

*E*choes of the Company



Meeting of the Visitatrixes

JULY
AUGUST
2018
No. 4



50th anniversary of the death of Mother Guillemin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Letter of August 15, 2018.....	182
Sister Kathleen Appler, Superioress General	

VISITATRIXES' INTER-ASSEMBLIES MEETING

Opening of the Visitatrixes' Inter-Assemblies Meeting.....	185
Sister Kathleen Appler, Superioress General	

Discerning, Accompanying.....	194
Father Henri Aubert, SJ	

Missionary momentum - mission <i>Ad Gentes</i>	210
Father Tomaž Mavrič, Superior General	

Fostering a culture of encounter.....	217
Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Archbishop of Manilla	

Reflections on the administration of goods in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life according to canon law.....	229
Brother Jean-Paul Marsaud, Son of Charity	

Closing of the Visitatrixes' Inter-Assemblies Meeting.....	262
Sister Kathleen Appler, Superioress General	

Letter of August 15, 2018

*“We acclaim you, Our Lady,
Mary, Blessed Virgin clothed with the sun,
crowned with stars, the moon under your feet,
salvation dawns for us through you.”*

Dear Sisters,

*The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with us
forever!*

On this day when we celebrate the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the words of this song inspired by the Book of Revelation spontaneously spring to my lips. They will be repeated by the thousands of pilgrims who will come to our Chapel and other shrines throughout the world to *acclaim Mary, the Blessed Virgin, Our Lady*.

United with you as I contemplate Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, I write to wish each one of you a very happy feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. I also want to express my appreciation for the many messages that I received for August 15th. I always read them with great joy and in gratitude lift up my prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for all the great things He does through you. Thank you for sharing your life and your service of the least fortunate.

Today, I invite you to meditate on the richness of this feast and the prospect of hope that it opens up for us. Our world and those whom we meet so need this. *Salvation dawns for us through Mary.*

Allow me to recall the words of Pope Francis from the Angelus on August 15, 2017, which express my thoughts on this day well. He said, *“Celebrating Mary Most Holy assumed into Heaven, we would once again wish her to bring to us, to our families, to our communities, this immense gift, that unique Grace that we must always seek first and above all the other graces that we also have at heart: the grace that is Jesus Christ! By bearing Jesus, Our Lady also brings to us a new joy full of meaning; she brings us a new ability to traverse with faith the most painful and difficult moments; she brings us the capacity of mercy, in order to forgive each other, to understand each other and to support each other.”*

Your letters and messages do not lack concrete examples of these painful moments due to tensions and conflicts, natural disasters, and political and social conditions that produce violence and exacerbate poverty, which your local communities live in communion with those who are most poor in many countries. Yes, may the Blessed Virgin Mary grant you a new ability to traverse these difficult moments with faith and to engender hope, confident in her maternal presence, in these critical situations. I continue to pray with gratitude for all of you facing these very adverse circumstances and who strive to meet the challenges related to migration and human trafficking. Let us also give thanks to God for the pathways of peace and reconciliation that seem to be opening in certain countries and for the hope that they inspire in the hearts of those who live there.

During the Visitatrixes’ Inter-Assemblies Meeting, we all felt the presence of the Virgin Mary and her powerful intercession that obtained many graces from her Son to help us look confidently and realistically at the Company today and begin to trace out paths of hope for tomorrow through remote preparation for the upcoming

Letter of August 15, 2018

ing Assemblies. I know that the Visitatrixes have already had an opportunity to share with you something of their experience.

Another sign of hope... After a period of prayerful preparation in which the Sisters of the Provinces of Naples and of San Vincenzo-Italia actively participated, I had the joy of officially creating the new Province of San Vincenzo-Italia on July 18 in a spirit of sisterly communion and under the loving eyes of Mary on the anniversary of her first apparition to Saint Catherine Labouré. Let us thus especially entrust the Sisters of this new Province to her and pray through her intercession for all the Provinces that are currently involved in a process of reconfiguration.

Finally, I invite you to hold in prayer two upcoming events for the Vincentian Family: the Vincentian film festival “Finding Vince 400”, which will take place October 18-21 at Castel Gandolfo, and the International Conference of the Famvin Homeless Alliance, which will take place in Rome November 26-28, 2018, and bring together approximately one hundred participants from across the world.

To conclude, I again quote Pope Francis last August 15. *“Mary is the model of virtue and of faith. Today, in contemplating her Assumption into Heaven, the final fulfillment of her earthly journey, we thank her because she always precedes us in the pilgrimage of life and faith. She is the first disciple. And we ask her to keep us and support us; that we may have a strong, joyful and merciful faith; that she may help us to be saints, to meet with her, one day, in Heaven.”* This is my wish for each one of us.

Affectionately united with you in prayer,

Sister Kathleen APPLER
Daughter of Charity

Opening of the Visitatrixes’ Inter-Assemblies Meeting

May 14, 2018

Good morning, Sisters and Father Bernard. It is a joy to formally open this meeting. You are here from the fifty-one Provinces and the Region of Albania, in order to participate in this Inter-Assemblies Meeting. It is evident from my visits with each one of you that the Holy Spirit has showered you with abundant graces during your retreat, which Father Bernard so carefully prepared. I take this opportunity to thank him for all that he has offered to us already and for his accompaniment and prayerful support in the days ahead.

I also take this moment to thank the members of the Preparatory Commission who have done so much to organize this meeting: General Councillors, Sister Françoise Petit and Sister Iliana Suarez; Visitatrixes, Sister Mary Ann Evidente (from the Province of St. Louise de Marillac – Asia) and Sister Aleksandra Wydra (from the Province of Cameroon); and Sister Micheline Tremblay of the Sisters of Holy Cross, our facilitator.

In addition, I thank the General Councillors who are coordinating the liturgy, Sister Hanna Cybula and Sister Maria Teresa Mueda; Sister Marie Odile Herbet,

O
*Opening of
the
Visitatrixes’
Inter-
Assemblies
Meeting*

Opening of the Visitatrixes' Inter-Assemblies Meeting

Secretary General and the secretary for this meeting; our Sister translators; and our Sisters in the control booth.

I owe a debt of gratitude to each of the General Councillors and all of the Sisters of the Mother House who have already done so much for us and will continue to meet our every need. Thank you one and all!

And you, my Sisters, you have come from every continent. For some of you, this is your first experience in an international leadership group of this magnitude; others have had similar opportunities prior to this one. Twenty-eight of you were present with us at our 2015 General Assembly, either as Visitatrixes or as delegates; twenty of you joined us at the session for newly-designated Visitatrixes in February 2017. Others of you are less than one year into your term as Visitatrix. Several of you were installed very recently. In fact, Sister Delia Cabrera Godoy, from the Province of Central America, was just installed on April 11. I am grateful to you for your generous acceptance of your designation by the General Council to serve as the Visitatrix of your Province. You are in my prayers daily!

It is a grace to gather during the Easter Season. It is a time characterized by rejoicing and “Alleluia’s” as well as by the assurance of the unconditional love of God for us.

The Gospel we just heard spoke directly of Jesus’ love and His desire that those whom He has chosen remain in His love and share it with others. He calls them His chosen friends. He entrusts them with His mission and appoints them to go forth and bear fruit.

Let us take a moment to consider a particular group of Jesus’ friends, namely the women who went to the tomb to anoint His body on Easter morning. I believe that it was their relationship with Christ – their love for Him – developed over His years of ministry that led the women to show their respect for Him. Fol-

lowing the crushing disappointment and sorrow of witnessing the suffering and death of their beloved Teacher and Friend, the women boldly set out early in the morning to go to Jesus. Despite their questions and their fear, they courageously sought to be with the Lord whom they loved in order to anoint Him properly. They were not sure what they were going to find at the tomb. Would they be able to overcome the potential obstacles? In very practical terms, would they find a way to roll back the stone at the entrance of the tomb? Would anyone be willing to assist them? The women went forth with determination and hope. You know well what happened next: an angel announced the resurrection, which Jesus’ appearances later confirmed. The resulting joy of these friends of Jesus escapes all words, though “Alleluia” seeks to capture the emotion!

Take a moment with me to enter into the experience of these women... Reflect upon the gift of God’s presence in their lives and of the love they shared with Christ. Place yourselves in the presence of these women. Marvel, contemplate, and in the stillness of your heart, hear the tiny whisper by which God speaks to you (cf. 1 Kings 19:12). What did these women feel as they developed their relationship with Jesus when He announced the Kingdom of God? ... What did they feel as they witnessed His suffering and death? ... en route to the tomb? ... in their attentive observation at the tomb? ... leaving the tomb and taking up the mission of spreading the Good News of Jesus? Relive all this with them ...

Let us continue to accompany these women in their boldness and courage... Remember that these women had just lived through days of suffering and insecurity. Jerusalem was filled with questions and mistrust. However, the women went forth in the early morning hours to find their Lord and to offer their respectful care. They loved Him and wished to manifest that love concretely. As a result of their relationship with Jesus, nothing would sway them from their desire to approach Him nor, confronted with another

Opening of the Visitatrixes' Inter-Assemblies Meeting

reality, from their joy-filled mission. They chose to open their hearts in faith and offered themselves fully.

Two thousand years later, the Lord is calling us to act in a similar way. I am confident that we too want to embrace the gift of Christ's love. To do this, we must be solidly grounded in our God who loves and sustains us. The Lord urges us to be audacious and open, not hesitant or fearful, when confronted with the challenges and possibilities of our day. Pope Francis so often reminds us that we must not remain closed in upon ourselves. Rather, following the example of these women in Scripture, we must remain alert and active, not running away from what we do not understand or makes us uncomfortable. It is important that we open our eyes to the possibilities before us. As the Holy Father advises us in his most recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, "*Far from being timid, morose, acerbic or melancholy... the saints... radiate a positive and hopeful spirit... If we allow the Lord to draw us out of our shell and change our lives, then we can do as Saint Paul tells us: 'Rejoice in the Lord always'*" (GE n° 122). I believe that allowing our questions to lead us forward, just as they led the women to the tomb, will favor our radical response as Daughters of Charity.

Living out our responsibility as Jesus' friends demands boldness in our mission. You and I are encouraged to move beyond our own comfort zone. We must leave behind the fear and indifference that could hold us back. We need to progressively discover the love that Jesus offers us and wishes us to offer to others. We must seek to encounter Jesus personally and communally. We must ask for His help with the challenges before us. Strengthened by His presence and assistance, we can discern with creativity what is best for the good of those who are poor. We must accept that it is unlikely that we will find easy solutions for the questions confronting us. However, as our Inter-Assemblies Document reminds us, "*we are still being called today to live the Gospel in the world in a radical way, following the example of Saint Vincent*

and Saint Louise" (IAD, p. 5). Let us draw from our relationship with Jesus and His friendship. We can trust that our encounters with Him will lead and support us like the women who went to the tomb.

This demands that we live our characteristic virtues of humility, simplicity and charity here and now. Each of us is called to authenticity, transparency, and acknowledgement of our strengths and our limitations. We should recognize that we have much to give to others and to receive from them. We are in need of continuous conversion. We must be able to ask forgiveness as well as offer it. Entering into Christ's love, as did the women disciples, demands that we accept our vulnerability and powerlessness, thus allowing the Lord to be the center of our lives. He ultimately controls all. Saint Louise's life bears witness that she understood this concept well. Like her, we must be women of deep prayer in close relationship with God.

At the beginning of this meeting, we can count on St. Louise and the women disciples to teach us all this – and more! These women knew how to “remain with” Jesus, trusting in His love, asking the difficult questions and not losing faith or hope. They opened their hearts to Him and received His love in return. The women had the courage to set out at dawn with their precious oils to anoint our Lord's body because their hearts had already been anointed with His love. Trusting the angel, they again set out to pass the message on to the disciples and participate in the mission. They didn't hold back. In a similar way, as we solemnly recalled during the prayer vigil last week, Saint Louise turned to the Lord in a time of darkness and confusion and received a “light” that guided her forward in a mission and assured her of God's loving presence. Our Company of women “coming and going” was born from our Foundress' resolute response. May we continue to learn from these holy women who remained in the Lord's love, went to Him by the Cross and spread the good news of His love in word and act.

Opening of the Visitatrixes' Inter-Assemblies Meeting

In these upcoming days, we gather to enter more fully into Christ's loving presence and accompaniment of us in the Little Company. This is a strategic moment in our history. For the next two weeks:

- We will engage in mutual formation for your mission as Visitatrix. We will explore your service of discernment, accompaniment, animation of missionary momentum, and promotion of communion in your respective Provinces;
- We will dialogue about the progress we have made in living out the decisions of the 2015 General Assembly and the challenges in the Inter-Assemblies Document;
- We will prepare for the 2021 General Assembly, including the consultation for the number of General Councillors to be elected there and the criteria for this choice, in compliance with Statute 49a.

