in to homesickness and discouragement.

3) Recruiting Of Vocations

a) Choosing the Aspirants well

At one time, the Institute accepted only vocations which were already advanced and mature; today, we begin with young men who simply offer the hope of a vocation. Before, the Lord was sending us fruit that was close to being ripe; now they are merely blossoms, which must develop and bear fruit with the grace of God, after long years of assiduous and diligent care. Once, those who entered, being in theology or already priests, knew very well what they were undertaking, what they were leaving behind, and how much sacrifice they would encounter, because their vocations had already been tested and guided by the spiritual directors of the diocesan seminaries. Generally, the mediocre and uncertain did not go on, or were not recommended. Now, few of our vocations come from the diocesan seminaries, and all of the work of discernment, preparation and selection must be done in our houses.

Everyone can see what a serious duty superiors have in this regard, and how great is their responsibility toward the Institute and the Church, toward God and souls, so that they do not bring into the sanctuary one who has not been called. And how much more so in regard to those who want to enter among us, since they are not going to be peaceful inhabitants of a monastery, where ordinary attitudes of virtue might suffice as they live within the defenses of community life under the watchful gaze of their superiors. Our men will be sent into the midst of a pagan world, and must

have a wealth of solid virtues in order to represent the Church and advance Christ's triumph.

Thus, it is not enough that there is nothing negative to be found in our aspirants; it's not enough that they are sufficiently diligent in study and external behavior. We need to study their character, measure the ardor of their spirit, the absolute submission of their will, their generosity in sacrifice, spirit of initiative and faithfulness to duty. In a word, we need to make clear that a missionary seminary is more than a diocesan seminary; an apostolic school is much more than a simple high school. If the current method of recruiting is not carried out with strict criteria, beginning especially with the first year of high school; if we send on a group of students who are decent but not truly outstanding, as must be the case for those who aspire to an apostolic life among the non-Christians; then little by little we will end up losing the spirit of our Institute.

We can never lose sight of where it is that our students must end up, to what great commitment they must be destined when they become priests and brothers; so we need to test them often in order to eliminate those who do not offer a sufficient assurance of success. And in doing so, let's remember that we will never regret having been strict, but we might have cause to grieve if we have been too indulgent.

This seriousness in methods of recruiting, education and selection is especially incumbent upon us today for another reason. Our students, once they have taken their oath and received Sacred Orders, remain incardinated in the Institute. The Institute, as we all know, has no other purpose than the foreign missions. What will we do with young priests and brothers who, because of a deficiency in holiness or the lack of a true vocation, cannot persevere in the missions, or cannot even be sent there with any kind of certainty? It is the responsibility of the superiors to be very careful that the Institute is not placed in this grave difficulty.

Therefore, recruiting and choosing aspirants requires the greatest discernment. I want everyone to be aware of what the Constitution has to say about the acceptance of aspirants. We cannot accept (or if they are already accepted, we should dismiss) those in poor health or with too little intelligence, those who are undisciplined or lazy, those who are only sons who presumably will someday have the duty to support their parents. Neither can we accept those who appear healthy and normal, but have hereditary sicknesses in their families: tuberculosis, dementia, alcoholism, etc.

Rectors should never fear being too strict in accepting aspirants nor in dismissing ones already accepted who prove to be unsuitable; you will always err less by being strict than by being indulgent. It's true that the improvement of the candidates is part of our work; but when in the course of the formation process it becomes clear that a student does not have the stuff of a missionary, then without hesitation or regret, he must be dismissed. Keeping unsatisfactory students is damaging to the good ones; it unnecessarily upsets the balance of the house; it can also be a betrayal to the Institute and to the missions if one who is not called or is overly deficient proceeds to the priesthood. Better to act sooner than later: it is easier to send a student home in the first year of high school than after he has already advanced in his studies or taken his oath.

Every so often, then, those responsible for the running of our seminaries and apostolic schools should examine whether all is well with their students, if they are doing all they can for them, if all of them are responding properly to the grace of God and no one occupies a place which might be better taken by one more promising. Our missionary seminaries must gather the cream of the crop: those who, inspired by the greatest love, are prepared for great self-sacrifice, because they want to give all of themselves to the cause of our Lord.

I would say to you, with Pope Pius X: “*This being the case, how great should be the care which the clergy gives to formation in sanctity. Thus every other enterprise that one could undertake should yield to this. The best part of your efforts should be in the establishment and governance of seminaries, according to the holy law, so that the students might grow in complete doctrine and holiness of life.*”

b) Those not desirable

The rectors and superiors of the houses must never lose sight of *that great mission* to which their students are destined. With the opening of the apostolic schools, the preparation of aspirants to the missionary life has become a long and difficult process, and things that are long are also tiring; goals that are far off are often lost from view. The long years of preparation needed to form a missionary can give hope for a future improvement of students who don’t seem too promising; improvement that never materializes. Then the mission seminary which must gather *only* the best candidates, can become filled with young men of only average virtue, and the minor seminaries become nothing more than orphanages.

There is great danger in sending on undesirable candidates. That’s why, if we want to avoid doing damage to the Institute and the missions, we must always keep in mind the *high purpose* to which all of our efforts are directed, and bring the students to understand that mediocre virtue will not suffice in the apostolic life. Thus, it is not too much to ask that one be very strict and demanding in regard to the discipline of obedience. To a great extent, it is in the exercise of this virtue that the soul is perfected, and one can discern between those who are truly called and those who are not.

Those entrusted with the formation of youth must think seriously about this: to close one’s eyes in these matters can weigh heavily on one’s conscience. How many times, speaking of someone in the missions who is resistant to obedience or of some failed vocation, do you hear it said: This could have been predicted; even in the seminary there were signs of a

proud spirit; he never took instruction well; he was negligent in the observance of small rules; he was always complaining. Well, when these attitudes are seen in an aspirant and he does not improve even with correction, but continues to provide scandal and turbulence in the community, do not be afraid to dismiss him. There are some losses which are really gains. And it's no different for one who has already made his initial promise: "*The lack of a religious spirit which could be scandalous to others is reason enough for dismissal, if warnings and penance prove to be useless.*"^[246]

c) *Wary of Vacations*

A great danger for vocations can be the vacation time spent at home. Especially now that the boys enter in the first year of high school, they can end up being exposed too much to the attention of relatives who tend to spoil them, and even try to influence them away from their vocations.

When the Institute was accepting only those at least at the level of theology, we never thought about vacations at home. The superiors were quite strict on this point. Even though the students had vocations that were already tested and most of them came from the villages of Lombardy where seminarians on vacation were normally under the watchful care of their pastors, they were allowed no more than two days at home: Christmas and Easter, and they had to leave in the morning and come back to the seminary in the evening.

In more recent times, with a greater number of students and no place owned by the Institute for all of them to spend some vacation time, it has been permitted for them to go home for a few months of vacation. But even if now, because of circumstances, the discipline on this point is more lax, the spirit of the Institute must remain intact: it requires absolute detachment from family as an indispensable condition of those who want to be missionaries.

Our rectors should be mindful of this issue, so that they can make clear to the students and their families the strict demands of the missionary vocation, which imposes such a separation, to which they should become accustomed even while they are still in the homeland.

Unnecessary lengthening of vacations should not be tolerated. Our students need to feel the discipline of the Institute and show, by their most rigid punctuality in this area, that they have a love for the sacrifices entailed in their vocation, which they do not want to expose to any danger.

Too often the students, when they return to the seminary after a vacation at home could quote the saying: “*Every time I am among men, I come back less a man.*”^[247] Too often family life can weaken one’s spirit and resolve, smother one’s fervor, distract one with thoughts and anxieties about one’s parents, expose one to temptation and reawaken the memory of one’s past life.

Let us be careful lest the time that is spent for rest and reinvigoration of the body become detrimental to the spirit and vocation. The rectors should be appropriately familiar with the family situation of the students and be alert if they return to the seminary sad or burdened. Before the students leave for vacation, be sure to contact their individual pastors, so that they can watch over them in a holy way. The rectors should also give the students appropriate counsel before they leave for their homes.

4) The Education Of Youth

a) *The Formation of Saints*

In 1854 Fr. Taglioretti, venerable missionary of Rho, wrote to Bishop Marinoni these memorable words: “If you form saints, you will make apostles.” *To form saints:* this is the highest duty of our formation

houses. Thus, our apostolic schools and our seminaries must be *schools of sanctity*, where the aspirants must work assiduously, under your zealous, paternal and enlightened direction, for their own sanctification; they must work toward those apostolic virtues in which they must be rich and by which they will have to live and give fruitful example when they are in the missions.

Therefore, we must be firmly determined that nowhere in the Church can there be found students more fervent than in our houses, where the ranks of the most elect soldiers of Christ are being prepared. Even though the most intense year preceding one's promise is rightly called the Year of Formation, *we need to consider the whole period of formation which the students experience in the houses of the institute like a true and effective novice, up to the time they are ordained and leave for the missions.*

To die to self, casting off the old man and putting on Jesus Christ: this is the program of sanctification for a missionary aspirant, just as St. Paul proposed for his first Christians: “*Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in earth... What you have done is put aside your old self with its past deeds and put on a new man... Put on the Lord Jesus Christ...*”^[248] If some aspirants do not want to understand these passages, tell them: “*The reason you do not hear is that you are not of God.*”^[249] You don't have a vocation; the missions have no need for you. So then, my dear confreres, if you form saints, the people will have apostles and souls will have saviors to attend to them.

Permit me to address another point which is not out of place here. A venerable bishop, a good friend of the Institute, recently observed that there is a lot of talk about the missions these days, many sermons, conferences and meetings; but you don't hear the same kind of enthusiastic faith with which people used to speak about the missions and missionaries. It used to be that no one ever mentioned the missions without remembering the love of God for souls, all that Jesus suffered for them, the sad lot of the non-Christians in danger of being lost forever, and

other similar motives. His observation is correct. The missions used to be, above all, a matter of faith; now they seem to have become something of a “science”. That’s why many of the sermons and conferences remain sterile in regard to attracting vocations.

Why do I say this? To implore you not to allow this materialism to enter into our houses of formation, to guard against this subtle poison which threatens to attack the very roots of our apostolic fervor. We need to make clear to our students the supernatural motives upon which our vocation is based, so that they can know the reason for their calling and the reason for the sacrifices required by it: today in order to grow in holiness, and tomorrow in order to bring many souls to God. Our students must reflect upon their vocation and the science of the missions at the foot of the cross and in view of the fire of hell which awaits the poor souls who have no one to save them. Then, for the sake of this vocation, for the sake of these souls and Jesus Christ who died for them, they will be ready to sacrifice themselves and, if necessary, even to die.

Our Only Model

Jesus Christ! This is the entire reality which must form and transform the lives of our aspirants; He is the light which must illumine their ideals, the fire which must inflame their hearts, the food which must nourish and strengthen their souls! They need to feel the presence of Jesus Christ in their hearts and souls, as much as in their heads; they need as much spiritual as intellectual and scientific formation, as much prayer as theology. What would be the gain for our students if they knew all the theology ever written about Jesus Christ, and then were to become cold and indifferent to His interests? We would have intellectuals, but not missionaries, who in the future will have to sacrifice themselves joyfully so that non-Christians will come to know, love and serve Jesus Christ.

Let's never lose sight of this most important and essential element: our duty as educators of apostles. The great ones who have preceded us in the Institute and have left such an abundant legacy in the missions were men rich in faith, strong in grace, and generous in sacrifice because they were intimately united to Jesus Christ crucified. It was on this basis that the first churches and all of those that followed through the centuries were founded. It is on this basis that our dear confreres in the missions are working today, just as those we are preparing must do in the future.

The Spirit Of The Gospel

We're not asking too much of our students in this regard. The spirit of our Institute is the spirit of the Gospel, the foundation of our Rule. In the Gospel we see that Jesus requires renunciation and self-denial from the one who would follow Him in the path of the apostolate. The one who loves understands why: Jesus is love! To follow Him closely is a great privilege and unique joy; a privilege and joy for which one must prove himself worthy, like the one who *sold everything he had to obtain the pearl of great price*.

We can read in the Gospel about the first renunciation which Jesus requires from a missionary: the family. *“If anyone comes to me without turning his back on his father and mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters...he cannot be my follower.”* The second renunciation is to the goods of this earth: *“None of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions.”*^[250] The third is the most important renunciation: one's own body, one's own spirit, heart and will. *“Whoever wants to be my follower must deny his very self.”*^[251]

I have used the term “renunciation” for these attitudes which the Lord requires of His missionaries. A better term would be “*proofs of love*,” because to the one who knows how to give himself, He gives Himself.

There are also other reasons that this spirit of detachment and sacrifice is required for a missionary. We become missionaries in order to produce

great fruits of good for souls. But to do this, we need complete detachment from earthly things; we need to be truly free. The missionary who is too attached to his family, or always worried about his health, concerned for his own comfort, proud of his accomplishments, fixed in his own way of seeing things: how can he be an instrument of God for the salvation of souls? What can one do with a tool that does not abandon itself to the will of the artisan? The saints did great things because they were detached from the world; they were *free*, with the true freedom of Jesus Christ; they didn't have attachments which impeded their movement in the great works to which they applied themselves for the glory of God and the good of souls.

This freedom of heart and of movement is absolutely necessary for a missionary to be able to be always at the disposal of God and his superiors in regard to all the demands of his apostolic work. The one who does not renounce his own judgments, his own will, his own comfort and interests is not free; he is a slave who does not serve the work of God but rather impedes its progress. He can also lose himself in the process. Judas was lost because he was not free; he was bound by self-interest. What a tremendous lesson!

It is often said that missionaries are the advance guard of the Church, the front line troops; and this is true. But to be worthy of that name, they must be free from any encumbrance which hampers their movement; they must be lightly equipped so that they can advance more easily, knowing how to make do with little, how to carry on without those things that others consider so necessary.

These are the principles which we must impart to the students of our apostolic schools and seminaries! When we do not see an appropriate response from them, let us do the same as Judas Maccabee: "*He proclaimed that those who were building houses, or were just married, or were planting vineyards, and those who were afraid, could each return to his home.*"^[252]

The Spirit Of The Institute

Let us see what principles must inspire the spiritual formation of our students according to the tradition and spirit of the Institute: *generosity, devotion, renunciation and sacrifice are at the base of every activity of our missionary life* and there is not a step forward which is made without them. We must always be well aware and convinced of this: if our vocation means anything, it is the *solemn and real commitment which each one of us has made to give ourselves totally and without reserve to the Lord, up to the sacrifice of our very lives, for the salvation of souls*. What is a missionary if not this? How can we send young missionaries into the world if they do not understand this?

We missionaries must aspire to the *highest level of perfection*, precisely because we are committed to spend our lives, and when necessary even to give up our lives for the salvation of souls. Thus, nothing separates us from religious in the pursuit of perfection, because for us this pursuit is always followed by the reality of an existence which cannot be maintained fruitfully unless we are inspired by a great love for the Lord and a practical love of sacrifice.

In order to instill this spirit in us, we were taught to pray every day in these words: “O Lord, I consecrate to you the thoughts of my mind, the affections of my heart, the strength of my body, my comforts, my goods, my health, my honor and my life. I am here as your victim: make me pure, make me holy, so that I might be worthy to be sacrificed for you!” How often this offering of our lives to the Lord is followed quickly by immolation!