I am confident that these next fourteen days will be a sacred journey for each of us.

You will find that your questions and remarks in response to the preparatory questionnaire have directed our planning. You clearly expressed your concern about the need for quality initial and on-going formation. It is evident that we want to offer Vincentian formation that:

- will give us both the solidity and flexibility we need to live our charism authentically, enthusiastically and prophetically;
- respects all cultures and all stages in life of the Sisters;
- encourages us to radically live our Charter.

We also heard your request for help with a creative and effective revision of works that is sensitive to the needs of those who are poor today as well as to the capabilities of our Sisters who try to meet these needs. Your questionnaires indicate that at times you

experience internationality as a challenge, while at other times it is clearly a gift. This reality, which we should not be afraid to address, will surface in our conversations. Together, we will help each other live out our Vincentian values.

You have also expressed your hope nurtured by the ideals and enthusiasm that our Sisters young in vocation bring to the Company. You share your gratitude for the witness of the prayerful fidelity of our older and sick Sisters. You sense that the Sisters are trying to live even closer to those who are poor, following the invitation in our Inter-Assemblies Document, thanks to openness of heart and sometimes a change of mentality. You further point out the graces we have received as a Company as we strive for deeper communion with other members of the Vincentian Family. Additionally, you appreciate the collaborative work being pursued with the laity. You encourage us to see our insertion in the world at this time as having the potential of a mustard seed: the smallest of all seeds, it produces a huge plant, touching many with God's goodness. The key to all is once again our willingness to be women of prayer who offer ourselves unreservedly to the calls of those who are poor.

Because of your mission, you know first-hand the realities lived by your Sisters and those whom they serve. You know their joys and the hardships that they encounter daily. I congratulate you and your Provincial Councils for the work you are doing, and it is my hope that these two weeks will give you the impetus to not only pursue it, but to dare to go even further. These signs of God's action give us the confidence to continue moving forward. I have personally witnessed your *Boldness of Charity for a New Missionary Momentum* through your openness to listening to the Holy Spirit and our Founders, as well as to listening to and learning from one another. I see the creative efforts you are making to network with each other and with the various branches of the Vincentian Family. Let us implore the help of our Lord and His Blessed Mother to further hone our skills in these areas. This

Opening of the Visitatrixes' Inter-Assemblies Meeting

attitude of solidarity and concrete collaboration will enhance our mission today and beyond. May we allow the Lord to work with us and through us for the good of those who are poor.

Despite a busy schedule, please take time for quality prayer and implore the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This will help us discern together the appropriate Vincentian responses in our digital age. We have a responsibility to find methods that transform hearts and minds and bring the voices of our Sisters and of those who are poor to people in positions of authority whose decisions affect the respect and quality of life of those whom we serve. During these upcoming days, listen and learn in order to assist one another and to plan services with compassion and realism.

I further encourage you during our meeting to draw upon your experiences - your successes and joys - and seek additional ways to collaborate with one another. Consciously build relationships and develop far-sighted solutions that foster unity, cooperation, and accompaniment. We can be living examples of the “culture of encounter” that Pope Francis calls us to personify.

I thank you in advance for your willingness to energetically, creatively, and boldly grapple with the difficult issues that may surface. May the women who bravely went to the tomb, St. Louise, our Sisters who have walked before us, and one another inspire us during these two weeks. It is with confidence that I urge us to dare to move forward with determination, joy, and commitment. God asks everything of us, but He also promises to give us everything. May the resolutions which will be made at this encounter testify to the Sisters in our Provinces and to those who are poor to our readiness to serve creatively according to the Vincentian charism in a spirit of communion and solidarity.

Fifty years ago, Mother Guillemin told us that the “*crowning aim of the coming General Assembly, and of the tremendous work which we have all undertaken in order that it may be fruitful [is]*

[n]othing else but this: that the Company of the Daughters of Charity, having examined anew their way of life in the light of the teachings of the Gospel, should make the necessary readjustments in order to resemble more closely their Divine Master, Christ; and that the Company should thus become, by each of its members and each of its Houses, a sign of God among the Poor...” (Mother Guillemin, January 1, 1968). This aim directs us still today. As we seek to concretize this morning’s Gospel and remain in Jesus’ love as His friends, let us dare to respond anew with boldness, creativity, and openness.

I am convinced that there is no one better to aid us in exploring the challenges before us and in implementing our decisions than the Blessed Virgin. In her apparitions and assistance throughout the world, she has expressed her love for every race and nation. We witness the evidence of this love in particular here at the Mother House in the continuous flow of pilgrims who, with the enthusiasm of the women who went to the tomb of Jesus and the deep faith of St. Louise, come to the foot of the altar with their needs. As our loving Mother, Mary draws us into union with each other through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us always implore her intercession. May the Mother of God present us to her Son – and then, may we have the courage to whatever He tells us to do!

Sister Kathleen APPLER
Daughter of Charity

Discerning, Accompanying

INTRODUCTION

Questions put forward for these two days of the meeting

“How do we discern and come to know God’s will? Discernment and decision-making, spiritual discernment, procedures for spiritual and apostolic discernment? Communal discernment? How do we support Sister Servants to help them to get beyond the ‘organizational and administrative’ dimensions? How do we accompany Sisters during each stage of life?”

A preliminary remark

I am going to speak to you based on the Jesuit experience, naturally within the universal Church. Jesuits are members of the Society of Jesus, known as the Company of Jesus in French, which is why people often call us “the Company”. As for you, we also speak of the “Company”, but the Company of the Daughters of Charity. I therefore think that you will identify with what I will say. The experience is universal enough to help you to move forward in your own reflection as Daughters of Charity.

Pope Francis regularly speaks of discernment. Almost all of his teaching *ex cathedra* mentions it. I would point out four such teachings that mark out the first years of his pontificate and that contribute to its strength and unity.

Evangelii Gaudium, The Joy of the Gospel (apostolic exhortation following the synod on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world, November 24, 2013);

Laudato si’ (encyclical on care for our common home, May 24, 2015);

Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love (apostolic exhortation following the synod on the family, March 19, 2016);

Gaudete et Exsultate, Rejoice and be glad (apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness in today’s world, just published, March 19, 2018).

In each of these texts, Pope Francis brings out for the universal Church a term previously considered specific to Ignatian spirituality: discernment. Obviously, the Pope is Jesuit, but he clearly shows how discernment is not reserved for Jesuits. For him, it is one of the essential leavening agents of ecclesial, apostolic and spiritual life. As you see in reading these titles, each time he makes a connection with joy, a fundamental aspect of every Christian life.

What is discernment?

Here is how Pope Francis presents discernment in his most recent exhortation:

How can we know if something comes from the Holy Spirit or if it stems from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil? The only way is through discernment, which calls for something more than intelligence or common sense. It is a gift which we must implore. If we ask with confidence that the Holy Spirit grant us this gift, and then seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel, then surely, we will grow in this spiritual endowment (Gaudete et Exsultate, 166).

I would like to note three elements about discernment from this short quote.

Discerning, Accompanying

Discernment is the act of choosing between two spirits: the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the devil... This is not new. We saw this already in Saint Augustine, naturally expressed in different terms. “Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.”¹

The Pope distinguishes, on the one hand, “intelligence or common sense” from discernment. In short, reserving the right to add details later, discernment is not leadership...

Finally, discernment is a gift for which to ask “through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel.” Discernment is not a private affair; it presumes at the very least accompaniment, probably work in common. Having said this, I would like to put forward some Ignatian aspects of discernment in three sections: Ignatius’ experience, the experience of his first companions and the experience of community life today.

I. IGNATIUS’ EXPERIENCE

Ignatius experienced discernment gradually. At the Battle of Pamplona on May 19, 1521, the vain honor of the world caused him to lead his companions in arms to resist the enemy, good soldier that he was. However, he was seriously wounded and needed long months of convalescence to heal. He had a lot of free time and, after reading the life of Christ and the lives of the saints, he would stop at length to think. A surprising series of thoughts assailed him.

Thoughts – of worldly exploits that he desired to accomplish, or those of God that came to his imagination – stayed with him for a long time as he turned them over

1. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XIV, chapter 28 (trans. Marcus Dods)

in his mind, and when he grew weary of them, he set them aside to think of other matters.

There was this difference, however. When he thought of worldly matters, he found much delight; but after growing weary and dismissing them, he found that he was dry and unhappy. But when he thought of going barefoot to Jerusalem and eating nothing but herbs and of imitating the saints in all the austerities they practiced, he not only found consolation, but even after they had left him, he remained happy and joyful.²

These alternating inner feelings, which he called “motions”, are at the foundation of discernment. Ignatius understood only gradually over time how they worked. Little by little, he would write the *Spiritual Exercises*, which transcribe them.

Discerning involves having a clear understanding of ‘what is happening within us’. Does something correspond to God’s direction? Does it direct us toward life? Or does it direct us toward what Pope Francis calls the devil? Two spirits fight within us: the spirit that leads to life and the one that leads to death.

We feel the effects in their implementation. We find either consolation (increase in faith, creative energy, joy, etc.) or desolation (loss of the will to live, sadness, weariness, etc.).

It is thus a question of deciding for life, of making a decisive choice, as we say. After having noted inner feelings and discerned the direction they lead us, we mobilize our will to go in the direction of good, of what brings us life. The *Exercises* can take thirty days. A unique experience, in a way, but an experience that in reality can drive an entire life, be it that of an individual or a human group, such as a religious congregation.

2. Saint Ignatius, *A Pilgrim’s Journey*, no. 7-8 (trans. Joseph Tylenda)

II. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST COMPANIONS OF IGNATIUS

I would like to begin with two preliminary remarks.

1. THE FOUNDATION OF THEIR COMPANIONSHIP IS CHRIST.

The life of Ignatius is a great personal adventure: becoming a disciple of Christ whom he discovered in the torments of darkness and illness, as well as in joy and light, this Lord whom he learned to find and love. He could not keep this experience for himself. It led him to encounter others along his journey and to set them ablaze with the same fire.

First, there is the encounter with Christ's desire to save the world. In the *Exercises*, it involves contemplating the Incarnation: love descends from the three Persons of the Trinity to dwell among created beings and save them from the threat of death. This meditation on the mystery of the Incarnation invites each person to place himself at the service of Christ but above all to consider Him a companion on the journey, wherever he is sent to continue His mission. This is the meditation on the Kingdom.

2. THEY HAVE TOTAL FREEDOM.

Ignatius is no longer a human leader like the soldier he was during the siege of Pamplona. In reality, the companions who would follow him did so in full freedom. The *Exercises* are really a school of freedom where each person defines himself before His Creator and Lord without any pressure from an individual or group.

In the *Exercises*, Ignatius is clear.

He who is giving the Exercises should not turn or incline to one side or the other, but standing in the center like a balance, leave the Creator to act immediately with the

*creature, and the creature with its Creator and Lord.*³

Through the *Exercises*, Ignatius did not use the influence he might have over his future companions to pressure them in order to win them over for the service of God in attaching them to the person of Christ. It is moreover interesting to note that the followers would not be called "Iniguistes" or "Ignatians" (as with Dominicans, Franciscans, etc.) but Jesuits, companions of Jesus.

What allowed the first companions and what allows Jesuits still today to hold together as a Body, to support each other? This companionship finds support in several vital attitudes. I will put forward five.

A common understanding

First, there is the reality of a **common understanding**. For each of Ignatius' companions, this common understanding lay in the contemplation of the Incarnation. This same common understanding would impel Ignatius to place himself at the service of the Pope, the surest representative of Christ on earth.

Today, all Jesuits' sense of belonging to the Society of Jesus is rooted in the desire to follow Christ. This desire is like a fire that sets the world ablaze, as it did in the time of Ignatius and his first companions.

A common project

Being together with Christ is not enough; there must be a **common project**, a life project. Every human group, whatever it may be, is led to give itself a rule that defines a way of proceeding and living together. Religious know this as Constitutions or a Rule of Life; lay groups have a Charter or Statutes. Ignatius involved his first companions in drafting the Constitutions of the nascent

3. Saint Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 15 (trans. Elder Mullan)

Discerning, Accompanying

order. They would do this through a process of discernment, in other words, by entrusting the Holy Spirit with the task of working on their hearts so that what they would decide with all their intelligence and will would correspond beyond a shadow of a doubt to the Will of God. So it was that in 1539, the first ten companions would spend three months to prepare for themselves the first basic rules that would drive their group, the first, obedience, being twofold because of obedience in following Christ on the one hand and obedience to one of them on the other hand.