But this heroism of one’s vocation, this heroism of sacrifice requires and presupposes a heroism of virtue, perfection, sanctity and love. What is, or at least what should be the sanctity of our missionary? I have studied this feature in the best of our men and I have seen that it is *the perfection of love in*

the perfection of sacrifice, according to the words of the Lord: “*There is no greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*”^[253]

I have seen these men leave their families with heavy hearts, go far away from home, renounce lucrative positions, a life of comfort and independence, knowing that they are exposing their flourishing youth to insidious diseases, and probably to a premature death. But it was not just once that they made these sacrifices and detachments; I have seen them lived out every day, and that presupposes an even greater virtue.

The circumstances which surround the lives of our missionaries require a spiritual strength, a store of virtues, a love of the cross which is in fact extraordinary. Without hesitation, often with joy and enthusiasm, always with tranquility, they go forward to meet the duties of their apostolate, in spite of weariness, dangers, privations, sickness, ingratitude, lack of visible success, and persecution; and they do it not just once, like a soldier at war, but throughout their entire lives. Our missionaries do all of this simply and naturally, without any hope of earthly reward, far away from the eyes of their superiors, and often persecuted and misunderstood by the very ones they have come to serve.

Why do they do all this? There’s only one answer: out of love for Christ, to spread His name and His Kingdom, to save the souls for which he spent all of his blood. This is the sanctity of our missionaries, not written in books but seen in the flesh: *perfection of love in the perfection of sacrifice*. And this is the ideal of true sanctity which we must present and impress upon all those who want to embrace the apostolic life according to the spirit of our Institute.

Oh, how I would like everyone to understand that what is truly *solid* in the missions does not consist of the beautiful cathedrals and great institutions, often maintained by money from outside, but *men, filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ*. The spirit of Jesus Christ, present and visible in the Institute: this

must be our great treasure; this is what makes us acceptable to God, useful to souls, appreciated by the Church.

I have here with me two beautiful testimonies to the great spirit of our missionaries, and I want to publish them only so that they might serve as an inspiration and example to our students. His Eminence Bishop Edward Mooney, the last Apostolic Delegate to India [later the Cardinal Archbishop of Detroit, who first invited PIME to establish itself in the U.S.], wrote to me from Japan: *“I am happy to congratulate you sincerely about your missionaries in India. In their four missions they serve generously, selflessly, serenely and, thanks be to God, with success. My only regret is that you are not also present in Japan.”* [Today, of course, PIME has several missions in Japan.]

Another distinguished person, visiting one of our missions in China, wrote these beautiful words to me:

“I add my greetings and my own sentiments to the filial affection which your missionaries have for you. It has been most interesting and pleasing to see the beautiful missionary life taking place here: there is great and varied activity, a beautiful spirit open to all of the initiatives, a wonderful relationship between the missionaries and the bishop, and a generous attitude toward the apostolic work. Love for the Chinese people is always present and alive, as is the desire for their conversion. Forgive my enthusiastic observations, which are not meant as vain compliments: I have a magnificent impression of the work of your missionaries and it seems natural for me to tell you about it in total confidence.”

This spirit which is observed and appreciated even by people outside of the Institute, and which we have inherited from our forebears, must be religiously preserved and transmitted to our successors, who are right now our young students and aspirants. They must show themselves to be aware and honored that the Lord has called them to this apostolate and the responsibilities attached to it, preparing themselves with the highest

commitment to enter into the great inheritance of souls to save, for which their elder brothers are working and spending themselves today.

Love For The Institute

Every house of the Institute should become a center of mission education and animation. The students must be trained to participate in this healthy spirit of belonging and making the Institute known. They can do so in their personal correspondence and especially during the vacations which have been granted to them.

Fraternal union and love for the Institute must be instilled in the students. Love for the Institute does not mean only the unquenchable desire to go to the missions. Such a lively and sincere desire to go to the missions is presupposed in everyone, and it is something not only laudable but necessary in anyone who joins our company.

But the one who truly loves Jesus Christ even more than the personal satisfaction of going to the missions, submits himself to the cause of God which he has come to serve. If in the judgment of the superiors, one must commit himself for some time in the homeland, this should be accepted gracefully, with the certainty that the spread of the faith and the salvation of souls is served just as surely by one who is teaching in the first year of the minor seminary as by those who are preaching in China and India.

Our students must be trained in these principles of submission, practical devotion and selflessness for the sake of the Gospel, to which the whole Institute is consecrated and which is the only reason for all of our work. Only in this way will they be humble and docile instruments in the hands of God, able to do great things for His glory.

b) Formation in Piety

Love Of Prayer

Our beloved confreres who are in the missions work principally to form good Christians; those in the houses of formation work to form good missionaries. You can understand how difficult, delicate and filled with responsibility such a task is!

Those in missions watch our houses of formation with great expectations, since it is there that new forces are prepared to respond to the ever increasing needs of the missions entrusted to us. If we do not prepare holy missionaries, our work is in vain. Therefore, if it is important to give our students a serious and complete intellectual formation, even more diligence and attention must be committed in regard to the formation of their spirits.

Those entrusted with the education and formation of our students should feel the greatness, the nobility and the responsibility of their office, and so must make sure that our houses of formation are true gardens of virtue, full of fervor and charity; true schools of apostles, in which Jesus is always seen in the holy tabernacle and in the holy lives and examples of the superiors and any other fathers who are there. A great spirit of faith must be nurtured in the students: this must be the root and the goal of every action, the foundation and guiding principle of our whole educational system. *Everything for Jesus* must be our motto. Our education must serve to impress Jesus in the minds and hearts of our aspirants in such an indelible way that their whole lives become little by little a copy of the life of Jesus. Only in this way will they be able to represent our Divine Teacher to the people and carry on worthily and fruitfully his mission.

It would be vain to expect that our young men will succeed only with their own forces and our care. With a spirit of faith, let us also instill in them a great spirit of prayer. Only if our students pray will they be able to reach so high a goal as that to which they aspire in coming to us.

Let's not delude ourselves. All other means to foster vocations are good, only if they are united to the essential, indispensable element of prayer; but if this is neglected, our seminaries become houses of futility and failures, or maybe even worse, they send to the missions deficient personnel.

So let us use our efforts and our money well. Let us make sure that our apostolic schools and seminaries give the maximum return in the form of holy missionaries and, if possible, also numerous ones. And the missionaries who leave from our houses will be holy, and also numerous, if we spend every effort to ensure that our Blessed Lord, the only true teacher of apostles, is always at the center of the minds and hearts of all our dear students.

Dearest confreres, we have entered into a vocation that is completely divine; to us has been entrusted an absolutely superhuman duty. We are called to spread the reign of God on earth, and along with our own souls we must save many others.

Well aware of our infinite weakness, Jesus admonishes us that without Him we can do nothing. Therefore, how shall we succeed in such an undertaking? There's only one way: *by prayer*. Without Him we can do nothing; with Him we can do anything. *Let us be men of prayer, and we will be holy missionaries!*

Mental Prayer

The principal area in which our students must be well versed before they go out into the world is the art of prayer. To send out young members to the missions without familiarity in this regard is like sending unarmed soldiers into battle: it is to betray them and expose them to certain ruin.

The goal of seminaries is the formation of *holy* missionaries; thus, the students must be well trained in the interior virtues. Above all, they must

be trained in the love and practice of prayer, which is the source and life of all other virtues. St. Charles Borromeo, who is a master in this field, assures us that the time spent by a young man in a seminary would be perfectly useless if he left without having acquired the art and practice of meditation. Superiors and especially spiritual directors should listen well to the words of this saint:

“In regard to prayer and its motives, you should reflect most diligently about how useful it is to priests. You should also realize that seminarians will have made very little progress in the spiritual life if they do not pray or if they pray with the wrong motivation. Therefore, you should often present to them the great and fruitful effects of prayer, especially in the form of meditation; you should do all in your power to encourage them to study and love it.”^[254]

Fr. Olier, the founder of the great seminaries of France, gave immense importance to the spiritual formation of seminarians and prescribed for them an hour of meditation every morning. In his “Memoria”, in which he treats the foundation of the seminaries (published in 1651), he has these grave words:

“Since the seminary is the place where the seeds of the ecclesiastical spirit are sown, the directors, who must be men of prayer, must consider it their first and principal duty to make the students men of the interior life as well, according to the capabilities of their age, showing them the importance of acting in union with the spirit of our Lord, without which not even Christian activities and ministerial commitments are able to please the Lord nor bring about any fruit for the Church. All of the great things that we teach in the seminary: the Mass, the Office, ceremonies and song; what good are they if the spirit and life of prayer does not inspire them? The blessings of God upon our commitments and the sanctity of our actions depend entirely upon the depth of the interior life.”

Fr. Olier was one of the great apostles of mental prayer, and the method of prayer he established for the Sulpician congregation has become one of the most celebrated in the Church. The general character of this method is

to be affective, to put aside acts of the imagination and reason, and to concentrate on adoration, petition, communion with the virtues of our Lord, the reception of and cooperation with grace. He maintained that this method helps one come into contact with the divine, and requires one to use not so much the intellect as the will, which is then applied to the practice of the priestly life.

He said: “*Mental prayer complements the Holy Eucharist. Our Lord has given us both in order to unite ourselves to Him. In prayer we receive the same benefits as in Holy Communion, although in different measure. In prayer as in the Eucharist, we adore Christ truly present, in prayer Jesus nourishes and strengthens the soul, becomes united with it, and makes it like Himself, in disdain for things of the earth and in love for things of heaven, and formidable before the devil.*”^[255]

The venerable Fr. Avila used to say that the one who does not have the spirit of prayer is not made for the priesthood (and much less, I would say, for the missions). St. Gregory, as reported by Chaignon, feared for those bishops who admitted to the priesthood candidates who did not have a love for prayer. St. Bernard exhorted Pope Eugenio to ordain only “*those who engage in the practice of prayer and are accustomed to it, that in everything they might trust more in prayer than in their own industry and hard work.*”^[256] St. Charles, before ordaining a priest, wanted him to be examined on this very point: whether he knew and understood “*the methods of prayer in all its parts, rules, etc.*”^[257] The legislation of the Church also sanctions the obligation for mental prayer, not only for religious and priests but also for simple seminarians.^[258]

Pope Pius X wrote: “*The priest lives daily almost in the midst of a depraved world, and often remains soiled by human dust... That is why there is a great need for him to return every day to the contemplation of eternal things, so that the mind and the will might be strengthened with renewed vigor against the attractions of the world.*”^[259] Now, our students must be sent, not almost but certainly, into the midst of a depraved world, into the midst of a pagan world, where the danger of

being soiled by human dust is even greater. We cannot, therefore, send them out if they are not adept in the practice of prayer, the only armor with which they can defeat any temptation and keep themselves pure of any evil: *The armor of the priest is found in prayers and tears.*

In the seminary, then, our students must feel within themselves the habit, the need for mental prayer. This is not an easy thing, because the quiet and solitude required for prayer goes against the grain of youthful spirits. They believe that life comes from action and naively think that action is found only in external activity. Meditation can easily annoy them when they don't understand its necessity, when they do not approach it with full commitment. The long solitude of Christ in Nazareth should serve to free them from this deception and make them understand that there is nothing more active than meditation, than occupying one's thoughts in the things of God, who is the only true source of light and life. "*In You is the source of life, and in Your light we see light.*"^[260]

It is in intimate communication with God, the font of life and light, that the apostle attains strength and stamina for his external activities. It is also here, and only here, that the young aspirant to the missionary life tests, matures and reinforces his vocation, because any vocation that is not inspired and matured by God in the intimacy of prayer is not a true one.

Why, my dear students, do you want to be missionaries? What moves you, what attracts you? Don't deceive yourselves: if your plan is not the result of a great spirit of faith and a great love of God, don't even go through the bother of crossing the sea! It is by meditating on the greatness of God our Father, and the right He has to the adoration and service of all people; it is by meditating on the immensity of His love, by which He did not hesitate to offer up His only Son in order to save the world; it is by weeping over the wounds of the crucified Christ, over the lot of the poor non-Christians for whom so much blood was shed; it is by uniting yourself to these truths in prayer, that great ideals are born and strengthened.

Thus you also will understand the detachments, the sacrifices which the missionary vocation imposes now and then. No one willingly sacrifices himself if he does not have great faith and love in his heart. It is by faith, by great conviction, by the most generous love that the heroisms of the cross are made. Now in order to have this faith and to grow in it, you need to encounter the Lord in prayer: “*Look to Him, that you may be radiant with joy.*”^[261] In order to be inflamed by this love, you need to be well practiced in meditation.

Our vocation is great, sublime and divine. There is no other which surpasses it in nobility, in sanctity, in merit; it is identified with the work of Christ, with the mission of the Church. We, however, are small and weak; even if we were the best of humanity in terms of cleverness, eloquence and valor; even if the whole world admired us for our great gestures of heroism, it would all be for nothing if our work was not done in union with Jesus, because without Jesus we can do nothing in terms of the apostolate and eternal life.

Now, this union with Jesus which gives virtue and effectiveness to the apostolic life is something exquisitely interior: it is the fruit of prayer. Only when, through the practice of prayer, the apostolic life is carried on “*hidden with Christ in God;*”^[262] only when Jesus Christ reigns supreme in the heart of the missionary, does he shine fruitfully on the outside through holy apostolic activity. Take this as an absolute truth: *external activity which does not reflect the interior life is useless and vain, if not damaging.* It’s been said before, but it bears repeating!

Training In Meditation

Our students are abundantly nourished by the Word of God: in spiritual exercises once or twice a year, monthly retreats, hours of adoration which sometimes include preaching, and a preached meditation almost every day;

this is most consoling. But a question arises: when they get to the missions and all of these activities are not so common, *will the young member know how to make his own meditation?* The missionary whom we send, if he has taken advantage of the formation presented in our houses, is certainly a man of strong piety; but is he also trained and well versed in the practice of mental prayer?

Coming to the practical aspect of this point, I would say that it is holy and most useful (even if burdensome to the superiors) to offer a preached meditation every day in our apostolic schools. The young men will then learn day by day how to be nourished by the Word of God; they will be helped to reflect on divine truths and to apply these to their lives, thanks to reflections and suggestions which the preacher offers them.

This is a good beginning; but starting from high school, the students must be trained *individually* in the practice of mental prayer and how to do it on their own. The duty of the spiritual director is to give them increasingly complete means and methods in this important area, according to the approved texts of asceticism.

Thus it is not enough to give theoretical instructions about prayer to the whole community. The more delicate task of the spiritual director is to address and help the individual students in the practice of prayer: questioning them, enlightening them, overcoming the difficulties which can arise from inexperience, distractions and a lack of generosity.

I'm not saying that we should eliminate preached meditations in our apostolic schools and theologate. These matters can certainly be presented in preaching, and developed with appropriate reflections. What's important is that the students do not come to believe that meditation consists merely in listening to a sermon; they must also have time to *do meditation*. The application of a given truth or mystery to one's own life or the examination of how one is personally progressing in relation to the

virtues presented; the exercise of the will in formulating practical resolutions, adapted to one's own circumstances of daily life; above all, the exercise of the various emotions in adoration, admiration, praise, thanks, sorrow and love, which must be at work in any true meditation; all of this is essentially an individual activity. If the presentation of the material closes with "Thanks be to God", we can't really say that the students have *done meditation*, even if they listened perfectly to the full development of the topic, because the principal and essential part of meditation begins after the presentation, in an act of will and the formulation of resolutions.