They did not so much choose obedience for greater asceticism, as one of the three pillars of religious life, but for greater availability and effectiveness at the service of the common understanding.

*It is better and more necessary for us to give obedience to one of our Company, so that we might better and more exactly achieve our primary desire of fulfilling the divine will in all things, so that the Company would be preserved more surely, and finally proper provision could be made for whatever matters might arise, both spiritual and temporal.*⁴

A radical decision

To remain firm and steadfast in a Body and to support its other members, a person must make the radical personal decision to commit oneself. To make known that a project is not of purely human origin, a person submits it to Him who is at its origin by an **act of commitment** that may be pronounced officially or not. Whatever its form, a person makes this commitment **before God**. In the *Exercises*, the decision phase takes place in the offering of the meditation on the Kingdom during the second “week” of the *Exercises*.

On the one hand, there are the full and complete will and freedom of the person making the *Exercises*. “*I want and desire, and it*

4. *Deliberation of 1539*, no. 8

is my deliberate determination... to imitate Thee in bearing all injuries and all abuse...” On the other hand, there is complete surrender to the will of the Lord Jesus. “... *if only it be Thy greater service and praise... if Thy most Holy Majesty wants to choose and receive me to such life and state.*”⁵

These two expressions contrast sharply; the synergy of these two wills undergirds our lives.

Fraternity and friendship

The fraternity of the Jesuits, the first companions of Ignatius as those today, is not disincarnated; however, this friendship is only given as a bonus. It is not primary because we do not gather based on sensory, cultural or other affinities. **We did not choose each other; we were chosen.**

It was only later, after many discussions in which disagreements appeared among men different because of age, nationality and character, that Saint Ignatius would call them “friends in the Lord”. The birth of the Company is indeed a story of deep friendship and fidelity. For a long time, this was made evident in countless letters exchanged among companions and sent out from Rome to all the companions throughout the world, a real feat in that time!

Feeling with the Church

I would like to add a fifth point, vital for discernment, in the life of Ignatius and his companions, which is the relationship with the Church.

In Paris as in Rome in the time of Ignatius, the Church was in great difficulty. It was going poorly. This was the time of the Reformation and the Counterreformation. The Church was in a state we

5. *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 98

Discerning, Accompanying

could not imagine today. However, it was precisely that Church and not another one that Ignatius and his companions wanted to follow... because it represents Christ! This was an unquestionable certainty. *Sentire cum ecclesia*, feeling that the Church is the ‘bride of Christ’ and has given birth to them in the faith.

Thus, throughout the spiritual journey of the *Exercises* that they followed with Ignatius, the companions asked for the grace “*not to be deaf to the calls of His divine Son but prompt and diligent to fulfill His most Holy Will.*”⁶ In the same movement, at the end of the process, they want to have “*our mind ready and prompt to obey in all the true spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our Holy Mother the Church Hierarchical.*”⁷

Ignatius spoke of “our Holy Mother the Church Hierarchical”; he did not dream of another Church, the ideal or primitive Church. He was thinking of the visible Church of his time! He would remain in the Church and at its service, working from within on its reform. More than an intellectual conviction, an intimate ‘feeling’ dictated his behavior and what he wanted to share.

III. THE EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY LIFE TODAY

The community, a place of discernment

In the time I have been a Jesuit (46 years already!) in the Company, I have heard two opposite, even conflicting ways of conceiving of community life.

First, there was the mission, and we spoke of “*communitas ad dispersionem*”, “*the community in view of dispersal.*” This is the consequence of what I said about obedience: it is only meaning-

6. *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 91

7. *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 353

ful in that it helps fulfill the mission entrusted to us by Christ through our Superiors. We are thus dispensed by a special bull from the Pope from reciting the office together in order to give us the possibility of being available at any hour of the day or night. Traditionally, community life was minimal. In a way, each Jesuit lived independently even if for reasons of convenience we lived in large communities!

Since the 31st General Congregation, guided by the inspirations of the Second Vatican Council, another way of thinking about community has developed. In this complicated world, community life has become essential in order to support each other and to fully live out the mission to which each one is called. Small local communities were created to live out this mutual support. Nonetheless, fifty years later, six General Congregations later, we are still reflecting on the meaning of community life. It isn’t so easy to really get down to it!

Here is what our most recent General Congregation said about it, in autumn of 2016:

*The Jesuit community is a concrete space in which we live as friends in the Lord. This life together is always at the service of mission, but because these fraternal bonds proclaim the Gospel, it is itself a mission.*⁸

I would like to highlight what the Congregation said: **the community is itself a mission**. In other words, it is essential for the accomplishment of the mission. It is not just a convenient place so that each person can live ‘apart and independently’ but should become a place of discernment. The text from the 36th General Congregation continues,

Communal discernment requires that each of us develop some basic characteristics and attitudes: availability, mo-

8. 36th General Congregation (2016), *Decree 1*, no. 9

Discerning, Accompanying

*bility, humility, freedom, the ability to accompany others, patience, and a willingness to listen respectfully so that we may speak the truth to each other.*⁹

It should offer the world the witness of fraternity today.

*In our world that knows too much division, we ask God to help our communities become “homes” for the Reign of God. We hear the call to overcome what can separate us from one another. Simplicity of life and openness of heart foster such mutual concern.*¹⁰

What is new today is **spiritual conversation**. The most recent General Congregation broadly implemented this practice, which it wishes to promote in the future in the Company as a whole. I should define it.

First, it is clear that **all decisions for the mission presuppose an organized, well-reasoned and systematic discussion**. This is vital and what we find in the development of ‘leadership’ principles that come to us from across the Atlantic and certainly help improve our decision-making. The 2nd Decree of the 36th General Council draws considerable inspiration from leadership principles. As you will see, I will not quote any passages of that decree in my presentation!

Spiritual conversation, however, comes before this way of proceeding. It consists of mutual listening to what moves each person internally, in his consolations and desolations, in a way. It does involve making decisions, but we should not omit this conversation.

It involves listening to what we feel in our deepest selves, daring to express and share it with our brothers (and sisters). It means

9. 36th General Congregation (2016), *Decree I*, no. 11

10. 36th General Congregation (2016), *Decree I*, no. 13

listening to each other, in limitless mutual respect, in which each person expresses himself without the risk of judgement or labeling. It involves trusting that the Spirit of God expresses Himself and makes Himself heard in our words exchanged in an atmosphere of trust. This opens up to spiritual consolation.

I must admit that up to now we Jesuits have been little inclined to this way of proceeding among ourselves even as, paradoxically, we developed it in our mission fields. For example, it is the basis of the pedagogy of Christian Life Communities.

Since the most recent General Congregation, we are developing this method in our congregational meetings and have taken up “spiritual conversation”. I must tell you that it is quite positive and is bearing fruit!

Government

All that I just said about community life restores the specific place to the Superior of a community. Remember what I said at the beginning about the reason for obedience at the service of the mission.

In the Company, we have another dispensation from Rome that allows the Major Superior to receive the “account of conscience”. It involves him meeting each of his companions over whom he has authority at least once a year on the level of the “*for interne*”, that is, what makes up the personal, intimate and spiritual life of the person. Now, according to Canon Law, no Superior, whom-ever he may be, even the Abbot of a monastery, has the right to demand his subject to reveal himself so “naked” before him! Saint Ignatius received the dispensation for himself and his companions after him. This opening of the conscience helps a Superior give his companion the mission that is most appropriate for him with the best conditions possible for fulfilling it. It can happen, of course, that others do not understand the decision a Superior

Discerning, Accompanying

makes, given the secrecy of the account of conscience. However, what makes this possible is that the trust between the brothers rests on absolute fidelity to the Spirit and on tested mutual trust.

This mutual trust builds its foundations on the way that we learn to live community life together, without waiting for the account of conscience!

Collaboration with others

*Of course, this disposition to attend to the Spirit in our relationships must include those with whom we work. Often they teach us this openness to the Spirit. Important discernments concerning mission are often enriched by their voices and their commitment.*¹¹

This collaboration with others to which the 36th General Congregation invited us is obvious, but it has not always been so simple, especially when we were numerous and in a way could live our mission in total autonomy. In reality, it is not because we are fewer that we should collaborate now with others, be they Sisters, diocesan priests or lay people; it is quite simply because it is unimaginable today to suppose we are the only ones capable of carrying out the mission. From this point of view, Vatican II opened many doors, in particular that of collegiality, which still today has great difficulty breaking into the ecclesial world. I think it is a reason that Pope Francis so often returns to the problem of hierarchical clericalism in the Church. We priests often risk thinking that because we have received anointing by the Spirit, we are the only ones to have received ultimate authority.

I would like to highlight two points concerning this collaboration.

Networks

11. 36th General Congregation (2016), *Decree 1*, no. 14

The first point is a practical one, the importance of networks. I quote the 36th General Congregation.

International and inter-sectoral networks are an opportunity to strengthen our identity, as we share our capacities and local engagements in order together to serve a universal mission.

*Collaboration with others is the only way the Society of Jesus can fulfill the mission entrusted to her. This partnership in mission includes those with whom we share Christian faith, those who belong to different religions, and women and men of good will, who, like us, desire to collaborate with Christ's reconciling work.*¹²

Collaborate or partner

However, I think that we should go farther. I was touched by what our Superior General, Father Arturo Sosa, said to us during the celebration marking the creation of the new Jesuit Province of Francophone Western Europe.

The Company will only be able to grow through collaboration with others, by becoming the little collaborating Company. We want to increase collaboration, and we do not want simply to look for other people to cooperate with us and in our works; it does not involve clinging to the prestigious position of those who have the final say.

In terms of collaboration, we are looking for the right words, and each language has the challenge of finding the best expressions for what we are trying to live out. The word 'partners' is probably more appropriate than 'collaborators'.

12. 36th General Congregation (2016), *Decree 1*, no. 35 and 36

Discerning, Accompanying

This change in vocabulary is more than window-dressing. Father Arturo Sosa stressed why we should be partners with others and not just collaborators. “*We as Jesuits want to collaborate generously with others, inside and outside of the Church because we share a mission that does not come from ourselves and is not ‘ours’; it is Christ’s mission! We share it with so many men and women dedicated to the service of others.*”¹³

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude by bringing out three essential aspects of discernment today.

The joy of consolation

I won’t insist, but I remind you nonetheless of what Pope Francis never stops repeating. One simple quote from his most recent apostolic exhortation will suffice.

Hard times may come, when the cross casts its shadow, yet nothing can destroy the supernatural joy that “adapts and changes, but always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved.” That joy brings deep security, serene hope and a spiritual fulfilment that the world cannot understand or appreciate (Gaudete et Exsultate, 125).

Choose and decide

If there is discernment, there is a decision. In the Church, that means that there are men and women - laity, consecrated women

13. Father Arturo Sosa, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, in Namur on July 31, 2017

and men and priests - who commit and who see through to the end what they have chosen. They are not dragged by the hand, not even the hand of God! It is their own freedom and their own will. “*I want and desire to follow the call of Christ,*” we say in a prayer, at a major moment in the progression of the *Spiritual Exercises*. This is what we call the time of “election”, the time of the choice: a human will respond freely and totally to another will, that of Jesus who wants to save the world and who calls as many as possible.

Turn oneself entirely over to the Lord

This is the reason for a third fundamental attitude, that of surrender to God. We are both completely free to do what we want in following Christ and we turn ourselves entirely over to Him because we receive everything from Him; without Him, we are nothing! In the *Exercises*, this is what we call the “prayer to ask for love” (*ad amorem*), which is an astonishing and paradoxical prayer.

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace; that is enough for me.*¹⁴

We often sing this prayer. The Eucharistic Youth Movement has made it its hallmark prayer. However, we do not always know to what it radically commits us... It is both a beginning prayer that sets us on the road and the final prayer of a person who has opened himself fully to his Lord.

Father Henri AUBERT, SJ

14. *Spiritual Exercises*, no. 234

Missionary Momentum – Mission *Ad Gentes*

May 19, 2018

Sister Kathleen, Father Bernard, Sisters, it is wonderful to be here with you this morning in the context of your Inter-Assemblies Meeting. Because you have been reflecting on the Inter-Assemblies Document, *The Boldness of Charity for a New Missionary Momentum*, I would like to share some of my thoughts on that subject.

I will present four points in this brief talk, a couple of which have several subdivisions.