In meditation we seek and bring about, above all, *union of our spirits with God*. Thus, it must be a holy conversation with God which can vary according to the subject of our meditation, and which, little by little as we become more adept, must be ever more intimate, intense and affectionate. It is indispensable that the soul have time and peace in order to do this. Preaching and good reading also produce illumination and emotion in the hearers and reader; but sermons, instructions and spiritual reading are one thing, and the methods of daily meditation called for by our Rule are another.

In conclusion I would say that preached meditations, very useful initially to instill strong convictions in the minds of the students, must gradually lead to the practice of true and proper personal meditation, which however must always be guided and aided throughout the entire stay of the student in the seminary.

If the students do not acquire the practice of personal meditation while they are in the seminary, it will be very difficult for them to be true men of prayer when they are in the mission field.

c) The Spirit of Sacrifice

What The Aspirant Is Seeking

It is impossible to follow Jesus Christ without loving Him in the most ardent way. But to love Jesus Christ to the point of leaving everything to follow Him in the way of the apostolate requires a great spirit of self-denial and sacrifice, because on earth *it is impossible to love Jesus without sacrificing oneself.*

Besides, what is the missionary aspirant seeking when he enters the Institute? Certainly not the solution to the problem of food to eat! The one who comes to the Institute wants to follow Jesus Christ very closely, in a life of great perfection, of great sacrifice. There is nothing on earth greater than the missionary vocation: our aspirants are young men whom God has chosen to participate in the work of the world's salvation, the work of His divine Son Jesus Christ. Is it too much for us to be demanding on the point we are considering here, to require them to be ready for sacrifice and self-denial? In what other way can they be missionaries?

But it is not we who are being so demanding; it is our Lord who rejects anyone who cannot deny himself: "*Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple...none of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions.*"^[263] If such a person cannot even be a disciple, how can he be an apostle or missionary?

Our students must listen to the strong words of Jesus: "*If your right eye is your problem, gouge it out and throw it away.*"^[264] Jesus wants us to be ready to battle the greed of our external senses: to decisively curb unhealthy curiosity, to control unbridled imagination; above all, to subjugate the spirit of independence and pride, sensuality, unseemly love of comfort, egoism. All of these are enemies we have inside of us, enemies which must be defeated by the practice of daily sacrifice, embraced for the love of Christ whom we want to follow and who, out of love for us, did not refuse to give His life on the cross for the salvation of the world.

The Gift Of God To The Institute

This is certainly the spirit of God's Son, which was abundantly present in the hearts of our founders and first members. It is a solid and truly apostolic spirit, a zeal based not so much on external action and producing many works, but rather on personal sanctification, done in true love of God and therefore in a great spirit of sacrifice and self-denial.

It was for this reason that our founders had a special preference for the missions which were most difficult, poor and undesirable. It was upon this great ideal of sacrifice, more than upon a grand organizational base and many human means, that the Institute and our missions were founded. There was little theory, few rules, few superiors; but in compensation, there was the clear principle that, in order to be apostles, what is needed is love of the cross, not only in the ideal, but with all its implications of sufferings, privations and immolation; that by this means and only by this means would they be able to save souls, as Jesus saved them: through His holy cross. The usefulness of the Institute to the Church and to souls is measured by the degree of our spirit of sacrifice which, when it is genuine, contains everything else, because the spirit of sacrifice is also the spirit of the purest and truest love of God. The one who does not know how to sacrifice has much less love than the one who can give himself totally to our Lord, up to the offering of his whole life, as all of us have professed to do.

Naturally, sacrifice must be accompanied by prayer, because "*apart from me you can do nothing.*"^[265] But we must be careful not to consider ourselves spiritual men and good evangelical workers based solely upon how much we have studied prayer and how many pious practices we engage in. This would be a great deception. I call this point to the attention of the educators of our students. Practices of piety, frequent preaching of God's Word in meditations, conferences and retreats are all fine and good; but all

of this nourishment of the spiritual life will be in vain if it does not serve to strengthen souls and make them ready for self-denial of will and mortification of the senses.

It is sometimes disconcerting to see young men who were quite regular in their practices of piety, who might have even been considered very fervent while they were in the seminary; but who, once they are out in the world, with a greater amount of freedom, show little self-control and have great difficulty in obedience and sacrifice. Maybe the practices of piety were not always accompanied by the study of sacrifice and self-denial in regard to their own will.

The Practice

All of our students must realize that the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice must form the foundation of their missionary education today and of their apostolic life in the future. Their educators must be especially watchful on this point, must instill it in every way possible, must be demanding about it, must often test the students on it; and where they don't find such a spirit, or at least the serious desire to acquire it, they will know for certain that the stuff of missionaries is not there. If there are those in the missions who are lazy and only concerned with their own comfort, who have not become the kind of men the Lord has a right to expect in His apostles, these attitudes should have been noticed when they were in the seminary. If they had been dismissed at the time, it would have been better for everyone.

In practice, the spirit of self-denial can be seen in the fidelity with which the students carry out their own duty which, if done well, always entails renunciation, detachment and overcoming aversions. Duty in the seminary, in the missions, and anywhere else always requires renunciation of comforts, victory over impulsiveness and instability, inattention to likes or dislikes, to natural preferences or distastes. The one who is strict and prompt in fulfilling his own duty has already gone a long way toward

acquiring the virtue we are discussing. The one who shows negligence, on the other hand, gives little reason for hope, even if he seems devoted and enthusiastic about his vocation.

If there is ever an aspirant who shows tendencies directly adverse to the spirit of sacrifice, self-denial and humility, who has a marked and habitual weakness in control of his senses, his heart and his spirit: please, for the love of God, don't allow him to continue on the path to the priesthood and the missions! We should not limit ourselves to dismissing only those who have failed their exams, or are very weak physically, or have committed some serious failing. We must also examine them in regard to the positive qualities necessary to be good missionaries; if these are lacking, let us send them home without regrets.

It's necessary, then, to look at the *tendencies* of the aspirants, the *passions* which begin to appear from the first years. We must encourage, instruct and educate them in dominion over themselves. And when it is seen that after due correction a student does not offer an assurance of improvement, he should be dismissed. Be particularly attentive to proud and vain characters, constant complainers, those prone to particular friendships and sentimentality, those who are negligent in their studies, the lazy, those too easily angered, those who are immoderate in eating and especially in drinking.

When weaknesses such as these appear, pay attention! The bad tendencies and small lacks of today will certainly be the vices of tomorrow. And don't hold out the hope that in certain areas, improvement will be made in the missions. St. Ignatius, who had a lot of experience in this area, assures us that "*changing the climate doesn't change one's habits.*"

For the students who have already made their initial promise, we must be even more strict and demanding. Far from being a permit for self-comfort,

the promise must impose on the students a stronger duty to work seriously toward their improvement and perfection. Besides, not even a promise would allow us to admit to the sacred orders a young man who gives no assurance of solid virtue and a serious vocation to the priesthood and missionary life.

I would consider it a betrayal of my duty to the Church and the Institute if I did not repeat these thoughts and put them in writing. We will regret much more having been indulgent than having been strict. This is my experience and that of many others. Will we have fewer members? It's just as well if the ones we are missing are only those who, as enemies of the cross, are "*unfit for the Kingdom of God.*"^[266]

d) In Particular

It is not necessary to become a missionary in order to be saved; but the one with a vocation has the duty to follow the clear, explicit precepts of our Lord, who was never more specific and severe in any command to His disciples than that of detachment from the family on the part of anyone who would follow Him in the apostolate.