BEING A MISSIONARY IS PART OF OUR CHRISTIAN CALL

In the Gospel for the Solemnity of the Ascension, which we recently celebrated, we read Jesus's final words to his disciples, "*Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). It is our obligation as Christians, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, to go wherever necessary to proclaim the Good News, especially to those who are poor. Pope Francis recognized this responsibility when he encouraged us during the Symposium, "*Love is dynamic; it goes forth from itself. One who loves does not sit in an easy chair looking on, waiting for the advent of a better world, but gets up and goes with enthusiasm and simplicity.*"¹

1. Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Vincentian Family, Rome, 14 October 2017.

BEING A MISSIONARY IS PART OF OUR VINCENTIAN CHARISM

As you know, Saint Vincent promoted missionary work from the very beginning of both his congregations. In spite of hardships and persecutions, he never relented in sending his confreres to Algeria, Tunisia, Poland, Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Madagascar, etc. Some were killed. Others died on route. But still he sent them. It was the same with you.

The first Sisters went to Poland. From the very beginning of your Company, Saint Vincent told the Sisters, "*You have to be ready to go wherever you are told to go, and even to request this, saying, 'I belong neither here nor there, but wherever God wants me to be.'* ... *You are chosen to be at the disposition of Divine Providence.*"²

REINVIGORATING AND RENEWING OUR MISSION- ARY ZEAL – MISSION *AD GENTES*

If we try reinvigorating and renewing our missionary zeal, we will have the opportunity to look at it from a different perspective. For example, if we look from the outside toward the inside of our present reality, we might see how the wider Church is approaching Mission *Ad Gentes*. We will see the ways other Congregations, lay groups, other Christian Churches (Protestant, Orthodox) approach and take into consideration the Mission *Ad Gentes*. We can thus learn from their experiences and adapt them to our own situations. I encourage you to do this, but I also urge you to be open to the missionary vocation of your Sisters. If a Sister offers to go to a mission in your own country or to a mission *Ad Gentes*, I trust you will support her in this request.

2. Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity, C. 25b; cf., Saint Vincent, Conferences to the Daughters of Charity, Volume IX, Conference 1, "Explanation of the Regulations," 31 July 1634.

Missionary Momentum - Mission Ad Gentes

I would like to suggest some areas through which we might promote a greater missionary zeal.

a) Encourage, help nurture, and collaborate with the lay branches of the Vincentian Family in the field of renewing the missionary spirit

You accompany some of them very closely: VMY, AIC, AMM, and MISEVI. You collaborate with others: SSVP, Depaul International, etc. How can you work with them on developing a truly Vincentian missionary spirit?

b) Have groups dedicated to the Missions

In your schools, colleges, and other educational centers, try fostering groups of missionary volunteers to engage them in commitment to a missionary spirit. For example, there are a couple of these groups in the United States. In one of them, the young people give themselves for a year of national volunteer service in a Vincentian ministry. In the other group, the young people offer six weeks of international service during the summer in Kenya and Ethiopia.

c) Consider forming a “Vincentian Family Emergency Relief Organization”

Could we, on the level of the whole Vincentian Family, develop a structure similar to the Red Cross/Red Crescent, through which we would be able to respond immediately to various catastrophes on the international level? The places where such disasters happen are often in territories of the *Mission Ad Gentes*.

d) Deepen our collaboration and common strategies at international institutions

By advocating together at the UN, European Union, and other international institutions, we truly can be voice of the voiceless.

Our representatives at the United Nations already are making great efforts in this regard, but there is surely much more that we could do.

RENEWING OUR MISSIONARY SPIRIT THROUGH THE SYSTEMIC CHANGE APPROACH

I would like to suggest that the spirit of the “systemic change” approach might help us reflect on new, different, perhaps even completely original ways to revive, renew, and bring new momentum to the missionary spirit within each one of us. As I am sure you know, systemic change enables people themselves to engage in the identification of the root causes of their poverty and to develop strategies, including advocacy, to change those structures that keep them in poverty. Systemic change requires transforming attitudes. This term did not exist in Saint Vincent’s time, but I feel certain that he would embrace it wholeheartedly. How might reflection on the systemic change approach help us in the following areas to address this theme of missionary momentum?

a) Begin the fifth century of the Vincentian Charism

Inspired by their virtues, we build on the work of our Confreres and Sisters over the past four centuries. We are not “starting from scratch” to renew the charism within our communities or missions. We can look to those who have gone before us for impetus, adapting their ideas and projects to our time and present situations.

b) Continue with the fruits received from the Vincentian Family Symposium in Rome in October 2017

Those of you who had the opportunity to experience the International Vincentian Family Symposium know what an inspirational event it was. Some 12,000 members of the Vincentian Family gathered to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Saint Vincent’s charism. They came from all branches and 99 countries throughout the world. Many, who were not able to be with us physically,

Missionary Momentum - Mission Ad Gentes

joined us virtually through various mass media. I am convinced that everyone who participated returned home not only happy, but also eager to promote the Vincentian charism.

c) Continue developing our involvement on all levels: international, national, and local with regard to the Vincentian Family Global Initiative on Homelessness (Vincentian Family Alliance)

Introduced at the European Parliament on 29 June 2017 and then publicly launched on 14 October 2017 at the Vincentian Family Symposium, this initiative is truly a way to respond to the needs of many of the most desperate poor. We chose this as one of the four initiatives of the Jubilee Year because all the Vincentian Family branches throughout the world could become involved in it in one way or another. In this way, it really will be a Family undertaking for our “Lords and Masters.”

d) Reflect on the fruits of the pilgrimage of the heart of Saint Vincent de Paul across France and further initiatives for pilgrimages of his relics or those of other Saints and Blessed of the Vincentian Family

The yearlong pilgrimage of Saint Vincent’s heart throughout France was a grace-filled event. The Sisters accompanying this relic have stories of conversions, of people returning to the faith, of deepening of prayer and involvement in the Church, etc. We hope that such experiences might be replicated in other countries, either with other relics of our Founder or with those of our other Saints and Blessed. For example, the Vincentian Family has organized a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Blessed Marta Wiecka in Sniatyn, Ukraine, for eight consecutive years. More than 1,000 pilgrims joined it last May to pray and ask for grace through the intercession of Blessed Marta.

e) Reflect on the Vincentian Film Festival Initiative and other similar initiatives, keeping in mind the revival of the *Ad Gentes* missionary spirit

The Film Festival, to be held outside of Rome in October, is part of the Vincentian Family’s initiative to globalize charity. The idea is to champion 21st-century storytellers and challenge audiences with films that change our perspective on poverty in our communities. We hope to spark imagination by sharing our charism through creativity that is inspired by the Vincentian mission to globalize charity. I would like to see other such creative endeavors developed that might challenge people to respond to the cries of those most in need.

f) Share with the people locally, nationally, and internationally about the Saints, Blessed, and Servants of God of the Vincentian Family

I wrote on this point in my letter of 25 January 2018 to all the members of the Vincentian Family, marking the close of the 400th Jubilee Year and the start of the fifth century of the Vincentian Charism. Without repeating the details here, let me just say that I am convinced that developing devotion to the holy men and women who have gone before us, especially those who have been recognized as such by the Church, will be a sure way of encouraging vocations to the various branches of the Vincentian Family, as well as a means of promoting our mission of charity.

g) Renew the Culture of Vocations

I likewise addressed this topic in the above-mentioned letter of 25 January 2018. We all know that the Church is in need of vocations to the consecrated life in order to respond to the many demands for priests, sisters, and brothers. If we are truly convinced that our way of life is not only worthwhile, but also happy and fulfilling, then we need to spread that message far and wide. If we project a joyful attitude, we will attract others. However,

Missionary Momentum - Mission Ad Gentes

we also must be open to inviting young people to share our lives and our ministries. In this way, they will see that the call to follow Jesus and serve others is normal, something to which they too can commit themselves.

h) Reflect on the areas of communications, media

I believe that we can do much more in our use of mass media and social communication, encouraging systemic change and attracting vocations. The Church and those in consecrated life have lagged behind other institutions in using these modern technological means. I encourage us to do more in this regard.

I hope these few thoughts will help to stimulate your reflection. If every Province developed even just one new, creative way of being missionary, there would be motive to rejoice. At the next Assembly, those initiatives could be shared and their effects would be multiplied a hundredfold.

I ask the Lord Jesus to bless you in this endeavor through the intercession of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Saint Vincent, Saint Louise, Saint Catherine Labouré, and all the other Saints, Blessed, and Venerable of the Vincentian Family. May the Holy Spirit fill you with zeal and strength in your ministries.

Father Tomaž MAVRIČ, CM
Superior General

Fostering a Culture of Encounter

May 22, 2018

It is a joy and honor to be invited to your assembly that dwells on fostering a culture of encounter, both in missionary life and community life. These two aspects inter-penetrate each other. We are also cognizant of the impact of global forces on the theme, but special attention is given to the role of the Visitatrix in fostering such a culture of encounter.

CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER IN ECCLESIAL MISSION

For the first part of the conference, I will give an example of how the culture of personal encounter is indispensable in addressing an urgent global humanitarian and missionary concern, namely, the situation of migrants and refugees. Allow me to read excerpts of my talk at the United Nations, New York, on May 3, 2018, during the event, *Share the Journey of Migrants and Refugees: An Interfaith Perspective on the Global Compacts*. Religious leaders from the Judaic, Islamic, Buddhist and Christian communities spoke.

In the name of Caritas Internationalis I thank all of you for participating in this interfaith conference. I greet you in the name of the migrants and refugees whose arduous journey we share. Our gathering stresses the valuable contributions of religious traditions and their communities to the process of developing the two Global Compacts.

Fostering a Culture of Encounter

The Judaeo-Christian tradition, in its Roman Catholic expression to which I belong, reminds Caritas that migration is about human persons. Migrants are persons. Refugees are persons. They have human stories and dreams. But some sectors of society want to erase their faces. They do not belong to us. They are strange. They will a burden to us. We refuse to see them. They do not exist. Then the Hebrew Bible rings loudly, "Love the stranger because you were all strangers in the land of Egypt" (Dt 10:19). "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Lev 19:34). The memory of having been a stranger among other people should enable Israel to love, not just to tolerate, the stranger as a native, as a neighbor, as oneself. We invite everyone never to forget that in our families, clans and people, there must have been a migrant or refugee sometime, somewhere. In their name, the God of Israel calls us to love the stranger. But will we remember or choose to forget?

Christians believe that Jesus "migrated" from the condition of being God's Son to that of being a lowly human being. As a baby, He became a refugee in Egypt with His parents to escape the ire of Herod (Mt 2:3-15). He praised "outsiders" in His stories like the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-36) and presented "strangers" as models of faith, such as the woman of Samaria at the well (Jn 4), the grateful Samaritan healed of leprosy (Lk 17:11-19), the persistent Syrophoenician mother (Mk 7:24-30) and the Roman centurion who cared for his servant and believed in Jesus' word (Lk 7:1-10). To cap it all, Jesus identified Himself with strangers, "When I was a stranger, you made me welcome" (Mt 25:35), declaring that what we do or fail to do to strangers, we do or fail to do to Him. For Christians, a stranger has a human face, that of Jesus. By denying the humanity of a migrant or refugee, we reveal our own lack of humanity. Jesus' sharing our human condition urges us Christians to see the common humanity we share with those we consider strangers or outsiders.

In recent years, Pope Francis has given impetus to this faith perspective by calling for a culture of personal encounter with migrants, refugees and people excluded by contemporary society. I have observed that some people who are afraid of migrants or refugees have had very little personal encounter with them. They do not even know the people whom they fear. By meeting them, touching their wounds, listening to their stories and dreams, we might see ourselves in them. They are not strangers. They could be me, my parents, my brothers and sisters, my friend. Then I start sharing their journey. Their journey becomes our journey. Share the Journey is the name of the Caritas Internationalis campaign launched with Pope Francis last September 2017. I am more convinced now that sharing the journey requires a change of horizon from one of transaction to that of covenant between human partners.

Share the Journey is entering a covenant relationship with migrants and refugees. It draws inspiration from the guiding principles drawn by Pope Francis.

- 1) To welcome migrants and refugees by enhancing safe, legal and orderly channels for them and ensuring that their decision to migrate is voluntary. People have a right to migrate, but they have a right not to migrate also.*
- 2) To protect them by ensuring their dignity and rights, especially the right to life.*
- 3) To promote their integral human development so that no one is left behind or excluded.*
- 4) To integrate them into society by enabling them to share their values and culture as they learn from the receiving community.*

Let me share a story from a lady Caritas social worker from Lebanon. She assists refugees and migrants in detention centers. In 2008 she was asked to go to Damascus, Syria, to train two NGO's working with Iraqi refugees. She stayed in a monastery and took a taxicab to the venue of the training. One morning upon arriv-

Fostering a Culture of Encounter

ing at the training site, she asked the driver how much she had to pay. The driver looked at her and refused to take her money. She insisted but the driver refused. She felt uneasy and anxious. Then he said, "How can I take money from Caracas?" He meant Caritas. She asked if he knew her. He said, "In 2005 I was detained in Lebanon. The night before I was to be released, I was in pain. The guards did not give me medication. You passed by, and I asked for pain killer, and you gave one to me. After taking it, I felt much better and slept soundly. Your face has remained in my mind." The Caritas social worker wrote to me, "What was it that I gave this man? It was nothing, yet the fact and act of giving and giving truly from one's heart is what matters, and it reminded me that our work is imprinted in other people's hearts and that the mission we are living is of great importance. Therefore, we will give and keep on giving."

I am the grandson of a man born in China. His widowed mother had no means to raise him. She gave him to an uncle who engaged in trading in the Philippines. The boy migrated to the Philippines, started a life, got married and had nine children, the third of whom is my mother. I have migrant DNA. I am sure you do too. Thank you for your kind attention.

MISSING PERSONS

The most dramatic instances of the disappearance of human persons are kidnapping, murder, ethnic cleansing and war. But persons also disappear even when they are visible, as in cases of human smuggling or trafficking, abuse of women and children, on-line exploitation, poverty and injustice, neglect, marginalization, racism and similar phenomena.

There are many causes of the disappearance of human persons from our consciousness. Some are the prevalence of the "commodity form" over the "personal form" in viewing reality, especially humans. In the commodity form of thinking, everything

and everyone is perceived as an object, a thing or commodity to be used for profit. In this mental form, the value of a human depends on his or her functionality and usefulness. The human person in his or her humanity disappears.

This is fomented by aggressive individualism, bias and prejudice with its social expressions. The disappearance of human persons threatens communion, families, communities, societies, the common good and the family of creation.

In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* 1, the Second Vatican Council states, "By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament of intimate union with Christ, and of the unity of all humankind, that is, she is a sign and an instrument of such union and unity." The Church, although a little flock, is a "lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race" (LG, 9). The Council connects salvation with communion, our relationship with the Trinity and with humanity. The Church is not only a sign but a servant or instrument of communion. Isolation, division, alienation and aloneness are wounds to communion. The human family needs salvation from exclusion and disconnectedness. The Church serves by bringing the healing and saving balm of communion to a humanity wounded by strife, rejection, and violence. Of the many needs of humanity today, I believe that the exclusion and alienation of persons need urgent attention. In his book *Becoming Human*, Jean Vanier poignantly describes the journey from exclusion to inclusion as a path to healing.

James Sweeney, CP, observes that the prevailing culture "takes the laissez-faire attitude that the individual reigns supreme and individuals can look after themselves" (*Faith in Culture*). Even families suffer from a breakdown in relationships and communication. Individuals do not need others. Each one must look after oneself only. If you are poor, you have no one else to blame but yourself. Do not expect others to lift you up; do it yourself.

Fostering a Culture of Encounter

Alienating individualism has acquired social forms in ethnocentrism, racism, nationalistic xenophobia, religious and racial discrimination, scapegoating and stigmatizing people who differ from us like migrants, strangers, and minorities (Kristine Suna-Koro, “*The Sign of Unity and the Bond of Charity*”; Fr. David Izuzquiza, SJ, “*Breaking Bread: Notes for a Political Theology of Migration*”). The culture of individualism is one of the causes of the disappearance of human persons from our consciousness.

In the economic sphere of life, which impacts the social, cultural and political spheres, we see so-called economic growth that excludes the greater part of humanity and wounds creation.

On January 17, 2017, the eve of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, a study conducted by Oxfam, an anti-poverty organization, revealed that in 2016 eight persons in the world were as rich as half of the world or 3.6 billion people. The Executive Director of Oxfam justly commented, “*It is obscene for so much wealth to be held in the hands of so few when one in ten people survive on less than \$2 a day.*” But what makes it more bothersome is the fact that in 2015 or the year before, 62 persons were as rich as half of the world. Now they are reduced to 8. We do not deny that the most successful persons in the world are enterprising, driven, creative and “lucky”. But we are still disturbed and should be disturbed at the thought that wealth generated with the help of many people and nations is not distributed justly. We need to ask if economic growth that excludes the greater portion of humanity is genuine growth or legitimated injustice. The poor disappear as human beings in an unjust economic system.

We need self-critique or self-examination for a renewal of mentalities and attitudes that promote communion. We also need social structures that would allow room for the values of communion and solidarity to flourish. But let me emphasize the need for personal encounter with the people who are excluded, as stressed time and again by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato si’*.

A diaconal Church needs to promote a culture of encounter, of recognition of human faces and persons. In personally meeting the excluded, seeing and touching their wounds the way Jesus asked Thomas to put his fingers into his wounds, we realize that the issue of exclusion is not only about statistics and numbers. They are human beings, not numbers. Seeing the wounds of excluded people confronts us with a choice: will I ignore them or will I stop, come close and carry them to healing like the Good Samaritan? I must promptly add that when we encounter the outcast, we should not come from a position of superiority, strength or importance. We come as neighbors, brothers and sisters willing to learn worthwhile lessons about communion and healing from them. The poor can impart to us the values that the prevailing system lacks. And we must encounter wounded persons together, as a Church. All the baptized are asked to participate actively not only in worship and liturgy but also in the service of charity that heals. Leaders must form, equip and encourage everyone to be servants of communion. Christians must declare to the world, “We miss persons!”

THE VISITATRIX: AN AUTHORITY AT THE SERVICE OF COMMUNION, FOSTERING A CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER

We have been trying to link a culture of personal encounter with restoring communion. Fractures in community may indicate that some persons are missing or excluded in the eyes of the others. Please bear in mind that the societal, cultural and economic factors we mentioned earlier are also at play within our communities. The Visitatrix needs to be aware of their influence on community life and mission.

Drawing some insights from Dean Williams, author of *Leadership for a Fractured World* (2015), freely reformulating and adding to them, I would focus on the exercise of authority that allows humans to encounter each other as humans so that communion

Fostering a Culture of Encounter

may be restored. Mr. Williams, a professor at Harvard University, leads the World Leaders Interview Project. We can learn from a secular thinker like him. In his perspective, leadership or authority is about crossing boundaries, building bridges and leading communion at a time when the world is fractured.

According to Williams, the traditional image of a strong authoritative boss is the “big man leader”. This model operates on a predictable strategy of dealing with problems through *prominence* (Look at me. I’ll fix the problem), *dominance* (Listen to me and do what I say), and *tribalizing* (Follow me. I’ll advance your group’s interest). This type of leadership obviously has its strengths. But given the complexity of contemporary problems and interdependent challenges that we confront, we need leadership that can foster a spirit of communion where everyone is seen, recognized, invited and becomes a participant in common mission. But to achieve this, the leader must be attentive to visible and invisible boundaries that divide people, impede change, and destroy progress already achieved. Williams says, “*You must be able to cross boundaries to engage diverse groups in the work of problem solving and change. Sometimes, you must intervene to bust internal boundaries within your own group to open up the flow of information and get people to engage the outside world. For some problems, the leadership challenge is to help groups transcend their boundaries – to leave the safety of the known and to venture into the great unknown in pursuit of creativity and innovation. And there will be times when the leadership work is to help multiple groups bridge boundaries over deep divides in order to resolve conflicts, heal wounds, and reduce the mystery of the other in order to generate a mutually beneficial future.*”

A leader provokes people to face reality by posing tough questions or by declaring what is not working well. But to provoke is not enough and is not the only choice. Often the leader is called to evoke noble, true and good sentiments within people so that they could see problems, see each other and work together. To perform

the evocative aspect more effectively, a leader must move from talking about principles and solutions to telling stories. Stories shift attention from the leader to the values and meanings needed to face the situation.

In facing conflicts, a leader cannot simply repeat “dogmas” or rules that define parameters and limits, often quite rigidly. A leader must learn how to “play” and to encourage the community to play, to use its imagination, to dream of possibilities, to be surprised and to enjoy the adventure.

To build bridges, a leader allows members of the community to see each other, to encounter each other deeply. She detects who is missing to whom. She is aware of the groups that exist within the community. She encourages competing groups to appreciate each other’s narratives and sacred values. She shows how these narratives and sacred values perpetuate fractures and how changed perspectives could promote better relationships. Through communication the leader reduces the “mystery” of the groups to each other that leads to suspicion, prejudice, stereotyping and blindness. The leader identifies persons of credibility who can cross boundaries, be a voice of calm and play a mediating role. A leader facilitates and orchestrates bridging conversations, daring to discuss the unspeakable with calm. A leader lifts the eyes of all from petty battles to a higher purpose. She enables the members of the community to see herself in the other. She crosses the bridges with her community so that the narratives of groups become a WE narrative. Since the temptation to return to “tribalism” recurs, she watches with vigilance to prevent such regression.

A leader creates an atmosphere where forgiveness becomes a choice. Forgiveness liberates everyone from the prison of anger, bitterness, revenge and blindness to the other.

As a final point, allow me to share one massive change that has begun and will continue to grow in our time. It affects personal encounter and communion and is considered one of the causes of the disappearance of persons. The founder of the World Economic Forum, Dr. Klaus Schwab, calls it the fourth industrial revolution, which builds on the digital revolution (*The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, 2016). It is characterized by the internet's presence everywhere, smaller and more powerful sensors, artificial intelligence and machine learning. It will impact the economy, employment, the nature of work, consumer expectations, governments, security, managing information, health care, climate, social inequality, identity, morality and community. Experts nowadays are no longer talking about "change" but of "disruption". This massive change is happening already and will progress even if we ignore it. Dr. Schwab invites us to meaningfully address the disruption by mobilizing "*the collective wisdom of our minds, hearts and souls.*" With his vast experience, realism and optimism, Dr. Schwab proposes awakening three types of "intelligence" to respond to the change.

1. **Contextual Intelligence.** This corresponds to the mind. We need to develop our ability and willingness to understand contexts of emerging trends and find connections. We need to get out of rigid mental frameworks and fixed views of the future. By learning the various components of the context, we develop intellectual and social agility, needed to integrate diverse interests and opinions.
2. **Emotional Intelligence.** This corresponds to the heart. The mind and the heart must meet and not fight each other. Emotional intelligence involves self-awareness, self-discipline, motivation, empathy and skills to relate with people.

3. **Inspired Intelligence.** This corresponds to the soul. Inspiration means the constant search for meaning and purpose. We help lift humanity to a shared moral consciousness and shared destiny. The soul should inspire trust, so that common interests and not individual objectives are achieved.

Dr. Schwab's view of the integration of mind, heart and soul to promote the common good as we face change or disruption has universal appeal and resonates with Scripture, "*You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind*"

Dean Williams: Keeping yourself (leader/Visitatrix) from fracturing

Mr. Williams gives lessons to leaders, so they could avoid being fractured (interiorly divided or conflicted).

- Lesson 1: You don't have to save the world today or tomorrow.
- Lesson 2: Surround yourself with people who can keep you from doing stupid things.
- Lesson 3: Don't take it personally, even though it feels personal.
- Lesson 4: When the forces of darkness are upon you, reconnect to your higher sense of purpose.
- Lesson 5: Laugh a lot.
- Lesson 6: Start dancing.
- Lesson 7: Get lost – replenish the body and the spirit.
- Lesson 8: Choose your battles wisely and know when to walk away.

A CONCLUDING STORY

In one summer camp for the youth, I was invited to give a 30-minute talk on finding one's purpose in life. It was meant to be a vocation campaign too, but very subtly done. After the talk, came the question and answer question. A young girl raised her hand and asked, "Will you sing for us, Bishop?" I was surprised and

Fostering a Culture of Encounter

said, “Nobody told me I had to sing. Please ask questions related to the topic.” Many good and difficult questions followed. Then a young boy asked, “Will you sing for us now?” I said, “OK I will start a song that we all know, then we sing together.” After the song, the young people flocked to me to ask for a blessing, to kiss my hand, to take selfies, to ask for an autograph on their journals and shirts. As this was going on, I asked myself, “What do they see in me? A bishop? A celebrity? Am I failing in behaving like a bishop?” The answer came a year later in a similar summer camp. A boy came up to me and said, “Bishop, last year you signed my T-shirt.” I said, “Oh yes, at the summer camp last year.” Then he added, “I have not washed the shirt until now.” Sort of disgusted I said, “Wow. It must smell pretty bad after a year.” But he continued, “Every night, I fold it and put it under my pillow. I have not seen my father in years. But with that folded shirt I know I belong to a family and I have a father in you.” Missing persons. Encounter. Bridges. Communion. All these big words explode in one T-shirt signed by a bishop.