Let our students open the Gospel once more and meditate on these words of Jesus, spoken directly to them: "*I have come...to set a man at odds with his father, a daughter with her mother... Whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter, more than me is not worthy of me... Let the dead bury their dead; come away and proclaim the Kingdom of God.*"^[267]

When it is certain that God is calling, one must respond with absolute generosity and readiness; and to anyone who would try to hold him back he must respond: "*It is better to obey God than man.*"^[268] Following the example of St. Paul, he should not take the advice of flesh and blood: "*When... He who called me by His favor chose to reveal His Son to me, that I might*

spread among the Gentiles the good tidings concerning Him... immediately, without seeking human advisors... I set off.”^[269]

The superiors must explain these teachings to the students and place before their eyes the example which Jesus Himself has given! I’m just saying that Jesus is jealous for those He has chosen for himself, and so is the Institute. The Institute cannot count on one who is uncertain about his detachment from his family. If not today, then sometime in the future, he will surely return home.

The words of the Lord, “*No one can serve two masters,*”^[270] apply quite well here. Remember those two persons in the Gospel who wanted to follow Jesus, but had something to do first? They were not asking for much; in fact, their requests seem quite reasonable. One wanted to go and bury his father, and the other wanted to put all of his affairs in order.^[271] But Jesus did not accept these reasons for delay. He is the master; if He calls us, He wants us to obey as we must always obey God. If we have faith, we know that He will take care of those we leave behind, and much better than we could.

This detachment from our dear ones, this sacrifice of legitimate and holy affections is difficult and sorrowful. But how can we expect to participate in the divine apostolate if we cannot, in imitation of Jesus, recognize the beauty and the necessity of this sacrifice? There has never been a son who loved his mother more than Jesus did, but when He met her on the way of the cross, as desolate as she was, He passed her by; He continued on His way to the place of martyrdom, because that was the will of the Father, because that was required for our salvation. Jesus certainly was not indifferent to the pain and tears of His mother, but beyond that pain and those tears, He saw the glory of God, the salvation of millions and millions of souls which His sacrifice would bring about.

If God calls, nothing human can keep us from responding to His invitation. If Jesus wants us for Himself, no human love can supersede His love. Before being of benefit to the non-Christians, our sacrifice will be of benefit to our dear ones. To give up our vocation out of love for our family is to betray them and ourselves!

There are also those who try to talk us out of our vocation, “*...to make a man’s enemies those of his own household.*”^[272] Those who would provide obstacles to our vocation are enemies of our soul and the souls of those we must save. They embrace us now so as to profit from us later, and then they forget us. It’s sad, but it is a story that is repeated all the time. It is the revenge of heaven against those who, having been called by the Lord to His divine service prefer their family to Him, and choose their family over the interests of souls. The Institute must strictly demand this spirit of detachment from the family on the part of its students. The one who cannot understand it, who believes that he has a duty to his family because they are poor and in need of assistance, should go on home, because his is not a true vocation.

Obedience: Its Necessity

The superiors must be even more demanding in the area of obedience and submission. The disobedient are proud, and God does not know what to do with proud people. The work of proud and arrogant priests is never blessed by God.

The spirit and practice of obedience must be instilled most diligently and assiduously in the aspirants and all those who are preparing for the missions. Great importance is given to the virtue of purity, and rightly so; the one who is even suspected of failings in this regard is declared unfit for the priestly and missionary life. The same importance, if not more, must be given to obedience. Proud persons, rebellious to submission, difficult to

guide, easily critical of superiors, are not fit for the missionary life, even if they have other good qualities.

The primary cause, maybe the only cause, for the failure of a vocation in the missions is pride, which is generally manifested by a lack of submission.

Obedience is the sure and certain sign of a good spirit in a community. The students must know that only when a soul is submissive to the superiors can he be certain of his own vocation, and sure that he is being led by the spirit of God. To leave the track of obedience is to go off the road, toward certain ruin. Why? Because the one who withdraws from obedience withdraws from grace. Can there be a worse fate than that? What are we without grace? This doctrine does not come from me: "*My son, he who endeavors to withdraw himself from obedience withdraws himself from grace.*"^[273]

I repeat, we must be most demanding in the area of obedience. The students who do not obey in small things today will rebel against greater things tomorrow. We must train the will of our students, and this done through discipline and obedience. If you discipline water, you get irrigation and electricity; if you discipline fire, you get steam. By disciplining the will of the saints, the Church has received radiant and fervent forces for the apostolate.

Our Institute, like an army prepared to do battle, desires to offer the Church a highly ordered band of priests and brothers to contribute to the holy triumph of the cross. To send proud and disobedient men into our missions is to allow our ranks to be disrupted and our company to be destroyed. What would the Institute become if it could not count on the absolute obedience of its members; if a superior or bishop could not find in their missionaries the same sense of obedience and self-denial that earthly commanders find in their soldiers?

It saddens me deeply to see certain orders ignored, to notice how difficult it is for some to make small acts of obedience, to see the spirit in which the directives of the superiors are sometimes received. The superiors themselves cannot close their eyes when these and other lacks occur: they have the duty to call the transgressors in and confront their failing face to face. You need never compromise with the disobedient, the complainers, the proud; but with loving firmness you must persuade them, and instill in them the spirit of obedience and submission. You must teach them that only if they try to be obedient can they hope to complete their preparation for the apostolate in the best way.

I would ask our students to meditate upon these words: “*Let your offering be obedience, rather than the fool’s offering of sacrifice, for they know not how to keep from doing evil... Does the Lord so delight in holocausts and sacrifices as in obedience to the command of the Lord? Obedience is better than sacrifice and submission than the fat of rams.*”^[274] Obedience comes first, and then piety will also be sincere. The sacred text continues: “*For a sin like divination is rebellion, and presumption is the crime of idolatry.*”^[275] To resist the commands of God, which come through the means of obedience, is like the sin of idolatry or divination, in which the disobedient pretends, in a certain sense, to divine and decide what would be better to do: God’s will or his own. Falling into a kind of idolatry, he adores and does his own will.

These words are addressed especially to our students, the chosen disciples of the Lord, and they contain the whole program for religious life: “*None of those who cry out, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.*”^[276] The disobedient might say: “Lord, it’s true that I don’t much like to obey, but I want to be a missionary anyway, and I want to save many souls.” “No,” the Lord says, “if you are not obedient, your vocation is built on sand.” “*Many will plead with me, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name... and did we not do many miracles in your name as well? Then I will declare to them solemnly: I never knew you. Out of my sight, you evildoers!?*”^[277] Thus, let our vocations be founded on the solid rock

of holy obedience, and then our Blessed Lord will recognize us as His own. There can be no illusions in this matter: the one who wants to be a missionary must be humble and obedient. Let the one who does not want to understand this remain where he is: the missions are not for him.

I said above that the virtue of obedience must be treated just as strictly as the virtue of purity. In this regard, I want to make another reflection, which is also an instruction. Do we want to be sure about the virtue of a student? Then we should observe his obedience. The one who is obedient is humble, and the one who is truly humble is certainly pure. We need to meditate upon these serious words:

“He who does not cheerfully and freely submit himself to his superior reveals that his flesh is not as yet perfectly obedient to him, but often times kicks and murmurs against him. Learn therefore quickly to submit to your superior, if you desire to keep your own flesh under the yoke... As yet you love yourself too inordinately, therefore you are afraid to resign yourself wholly to the will of others.”^[278]

This teaching, which the author puts in the mouth of the Lord, is very precious: it teaches us the way to subjugate our senses more perfectly, and at the same time it shows us how difficult it is for the disobedient to remain pure. The educators of our missionaries should keep this especially in mind, lest they send on to the missions men who will cause pain for the Church in the future.

Obedience: Its Characteristics

Our superiors must make sure that they teach the students not only to obey because of faith, as I have described above, but that their obedience is also *ready, complete, and affectionate*.

We must demand that the students become accustomed to obey with promptness and dispatch: with no hesitation, discussion, or

observations. St. Augustine says: “*The Lord does not like obedience which is slow and conditional, with questions about why, how and when the command has been given.*” We can see how Jesus went without hesitation to Jerusalem, where He knew He would face His passion and death. “*Their mood was one of wonderment, while that of those who followed was fear.*”^[279] The Blessed Virgin, upon hearing the will of God that she was destined to be the mother of the Savior, responded immediately: “*I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me as you have said.*”^[280] St. Bernard, describing the obedience of the Madonna, says that she obeyed “*with full will, a smiling countenance and quick action.*” St. Joseph, receiving the order to leave in the middle of the night, obeyed without excuses or complaining: “*When he awoke, he did as the angel told him.*”^[281]

We must obey in *everything*, not only in those things that suit us; we must obey well, in every respect. Sometimes one can accept a position most willingly, but cannot tolerate instructions and observations on how to fulfill it well: this is not an exercise of virtue but of self-love. We must be obedient to *everyone*, not just to those superiors whom we consider wise. The one who has this preference is obeying the man, not God. Fr. Du Ponte says: “The obedience of one who submits to one better than himself but not to one who is less perfect is suspect; just as the faith of one who kneels before a cross of gold but not before a cross of wood is suspect.”

Our students should look at the way obedience was practiced in the Holy Family: Jesus was infinitely more holy and perfect, but He obeyed Mary and Joseph and never commanded anyone; the Virgin commanded the most perfect of the three and obeyed the least perfect; the one who commanded both Jesus and Mary was Joseph, the last in terms of perfection and sanctity.

Finally, we must obey with holy joy, with affection: “*God loves a cheerful giver.*”^[282] Obedience in difficult and painful things cannot be done happily if

it is not inspired by faith and love. It is love which renders the sacrifices of our vocation lighter and even desirable. The same is true of obedience. If I see Jesus in my superiors, I willingly obey them out of love for Him, who was obedient unto death on a cross out of love for me: "*He loved me and gave himself for me.*"^[283]



* All citations have been taken in their entirety from the first publication of *Apostolic Virtues* published in Detroit, Michigan in 1996.

^[1] Can. 1350. 2.

^[2] Chinese Plenary Council: Art. 18.

^[3] *The Imitation of Christ*, Book III, Chapter 32.

^[4] *Ps* 116.

^[5] *Rom* 10:14-15, 17.

^[6] *Jn* 17:12.

^[7] *Mt* 26:41.

^[8] *Phil* 3:20.

^[9] *Acts* 6:4.

^[10] *Ps* 34:6.

^[11] *Summa Theol.* II^a, II^{ae}; Q 184: a, 8.

^[12] *The Interior Life: Exhortation to Priests*.

^[13] *Summa Theol.* II^a, II^{ae}; Q 184: a, 4.

^[14] *Ibid.* a, 8.

^[15] Book 4, Chap. 5.

^[16] *Gal* 2: 20.

^[17] *De sacerdotio*, Book VI.

^[18] Perrand: L'oratoire de France au 17 et au 19 siecle.

^[19] *The Imitation of Christ*, Book II, Chapter 9.

^[20] *I Cor* 6: 20.

^[21] *Col* 1: 24-25.

[22] *Phil* 2: 15.

[23] *I Cor* 9: 27.

[24] *2 Tim* 2: 5.

[25] Arvisenet: *Memorale Vitae Sacerdotalis*.

[26] *Mk* 16: 15.

[27] *I Cor* 1: 21.

[28] *Acts* 6: 4.

[29] *Tit* 2: 7.

[30] Homily 40.

[31] *Acts* 4: 12.

[32] *I Cor* 1: 23-24.

[33] *I Cor* 2: 2-5.

[34] *Phil* 1: 21.

[35] *Mk* 6: 20.

[36] *I Cor* 9: 22.

[37] *Ibid* v. 19.

[38] St. Thomas Aquinas.

[39] History of the Foreign Missionaries of Paris.

[40] Today (1964) in the Church there are 16 missionary societies without vows, but with a perpetual oath which binds their members for life to the society and the service of the missions.

[41] *Sirach* 31: 9.

[42] *Mt* 8: 20.

[43] *Mt* 19: 27.

[44] *Lk* 6: 40.

[45] Msgr. Laouenan.

[46] *I Cor* 9: 16.

[47] *Eph* 4: 1.

[48] *2 Cor* 6: 3.

[49] *I Pt* 4: 8.

[50] *Phil* 1: 24-25.

[51] *I Tim* 5: 1.

[52] *Rom* 12: 10.

[53] *Eph* 4: 3-4.

^[54] *Rom* 12: 10.

^[55] *Proverbs* 27: 5.

^[56] *Lk* 11: 17.

^[57] *Lk* 6: 36.

^[58] *Mt* 11: 29.

^[59] St. Augustine.

^[60] *Jn* 15: 15.

^[61] *Ps* 103: 14, 8.

^[62] *Lk* 18: 11.

^[63] *Gal* 5: 15.

^[64] *Heb* 13:17.

^[65] *Lk* 10: 16.

^[66] *Rom* 12: 10, 16.

^[67] *Rom* 12: 21.

^[68] *Mt* 12: 25.

^[69] *Prov* 18: 19.

^[70] *Gal* 6: 2.

^[71] *Phil* 1: 21.

^[72] *Rom* 8: 9.

^[73] *Mt* 5: 3.

^[74] *Mt* 19: 21.

^[75] *Lk* 14: 33.

^[76] *Mt* 10: 9.

^[77] *Mt* 19: 27.

^[78] *I Tim* 6: 5.

^[79] *Ibid* 6: 8.

^[80] *Ibid* 6: 9-10.

^[81] *Ibid* 6: 11-12.

^[82] Collect S.C. de P.F. p.152.

^[83] *Ibid.* p. 613 (25-5-81).

^[84] *I Cor* 2: 4.

^[85] *Acts* 6: 4.

^[86] Primum Conc. Sin. Art. 159.

^[87] *I Tim* 6: 9.

^[88] *Mt* 6: 19, 21.

^[89] *Lk* 22: 35.

^[90] *Heb* 13: 5.

^[91] *Rom* 5: 19.

^[92] *Heb* 5: 8-9.

^[93] *Heb* 10: 5-7.

^[94] *Heb* 10: 10.

^[95] *Jn* 8: 42.

^[96] *Ps* 19: 6.

^[97] *Jn* 14: 31.

^[98] *Jn* 6: 38.

^[99] *Jn* 8: 28.

^[100] *Jn* 8: 29.

^[101] *Jn* 4: 34.

^[102] *Mt* 5: 18.

^[103] *Jn* 15: 14.

^[104] *Mt* 12: 50.

^[105] *Jn* 10: 18.

^[106] *Lk* 2: 51.

^[107] *Mt* 17: 26.

^[108] *Lk* 22: 42.

^[109] *Mk* 14: 49.

^[110] *Jn* 19: 28.

^[111] *Ps* 69: 22.

^[112] *Jn* 19: 30.

^[113] *Jn* 13: 15.

^[114] *I Jn* 2: 6.

^[115] *Rom* 13: 1.

^[116] *Rom* 13: 2.

^[117] *Lk* 10: 6.

^[118] *Eph* 6: 5-7.

^[119] *Col* 3: 23-24.

[¹²⁰] *I Pt* 2: 13.

[¹²¹] *Jn* 19: 11.

[¹²²] *Mt* 23: 2-3.

[¹²³] *Acts* 9: 6.

[¹²⁴] *Gal* 4: 14.

[¹²⁵] *Heb* 13: 17ff.

[¹²⁶] *I Pt* 1: 22.

[¹²⁷] *Can.* 198.

[¹²⁸] *Can.* 335.

[¹²⁹] *Can.* 627, 2.

[¹³⁰] *Phil* 2: 3.

[¹³¹] *The Imitation of Christ*: Book 1, Chapter 9.

[¹³²] *I Pt* 5: 1-3.