Cardinal Luis Antonio TAGLE
Archbishop of Manila

BROTHER J.P. MARSAUD, SON OF CHARITY

Reflections on the administration of goods in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life according to canon law

May 26, 2018

Following a colloquium for General Treasurers that took place in 2014 in Rome, Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life received a circular letter from the Dicastery entitled *Guidelines for the Administration of Assets in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*.

Another document, *Economy at the service of the charism and mission*, was just published in March 2018 by the same Dicastery. We know how attentive Pope Francis is to this question and how concerned he is about the witness that the Church should give in the economic arena. Moreover, in his exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, he takes up at length the issue of the flow of money and its often negative consequences in the context of globalization. Today more than ever, there is a strong demand for transparency in the financial administration of all institutions, be they political, social or humanitarian but also religious. Both Christians and society as a whole have high expectations for clarity in economic matters. They sometimes question the credibility of the life witness of our religious communities in that regard.

Introducing the international symposium March 8-9, 2014, Pope Francis said in his message to participants, “*Attentive vigilance is needed in order to ensure that the goods of the Institutes are administered with prudence and transparency, that they are pro-*

Reflections

tected and preserved, combining the primary charismatic-spiritual dimension with the economic dimension and with efficiency, which has its own humus in the administrative tradition of the Institutes which does not tolerate waste and which is attentive to using resources properly” (Message of March 8, 2014).

I - IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A/ **The word money** appears more than twenty times in the Gospels, and expressions relating to money, fifty times. Christ’s remarks on money do not pass unnoticed, for they are sometimes violent: the merchants in the temple are chased away vehemently (Jn 2:15, Mt 21:12, Mk 11:15, Lk 19:45). At the same time, there is a paradox. Jesus’ practice is a model of civility: He does not condemn the tax paid to the Roman occupiers (Mt 22:21, Lk 20:25) and even pays the temple tax (Mt 17:27). Moreover, his meetings and meals with tax collectors are well known (Lk 19:5). Jesus makes friends with wealthy people such as Simon the Pharisee (Mt 26:6) and Joseph of Arimathea (Mt 27:57).

We could say that Jesus’ discourse has three levels: condemnations, practices and symbols since Jesus will dare to speak in parables in which money symbolizes the Kingdom of God. The treasure buried in the field (Mt 13:44), the pearl of great price (Mt 13:46) and the lost drachma (Lk 15:8) are all monetary images that represent seeking the Kingdom of God.

We all know Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Lk 19:1-10). Perched in a sycamore tree to glimpse the ‘prophet Jesus’, he hears Jesus say to him, “*Come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.*” The crowd disapproves since it considers Zacchaeus a sinner, a collaborator with the Romans who grew rich off the tax. Jesus’ request for hospitality triggers something extraordinary in Zacchaeus: generosity. He welcomes Jesus in this way, “*Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over.*” Let’s evaluate this act: Zacchaeus uses this

money that had separated him from others to right injustices and relieve poverty. In his hands, the role of money is reversed: what isolated him from others becomes what **creates relationships**. Money is no longer what ruptures relationships but what makes their formation possible.

This reversal **takes place through gift**. Roles thus change: Zacchaeus no longer takes advantage of others to grow richer but allows others to benefit from his wealth. Through this change, money no longer governs Zacchaeus’ relationships and destroys them; Zacchaeus masters money and determines its role. By this conversion in the use of money, the reign of God suddenly at hand. “*Today,*” Jesus says, “*salvation has come to this house*” (Lk 19:9). Basically, we could summarize the challenge that Jesus puts forth in this way: it is no longer a question of what you do with your money, but what your money does to you. It either makes you seek possessions or creates relationships with others. We should heed the cry of Francis our Pope: “*Money must serve, not rule! [...] I exhort you to generous solidarity and a return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favors human beings*” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 58).

B/ Placing goods in common in the first Christian community

Religious life has always been aware of how important it is for it to live the experience of the early Church, in the primitive community of Jerusalem, namely placing in common the goods that each person possesses.

In its reflection, religious life usually turns to Acts 2:44, “*All who believed were together and had all things in common,*” or Acts 4:32, “*The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.*”

Reflections

Placing our goods in common and sharing therefore demonstrate the fraternal communion that is one of the visible signs of religious life in the Church and for the world.

Fraternal communion is the goal and primary motivation for the three vows – poverty (sharing and welcome of our brothers and sisters), obedience (belonging to an apostolic body) and chastity (resulting in another type of brotherhood than what conjugal relations produce). This fraternal communion is lived out in very diverse ways in our Institutes, yet it remains one of the fundamental characteristics of consecrated life.

As we know, our life is not an ideal of perfection that other Christians should strive to imitate; what we live is a sign, reminding the people of God of its eschatological nature (cf. *Lumen gentium*, 44 and 48) and the meaning of its pilgrimage and involvement in the world. Fraternal communion therefore has something to say to our society. It is a sign for more sharing, less individualism and more transparency in the use of goods.

Let us return to these passages from Acts, chapter 4. “*The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common*” (4:32). “*Those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles*” (4:34-35).

We realize this is an idealized picture because in chapter five, we already hear about fraud, that of Ananias and Sapphira. For the author of the Acts of the Apostles, this attitude and way of life is the most authentic translation of the newness of life given by the Spirit and that makes Christ’s disciples witnesses of a new world. The letters of Saint Paul also mention solidarity that Churches should practice among themselves. For example, the community of Antioch assisted the community of Jerusalem (Acts 2:27-30), and Paul organized a collection in the communities he founded in Asia Minor and Greece on behalf of the poor of Jerusalem (Rom 15:26-27; 1 Cor 16:1-3; Gal 2:10; Acts 20:4). Money becomes

a means to promote solidarity.

C/ Giving meaning to this concrete reality: the management of our assets

Paul VI, for the 75th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* (speech of May 22, 1966), wrote, “*The Church does not fear coming down from the religious sphere proper to it to the sphere of concrete conditions of social life. Like the Good Samaritan from the Gospel parable, the Church gets down off its horse, that is, from the purely cultural milieu, and becomes the ministry of charity, not just individual but social charity. It has bent over the economic field; it has spoken about the relationship between capital and labor; it has made statements on labor contracts, salaries, assistance, family law, private property, savings, on hundreds of practical question essentially connected to honest and legitimate necessities of life. Its charity has armed itself with the demands of progress that it called human and Christian and, as a result, just.*”

The Second Vatican Council, in *Lumen gentium* Chapter 4, article 34, takes up in its own way the meaning to assign all human activity. “*All their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne — all these become ‘spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’ (1 Pt 2:5)*” (LG, 34).

All of the Church’s reflection on human activity draws from the mystery of the Incarnation. In Jesus Christ, God Himself genuinely engaged in the human condition. If He really entered into human history, then in no way can we consider this condition, this history or this world unimportant or, even less, bad.

It is good to recall how Jesus was subjected to all the necessities that affect human existence: hunger, thirst, tiredness, sadness, suffering and death. He made Himself close to those who suffer,

Reflections

He was present to the joys of His family as in Cana, He cried over his friend Lazarus, He compassionately loved those who were excluded, sick and children, etc. We could say that this immersion of Christ in human life gives meaning to all our human activity. It is in this perspective of the mystery of the Incarnation that we should consider everything involving concrete reality, the so-called ‘secular’ activity of an Institute. The administration of Church assets is an authentic mission in itself. This is what Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, prefect of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, wrote. *“Careful and far-sighted administration of Church assets and works therefore takes on an evangelical nature”* (Acts of the symposium).

We should have the conviction that managing material goods well can provide a positive witness in sensitive areas like that of finances, for example. In France, we know how an effort to invest ethically has been an important witness offered by Sister Nicole Reille, who wrote, *“Our questioning on ethics often surprised investment managers more accustomed to questions on financial return rather than behavior. Asking these questions to influential people in the financial world by means of the management of our assets means having an impact, however modest it may be, on the evolution of a financial system that is more just and more respectful of all people.”*

II - THE ASSETS OF A CONGREGATION

A/ Origin of the assets of the Institute

Sharing of assets

As I said earlier when quoting the Acts of the Apostles (4:32), the community of goods results from and expresses the fact that they are “of one heart and mind”. Among the first Christians, there was a deep unity of heart and mind based on a shared faith, inseparable from a shared hope. They were aware that they formed a single reality, one body in which each person felt responsible

for all in a spirit of solidarity. Now, in order to be authentic, this communion in the same spiritual realities should take form and “incarnate” itself in sharing.

The community of goods is thus a consequence of the profound unity of Christians. It is the concrete manifestation and the tangible sign of the union of hearts and minds. Rightly understood and lived out, charity is always spiritual union and communal sharing. This communal sharing is the test of the authenticity of spiritual union. Brothers and sisters to each other sharing the same faith and hope, they choose to give flesh to this communion among themselves in a legally defined community of goods. Sometimes, we must admit, when placing goods in common is difficult, the union of hearts is weak...

By placing goods in common, religious pursue this same ideal of charity that involves both equality and sharing. Possession readily causes a mentality and behaviors of ownership, deforming community relationships. The community of goods thus creates this relationship of equality required for genuine solidarity, this unity. A congregation lives this out on a local level but also an international one.

Placing our goods in common, sharing and solidarity lived in practical terms have allowed the congregation gradually to gain the patrimony that we have to manage today. This patrimony is the fruit of our vow of poverty.

This patrimony is also the fruit of the work of Sisters who shared what they received for their work in schools, hospitals or other apostolic works, today retirement pensions for some, but always the result of their work. When Sisters die, there are also gifts made to the congregation from their patrimony (which is not obligatory; each Sister is free to make her will and name the beneficiary).

Reflections

This patrimony is the fruit of donors, people who have admired the work of the Sisters and wanted their work to develop and continue. Such people have thus made a gift to the congregation of their assets... you have surely seen, in the chapels of some of our institutions, often at the bottom of stained glass windows, the names of donors.

As you see, **these assets all have a history**. These assets contain your history, and we understand that sometimes they are so intertwined with the history of the congregation that it is hard to imagine selling, renovating or adapting them to current reality; it demands letting go, in a way.

Finally, these assets are part of a human fabric, a whole ecclesial environment that also must be considered because there may be decades of the Sisters' presence in a given city or village.

B/ Goods called “ecclesiastical goods”

All the assets that belong to a congregation are considered “ecclesiastical goods”. (More commonly, but improperly, we say ‘goods of the Church’).

We refer to canon 1257 § 1. *“All temporal goods which belong to the universal Church, the Apostolic See, or other public juridic persons in the Church [therefore, our Institutes] are ecclesiastical goods and are governed by the following canons and their own statutes.”*

How should we understand the expression “ecclesiastical goods”?

Ecclesiastical goods are temporal goods belonging to a public juridic person (c. 113). Public juridic persons include the Apostolic See, dioceses, Bishops' Conferences, parishes, seminaries, Institutes of Consecrated Life, public associations of the faithful, etc. A religious purpose is not what makes our goods “ecclesiastical

goods”, but the fact they belong to a public juridic person (the Institute) that acts and possesses in the name of the Church.

For our Institutes, as for all public juridic persons, a competent ecclesial authority constitutes them by decree (c. 116) and approves their statutes (c. 117). This is how a congregation is constituted as a ‘public juridic person’. In summary, we can say that the ‘ecclesiastical’ nature of a good flows from its property deed: the legitimately recognized congregation, but also the goods that a congregation owns indirectly by civil associations, foundations, civil society associations...

Such goods are also considered ecclesiastical goods to which corresponding canonical rules apply.

However, this title of ecclesiastical goods (goods of the Church) does not mean that our goods belong to the Holy See.

“Under the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff, ownership of goods belongs to that juridic person which has acquired them legitimately” (c. 1256).

The Roman Pontiff does not own our goods, just as he cannot be held personally responsible as in debt to a creditor of an ecclesiastical good. However, he does exercise a power of vigilance and protection regarding goods owned by the juridic person.

Some canon lawyers would say it this way: it is subordinate ownership. Therefore, according to canon 634 § 1, an Institute has a real right to ownership. *“As juridic persons by the law itself, institutes, provinces, and houses are capable of acquiring, possessing, administering, and alienating temporal goods unless this capacity is excluded or restricted in the constitutions.”*

Canon 586 reiterates this. *“A just autonomy of life, especially of governance, is acknowledged for individual institutes, by which they possess their own discipline in the Church and are able to*

Reflections

preserve their own patrimony intact, as mentioned in canon 578.”

Since, according to canon 1273, the Roman Pontiff is the supreme administrator and steward of all ecclesiastical goods, **this vigilance of the Holy See** sometimes requires permission from the Holy See for very large transactions (c. 1292), especially concerning alienations.

In addition, after each general chapter (assembly) of the congregation, the general leadership of the Institute should inform the congregation of its financial situation with its financial balance sheets.

C/ These assets should have a legal structure in each country where we are present.

Canon law calls us to always respect civil law and to *“take care that the ownership of ecclesiastical goods is protected by civilly valid methods”* (c. 1284 § 2).

III - ANALYSIS OF THE PATRIMONY OF CONGREGATIONS

A/ Real estate patrimony

It consists of quite diverse assets whose common point is attachment to the ground (land, buildings, apartments, chapels, cemetery plots). It was acquired in various ways: purchase, construction, donation, bequest, contributed by a member.

These assets often carry an emotional value because they have a history. I frequently see this when a congregation decides, for example, to demolish a chapel if it must sell a work, and Sisters say things such as, “This is where I professed my vows.” “I’m losing a part of my life,” a Sister once told me.

However, the administration of a congregation’s goods today demands asking questions about the appropriateness of maintaining various works. It is nonetheless important to hear and understand these reactions... It is also a path of letting go that congregations should live out as they reorganize their assets.

Cemetery plots: They are also part of our assets, even when we do not own the property. They should be kept up. We must be attentive in this regard to families who are very sensitive in this area.

B/ Moveable patrimony (our investments in banks)

Each congregation, each Province, has financial investments that allow it to meet its regular expenses. Today, all our international congregations experience a tension: ***between aging Sisters here to maintain and for whom to care, and the development of vocations elsewhere with missions to support.*** It is a difficult balance to achieve, often involving difficult decisions, **because behind the numbers there are always people** and missionary activities.

Organizing international sessions and Assemblies costs a lot of money, yet they are essential for the vitality of the congregation. Organizing international exchanges among different countries is vital for unifying the Institute as a single body and assuring the younger generations’ better knowledge of the charism that was born here... A Council finds itself confronted with such choices: this need and at the same time the desire that the elder Sisters might have a happy old age, especially all the necessary health care, which costs money, a lot of money.

I find that it is too bad that, in Chapters or Assemblies to which I am invited, there is little debate when they present the accounts... few questions. Of course, the numbers for a congregation are far from resembling those of a small local community, so members have difficulty evaluating the financial situation well. However, the Assembly is a decision-making body that should commit to missionary choices, taking financial possibilities into account. (I

Reflections

give the example of a congregation that was bankrupt one year after a Chapter, but nothing was mentioned during the Chapter.)

The cultural patrimony of the congregation: artwork, etc.

Alienating blessed objects requires much discernment and prudence. According to canon 1190, the sale of sacred relics is strictly forbidden. It can occur that a religious house cannot keep sacred art. The transfer of ownership of a sacred object can only take place from one public ecclesial juridic person to another (diocese, parish, etc.) as a gift, purchase, sales contract, but the new owner is required to respect the sacred nature of the object (c. 1171). For such a decision, the religious community must have the consent of the competent authority.

C/ Stable patrimony (*Guidelines*, 1.4)

Canons 1285 and 1291 mention stable patrimony without precisely defining what it covers. The *Guidelines* from the Dicastery focus on this idea of stable patrimony in paragraph 1.4. “*Stable patrimony is thus all fixed and movable assets that is essential to the life of the institute. It is the means of ensuring economic self-sufficiency but also the survival or the continuity of the institute to continue its work and mission.*”

Stable patrimony does not include all the assets of the Institute, which necessarily has assets to meet its immediate needs or to deal with renovations to property and significant expenses for the ordinary life of the Institute.

The governing body at the general level (sometimes Provincial) determines which assets are part of the stable patrimony: the headquarters of the Institute, of the Province, formation houses, real estate that provides for the subsistence of the Institute, cultural property that is valuable because of its history or artistic quality and in a way makes up the memory of the Institute, a bequest that has conditions to fulfill toward the donor, etc.

Finally, stable property is not set forever. It is protected, but naturally, it can be adapted and evolve depending on the economic situation and the needs of the congregation. In terms of canon law, the governing authority may rule on it and modify it. Drawing from the stable patrimony represents an alienation and requires permission from the general level.

D/ The personal assets of Sisters (not ecclesiastical goods)

According to canon law, we call Sisters’ **personal or inherited goods** all the goods belonging to a Sister before temporary profession, regardless of their origin, and all the goods received after temporary profession received as inheritances or donations.

All other assets acquired after temporary profession – salary, retirement benefits and pension, social security payments resulting from a temporary or permanent disability – are not personal goods although they are paid to an individual.

Administration of inherited goods

Sisters conserve ownership without usufruct of their inherited goods but give up the right to administer them personally (c. 668 § 1). Sisters therefore must draw up a document ceding their administration to a family member, the congregation or a professional. (All of this depends on your Constitutions.)

This document ceding administration of goods is signed and held by the congregation. It can only be modified with the permission of the major superior.

The renunciation of inherited goods, once limited to religious orders with solemn vows, has been possible since Vatican II in religious institutes with simple vows. It is an important act that requires real discernment on the part of the Sister, a desire of letting go of ownership for greater inner freedom.

Reflections

Only perpetually vowed Sisters can make this renunciation unless the congregation has not accepted this option for its Sisters. Typically, at least ten years of perpetual vows are required. The code of canon law requires permission by the Superioress General, but many Institutes also require the consent of the General Council. It is always appropriate to plan for the Sister's future, which calls for great prudence in a total renunciation of her goods.

Wills: Canon law prescribes that each Sister should make her will before perpetual vows. The Sister is free to name the beneficiary she wishes (c. 668).

We should help the Sisters to consider the duty of justice they have (for example, to the congregation) as well as the fiscal consequences of their choices.

IV - THE DESTINATION OF GOODS IN A CONGREGATION

The Church is not a business whose goal is to earn money. In the Church, goods are merely means for the People of God to fulfill its mission (*Gaudium et spes*, 76).

“The possession and use of [material goods] should be regulated and subordinated to the conduct and advantage of our apostolic mission” (Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam*, 54).

Canon 634 § 2 reminds us that we should avoid excessive profit and the accumulation of goods. Institutes *“are to avoid any appearance of excess, immoderate wealth, and accumulation of goods.”*

OUR GOODS THUS HAVE THE FOLLOWING DESTINATIONS OR PURPOSES:

a/ Support of the members of the Institute

These goods are first at the service of members of the Institute. Here are some references to the Code of Canon Law that indicate this.

Canon 670: *“An institute must supply the members with **all those things which are necessary** to achieve the purpose of their vocation, according to the norm of the constitutions.”*

Canon 610 § 2: *“No house is to be erected unless it can be judged prudently that **the needs of the members will be provided for suitably.**”*

Canon 619: *“Superiors... are to **meet the personal needs of the members appropriately**, solicitously to care for and visit the sick...”*

b/ For the service of the mission of the Institute

We realize the mission through works that must be supported. The mission requires formation in all its stages: postulancy, novitiate, juniorate, scholasticate and ongoing formation (all the familiar structures).

You know the cost of international gatherings of young vowed Sisters, new implantations in developing countries, planning of sessions, receiving young women in formation, etc. A congregation should regularly evaluate the missionary budget necessary to carry out its mission and above all prepare a budget, which involves making choices. We cannot do everything at the same time, especially when it involves investing in building a house of formation.

John Paul II, in *Vita consecrata*, praised missionary religious. *“How many Institutes devote themselves to education, training and professional formation, preparing young people and those no longer young to become builders of their own future! How many consecrated persons give themselves without reserve in the service of the most disadvantaged people on earth! How many of them*

Reflections

work to train future educators and leaders of society, so that they in turn will be committed to eliminating structures of oppression and to promoting projects of solidarity for the benefit of the poor! Consecrated persons fight to overcome hunger and its causes; they inspire the activities of voluntary associations and humanitarian organizations; and they work with public and private bodies to promote a fair distribution of international aid. Nations truly owe a great deal to these enterprising agents of charity, whose tireless generosity has contributed and continues to contribute greatly to making the world more human” (Vita consecrata, 89)

c/ Canon 640 highlights the aspect of gift: “contribute... something from their own goods to provide for... the support of the poor.”

In the tradition of the Church, the patrimony of the Church was called the “property of the poor”. Indeed, the goods of the Church should be allocated in part to persons who are poor. Perhaps all of this was to prevent clerics from monopolizing gifts from benefactors or embezzling them for their own use.

In the 16th century, several Councils repeated the expression that these goods belong to God and to His Church and are the patrimony of the poor, for example the Council of Bordeaux in 1583 or Aix in 1585. Consistent with this tradition, we read in canon 640, “*Taking into account local conditions, institutes are to strive to give, as it were, a collective witness of charity and poverty and are to contribute according to their ability something from their own goods to provide for the needs of the Church and the support of the poor.*”

Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate* (*Charity in truth*), suggests, “*In commercial relationships the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal economic activity... It is a demand both of charity and of truth*” (CV, 36).

d/ Assure consistency with the evangelical counsels: taking the economic dimension into account in the implementation of our projects.

The reason that we begin a new missionary project, establish a new presence or open a new work is above all to **respond to a need**, a need considered important, after discernment by the General or Provincial Council and various local communities.

Like Mary in Cana who said, “They have no more wine,” we note that “this neighborhood does not have schools or clinics or...” Obviously, economic reasons do not motivate our projects.

However, in the discernment process undertaken by the General or Provincial Council or a local community of Sisters to begin a missionary project, do we consider the economic dimension among all the elements?

Naturally, when we begin a new work, we look for people who will be able to carry it out. But shouldn’t we also evaluate beforehand the cost of the project, the financial investment and the incidence it could have on the annual budget?

Of course, this could push us to seek new financial resources, but we should demonstrate economic lucidity for any new project. In our international Institutes, it is essential to plan, draw up budgets and especially evaluate over the course of time so we do not throw ourselves into what I might call a headlong rush without any concern for tomorrow.

This is one of the important responsibilities of Councils and a reason the Treasurer and General Council must work together so that the apostolic plan and the economic dimension “talk to each other” in every discernment process.

Concerning administration, the document following the symposium in Rome describes all the processes necessary for good

Reflections

administration. “Draw up multi-year plans (budgets), draw up financial statements, introduce external certification of financial statements and audits to assure financial and administrative accuracy” (cf. Guidelines, 1.1 and 1.3).

“Transparency is crucial... Supervision and controls are not intended to be means of limiting the autonomy of an entity, nor are they signs of a lack of confidence. Rather, they express the service of communion and transparency, as well as providing protection for those with the delicate tasks of administration” (Guidelines, 1.2).

Each Institute should implement its specific objectives in the area of assets, always in reference to its charism and apostolic priorities. Each Institute should thus establish rules for the administration of its assets, including for the collective practice of evangelical poverty. We could turn to the most recent document of the Dicastery that calls us to a “credible communal poverty”.

V. THE TREASURER OF AN INSTITUTE

Responsibility for the administration of goods falls to the Superior. “The administration of ecclesiastical goods pertains to the one with direct power of governance over the person to whom the goods belong, unless particular law or statutes or legitimate custom state otherwise, and without prejudice to the right of the Ordinary to intervene where there is negligence on the part of the administrator” (c. 1279). The responsibility for the administration and management of goods thus falls to the Superioress General or Visitatrix.

A/ The Treasurer and her role

However, canon 636 tells us that Superiors are required to entrust the administration of goods to Treasurers.

“In each institute, and in each province ruled by a major Superior, there is to be a financial administrator, distinct from the major Superior and constituted in accordance with the institute’s own law. The financial administrator is to administer the goods under the direction of the respective Superior. Even in local communities a financial administrator, distinct from the local Superior, is in so far as possible to be constituted” (c. 636 §1).

The Treasurer thus receives a responsibility. This power entrusted to her is real. The Treasurer does not receive a delegation but an office: “An ecclesiastical office is any post which... is established in a stable manner” (c. 145). I insist on this point to stress that the Treasurer has a real responsibility. She is not the accountant of the Institute. Because of her office, she will contribute in her way, with all her skills as an accountant and administrator, to the management of the goods of the Institute.