[¹³³] *Wis* 32: 1.

[¹³⁴] *Gen* 3: 1.

[¹³⁵] Ad Archiep. Turon. 1888.

[¹³⁶] *Lk* 20: 16.

[¹³⁷] *Ex* 16: 8.

[¹³⁸] *Lk* 5: 5.

[¹³⁹] *Jn* 21: 3.

[¹⁴⁰] *Lk* 5: 6.

[¹⁴¹] *Jn* 21: 6.

[¹⁴²] *Phil* 2: 8-9.

[¹⁴³] *Rom* 8: 28.

[¹⁴⁴] *Jn* 15:20; 16: 33.

[¹⁴⁵] *Mk* 10: 38.

[¹⁴⁶] *Phil* 2: 8.

[¹⁴⁷] *Jn* 12: 24.

[¹⁴⁸] *Col* 1: 24-25.

[¹⁴⁹] *Acts* 9: 16.

[¹⁵⁰] *I Cor* 2: 2.

[¹⁵¹] *Phil* 1: 12-14.

[¹⁵²] *I Thess* 2: 1-2.

[¹⁵³] *I Pt* 4: 13-14.

[¹⁵⁴] *Jn* 16: 33; *Mt* 16: 18.

[¹⁵⁵] Office of the Common of Apostles.

[¹⁵⁶] *Heb* 9: 22.

[¹⁵⁷] *Jn* 15: 13.

[¹⁵⁸] *Jn* 21: 15.

[¹⁵⁹] *I Cor* 4: 9.

[¹⁶⁰] *2 Cor* 12: 10.

[¹⁶¹] *Gal* 6: 14.

[¹⁶²] *2 Cor* 12: 10.

[¹⁶³] *Acts* 20: 24; *Rom* 8: 37; *2 Tim* 2: 10; *Phil* 4: 13.

[¹⁶⁴] *Rom* 8: 17-18.

[¹⁶⁵] *Jn* 12: 26.

[¹⁶⁶] *Jn* 6: 68.

[¹⁶⁷] *Mt* 16: 25.

[¹⁶⁸] Bishop in Bengal.

[¹⁶⁹] Bishop in Burma.

[¹⁷⁰] Bishop of Hong Kong.

[¹⁷¹] In the beginning, our missionaries were often identified with the location of the seminary: Saint Calocero (Ed.).

[¹⁷²] *Acts* 1: 14.

[¹⁷³] *Col* 1: 17.

[¹⁷⁴] *Heb* 11: 27.

[¹⁷⁵] *I Cor* 3: 11.

[¹⁷⁶] *Jn* 8: 26.

[¹⁷⁷] *Spiritual Canticle*; Strophe 29.a.

[¹⁷⁸] *2 Cor* 5: 20.

[¹⁷⁹] *Ex* 32: 10.

[¹⁸⁰] Conference to the Clergy.

[¹⁸¹] *The Imitation of Christ*: Book 3, Chapter 32.

[¹⁸²] *Lk* 10: 41-42.

[¹⁸³] *Mt* 3: 2.

[¹⁸⁴] *Acts* 2: 38.

[¹⁸⁵] *Jn* 15: 5.

[¹⁸⁶] In Hom. 1 *De Precatione*.

[¹⁸⁷] *Ps* 119: 92.

[¹⁸⁸] *Ps* 10: 5.

[¹⁸⁹] *Mt* 6: 6.

[¹⁹⁰] *Lk* 9: 18.

[¹⁹¹] *Mk* 1: 35.

[¹⁹²] *Mk* 6: 31.

[¹⁹³] *Mk* 1: 35.

[¹⁹⁴] *Ps* 119: 147-148.

[¹⁹⁵] *Monita ad Missionarios*.

[¹⁹⁶] *I Cor* 7: 25.

[¹⁹⁷] *Mt* 19: 12.

[¹⁹⁸] *Lk* 4: 1.

[¹⁹⁹] *Rom* 12: 11, 12.

[²⁰⁰] *Eph* 3: 16-19.

[²⁰¹] *Jude* 20.

[²⁰²] *Col* 1: 24.

[²⁰³] *Col* 1: 24.

[²⁰⁴] *Mt* 16: 24.

[²⁰⁵] *2 Cor* 4: 12.

[²⁰⁶] *Monita ad Missionarios*.

[²⁰⁷] *Heb* 13: 8.

[²⁰⁸] *The Imitation of Christ*: Book 1, Chap. 25.

[²⁰⁹] *Lk* 9: 23.

[²¹⁰] *I Thess* 5: 22.

[²¹¹] *Eph* 5: 15, 16.

[²¹²] *I Cor* 2: 2.

[²¹³] *Lk* 1: 17.

[²¹⁴] *Jn* 10: 37.

[²¹⁵] *Mt* 5: 13.

[²¹⁶] *Mt* 5: 16.

[²¹⁷] *2 Cor* 6: 3-4.

[218] *I Cor* 8: 13.

[219] *I Pt* 5: 3.

[220] *Phil* 3: 17.

[221] *Tit* 2: 7-8.

[222] *Acts* 9: 16.

[223] *Phil* 3: 10.

[224] *2 Cor* 4: 10, 11.

[225] *Gal* 2: 19.

[226] *Gal* 5: 24.

[227] *2 Cor* 1: 5.

[228] *Ibid.* 7: 4.

[229] *The Imitation of Christ*: Book 2, Chapter 12.

[230] *Mt* 16: 25.

[231] *Mt* 11: 29-30.

[232] *Acts* 5: 41.

[233] *Lk* 6: 23.

[234] *Lk* 24: 26.

[235] St. Gregory: Hom. 25 in Ev.

[236] *Jn* 15: 16.

[237] *Is* 50: 5.

[238] *Lk* 9: 62.

[239] *Mt* 10: 22.

[240] *I Cor* 15: 58.

[241] Editorial comment in the 1964 Italian Edition.

[242] *Jn* 17: 12.

[243] *I Mac* 9: 10.

[244] The term “apostolic schools” refers to what we would call minor seminaries or high school seminaries. [Ed.]

[245] *Mt* 21: 3.

[246] CJC 647.

[247] Seneca: Ep. 7.

[248] *Col* 3: 5, 9; *Rom* 13: 14.

[249] *Jn* 8: 47.

[250] *Lk* 14: 26, 33.

[251] *Lk* 9: 23.

[252] *I Mac* 3: 56.

[253] *Jn* 15: 13.

[254] *Acta Eccl. Mediolan.* P. 5^a: De Seminariis.

[255] *Esprit de M. Olier.*

[256] *De Considerat:* Book 4, Chap. 4.

[257] *Conc. Mediol.* P. V. a. 3. De examin. Ordin.

[258] CJC 125, 1367.

[259] “Haerent animo”: Exhortation to Catholic Clergy.

[260] *Ps* 36: 10.

[261] *Ps* 34: 6.

[262] *Col* 3: 3.

[263] *Lk* 14: 27, 33.

[264] *Mt* 5: 29.

[265] *Jn* 15: 5.

[266] *Lk* 9: 62.

[267] *Mt* 10: 35, 37; *Lk* 9: 60.

[268] *Acts* 5: 29.

[269] *Gal* 1: 15-16.

[270] *Mt* 6: 24.

[271] *Lk* 9: 59-61.

[272] *Mt* 10: 36.

[273] *The Imitation of Christ:* Book 3; Chap. 13.

[274] *Eccl* 4: 17; *I Sam* 15: 22.

[275] *I Sam* 15: 23.

[276] *Mt* 7: 21.

[277] *Mt* 7: 22-24.

[278] *The Imitation of Christ:* Book 3, Chap. 13.

[279] *Mk* 10: 32.

[280] *Lk* 1: 38.

[281] *Mt* 1: 24.

[282] *2 Cor* 9: 7.

^[283] *Gal 2: 20.*