The law specifies the spirit in which the administrator (in our case, the Treasurer) should fulfill this office as appropriate to a member of the clergy or the laity who legitimately participates in the administration of ecclesiastical goods.

I would like to draw your attention to canon 1284, which describes administrators’ task, likening their administration to that of a “good householder.” “All administrators are to perform their duties with the diligence of a good householder,” in other words, administer in a way that does not take risks.

This is important to understand for our market investments and any investment that involves the future. It is a matter of assuring that the congregation does not “go bankrupt.” We are not managing a business, but a family.

“1- be vigilant that no goods placed in their care in any way perish or suffer damage; to this end they are, to the extent necessary, to arrange *insurance contracts*;

Reflections

2- ensure that the ownership of ecclesiastical goods is safeguarded in **ways which are valid in civil law**;

3- observe the provisions of Canon and civil law, and the stipulations of the founder or donor or lawful authority; they are to take special care that damage will not be suffered by the Church through the non-observance of the civil law;

4- seek accurately and at the proper time the income and produce of the goods, guard them securely and expend them in accordance with the wishes of the founder or lawful norms;

5- at the proper time pay the interest which is due by reason of a loan or pledge, and take care that in due time the capital is repaid;

6- with the consent of the Ordinary make use of money which is surplus after payment of expenses and which can be profitably invested for the purposes of the juridical person;

7- keep accurate records of income and expenditure;

8- draw up an account of their administration at the end of each year;

9- keep in order and preserve in a convenient and suitable archive the documents and records establishing the rights of the Church or institute to its goods; where conveniently possible, authentic copies must be placed in the curial archives.

- It is earnestly recommended that administrators draw up each year a budget.”

(All of this is in canon 1284. We remember that administrators fulfill their office in the name of the Church.)

Saint Benedict said to his cellarer, “As cellarer of the monastery let there be chosen from the community one who is wise, of mature

character, sober, not a great eater, not haughty, not excitable, not offensive, not slow, not wasteful, but a God-fearing man who may be like a father to the whole community. Let him have charge of everything. He shall do nothing without the Abbot’s orders” (Rule of Saint Benedict, chapter 31).

B/ Management by the Treasurer

The Code of Canon Law distinguishes acts of ordinary administration from acts of extraordinary administration (c. 638).

The Treasurer should have full and total initiative in so-called ordinary administration, what touches the usual operations of the life of the Institute (c. 638 § 2).

This includes regular deposits and withdrawals of cash to pay current expenses, salaries, maintenance work, heating, insurance, monitoring bank investments (without long-term commitment – no decision that commits the Institute for the future), etc. Ordinary administration falls within the normal competence of the Treasurer within the limits of budgetary guidelines generally determined in Council (c. 1284).

Acts of extraordinary administration

By acts of extraordinary administration, canon law refers to acts that only the major Superior and his or her Council, and not the Treasurer alone, can do. Proper law has the right to define them. In general, these acts are those that require a vote in Council (c. 638). Constitutions often spell this out: significant purchases or sales whose value is higher than an amount fixed by the Chapter or by the Conference of Bishops in a given country. In many Institutes, the following are also acts of extraordinary administration: long-term rentals, large loans, remodeling or interior renovations to a building that would usually be the responsibility of the owner, long-term investments, insurance contracts that implicate the congregation and any expense not planned in the budget that

Reflections

exceeds a limit set by the General Chapter.

Every alienation falls within the category of extraordinary administration.

An alienation is any transaction that lessens the legal patrimony of the Institute, in other words, that decreases its stable patrimony. This involves all real estate alienation, gifts to a third party, long-term (9 years or more) loans, granting a loan, lease or even temporary concession of a real right to a good, accepting an easement or the use of part of the patrimonial reserve. The authorization of the Holy See is required for any alienation over 2,500,000 euros in France. (Each Conference of Bishops determines the set amount.)

When the permission of the Holy See is required, the local Ordinary should be informed. Every request for permission of the Holy See should include the motivations for the alienation, the estimated value, appraised by two experts, of the good you wish to alienate, the budget and any debts. Ordinarily, you should not alienate a good for less than its appraised value.

To conclude this point, you should always consider the following elements for an alienation:

- the intention of the donors;
- rights acquired by the Institute, which may have significantly invested in a given work with property;
- the witness of poverty that the Institute should give and the concern for solidarity it should have toward other local communities or Provinces of its Institute as well as the needs of local Churches and even the urgent needs of society.

I should also emphasize that the authorization is a permission granted as an administrative requirement of supervision estab-

lished by the law but does not imply any guarantee for possible creditors. The hierarchical authority will often indicate in the rescript, “We decline any responsibility.”

C/How the responsibilities of the leader (Superior) and Treasurer should be shared

The Superior and the Treasurer each act in their field, but with the same objective, the mission of the Institute. This requires **a good balance of tasks, a well-defined status for the Treasurer and regular relations between the Superior and Treasurer.**

Good knowledge concerning legal, administrative and accounting affairs, etc. gives power to the Treasurer and can even create a feeling of inferiority in the Superior who may not have all these skills.

It is also normal that the Treasurer, well aware of the financial capacities of her Institute, would sometimes tend to put a brake on some investment that the Superior envisions for the good of the mission or vocations development, for example.

The Superior will have another approach to the economic situation, more focused on the missionary plan; economics may have a secondary place in her reflection. The Superior and the Treasurer are two people, each of whom has a power in the congregation; we should be conscious of this.

How can these two powers, or to use language more appropriate to the Gospel, how can these two services be shared and work together?

Regular work together

We previously spoke about ordinary and extraordinary administration. In my opinion, the work of the Treasurer and Superior together should not be limited to matters of extraordinary administration.

Reflections

It is very important that the Treasurer can regularly voice her concerns, whether with the Visitatrix or during Council meetings (even if she does not have the right to vote). They should listen to her everyday experience in order to prevent the Treasurer from closing herself in her economic and financial vision or her concerns as personnel director.

Even if the Superior has full trust in her Treasurer, even if she remains allergic to numbers (this exists), these times of encounter between the Treasurer and the Superior, in which each one can offer her point of view on what is happening financially in the congregation, are important and vital.

The transmission of files, information and thoughts

It is true that a Superior drowns in files, not counting all the emails that now come to her from all her local communities. Problems in sharing of information can be a source of misunderstanding when making a decision. Ultimately, it is important *to reflect together to allow economic decisions to mature*.

While the Superior and the members of the Council may be alone in voting, decisions should be the object of work in common to allow development of the decision on which the Council will vote.

This is why it is so important to share files and different propositions with their comparative financial impact. This is the work of the Treasurer, who should present it to the Council and listen to its reflection and questions.

One project may have been prepared by the Treasurer's office, but it seems appropriate that the Treasurer be present and might engage in the discussion up to the decision that is the responsibility of the Council, even if it has reasons to go against the initial project of the Treasurer.

If the project is rejected, the Treasurer will not take this decision as a disavowal but as another path that the Council judged better regarding the situation of the congregation.

The budget (see *Guidelines*, 1.1 – **develop multi-year plans**)

One of the places where the responsibilities of the Treasurer and the Superior overlap is during the vote on or the presentation of the budget. The Treasurer and her staff prepare the budget. She provides all the accounting and administrative data. The Superior with her Council will analyze all the needs of the material life of the congregation: care for elderly Sisters, formation of young Sisters, missionary projects, etc. The discussion will center on the following question: if we wish to carry out this activity, what are the financial consequences for today but also for the future of our patrimony?

The budget is a good means to avoid what can sometimes be a certain “irresponsibility” on the part of the congregational leadership; it is also a means to assess how well the Treasurer is keeping accounts and the real financial capacity of the Institute. Each person must face the truth.

The budget is a good school of transparency for the Council and the Treasurer. The decisions and compromises inherent to all management should be justifiable in terms of the chosen goal, in other words, the good of people and the mission of the Institute in the Church and in the world.

To conclude this point, the Superior, each Council member and the Treasurer should ask themselves three questions:

- Who will pay the cost of the decision that we wish to make? This question implies taking into account the economic implications of every decision. For example, when we organize a meeting of young vowed Sisters or an international assembly, we should take the time to ask who will pay. If the question is not asked,

Reflections

this means the value of things has little importance for us. How then could we speak of a witness to poverty?

- Another question: Is it worthwhile? This question demands rigorous analysis of the soundness of a decision and especially how it responds to our missionary objectives but also how we can take measures to find the least wasteful solutions.

- Finally, a third question that implicates each person's conscience: Is there consistency between what we are doing and what we claim to be? Is this the decision most in keeping with our tradition?

The dialogue between Superiors and Treasurers requires their awareness of the specificity of the perspective that they are held to defend. As I have already said, and I insist on this point, this dialogue will be all the easier at the time the General or Provincial Council must make decisions if it is an ordinary, regular practice.

VI - LAY PEOPLE WITH ROLES OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE TREASURER'S OFFICE

(Guidelines, 2.2)

You know that canon law allows a lay person to serve as Diocesan Treasurer. *"All persons, whether clerics or laity, who lawfully take part in the administration of ecclesiastical goods, are bound to fulfill their duties in the name of the Church, in accordance with the law"* (c. 1282).

The task of the congregational treasurer has become so complex that it is legitimate to wonder whether it is possible to find someone competent in so many areas within the Institute, especially when the number of members is decreasing in some countries. Up to now, the Dicastery considers it essential that 'someone from the family' always oversee the finances of the congregation. We surely need to invent another way of being a treasurer. Moreover, this is what is happening today. Perhaps someone does not have to have every skill (who could, anyway?), but know how to seek

good advice and delegate prudently.

Many congregations have thus hired administrative executives, administrative directors, assistant treasurers or others like general managers to collaborate or even take on responsibilities in treasurer's offices. You need good, clear, precise rules for this collaboration with lay people so that each person respects his or her specific domain and contributes what is asked, realizing that the Institute has its operational system, proper laws (canon law, capitular law), charism and missionary priorities.

In any case, there will be a contract, but it should be supplemented by a canonical engagement letter (job description) for that specific function within the Institute. The Superioress with her Council will have responsibility for this contract and not the Treasurer since it falls within extraordinary administration. The *Guidelines* also highlight the role of laypeople. *"Given the complexity of the economic and financial issues with respect to the management of goods and works, it is now almost impossible to do so without the collaboration of professionals, the laity, or members of other Institute.*

"However, two extremes should be avoided: on the one hand, not seeking the service of consultants so as to save money, thereby risking running into legal, economic or tax difficulties, and on the other hand, squandering the Institute's resources through ongoing consulting, sometimes undertaken without appropriate reflection, which does not always produce effective results..."

"Consultants can be of help but cannot assume the responsibility of the Institute" (Guidelines, 2.2).

VII – SHOULD AN INSTITUTE OF CONSECRATED LIFE OR SOCIETY OF APOSTOLIC LIFE HAVE A FINANCE COMMITTEE?

Reflections

I reminded you that the Treasurer is necessarily a Sister (c. 636). In Book V of the Code, canon 1280 indicates, “*Every juridical person is to have its own finance committee, or at least two counselors, who are to assist in the performance of the administrator’s duties.*” We could say that there is no mention of this for Religious Institutes whereas it is obligatory for a parish priest or bishop. We might say that the Superior’s Council plays this role. However, Councillors often do not have the necessary formation in economics.

It is clear that today turning to volunteer or salaried experts has become indispensable. It is important to clearly identify each person’s responsibilities and the decision-making process: an expert advisory group provides all the elements so that the General or Provincial Council can make good “informed” decisions thanks to the expertise of others.

The most recent document from the Dicastery, published March 10, 2018, asks that Institutes establish a finance committee. You can refer to article 2.2 to determine the areas covered, contracts to observe and controls to put in place, as in any organization.

VIII - CONTROLS WITHIN THE TREASURER’S OFFICE AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF GOODS

a/ The issue of supervision

The document of the Dicastery on the administration of assets brings out the **issue of supervision**: “*Supervision and controls are not intended to be means of limiting the autonomy of an entity, nor are they signs of a lack of confidence. Rather they express the service of communion and transparency, as well as providing protection for those with the delicate tasks of administration.*” (Guidelines, 1.2)

In order to achieve these objectives, the *Guidelines* from the Dicastery asks that Superiors together with their Councils:

“Develop internal control systems appropriate to the size of the works, based on proper segregation of duties and with a clear system of authorizations.

- *Ensure that the mission implemented through the assets is in accord with the principles of the Gospel and at the same time done in a cost-effective manner.*

- *Approve investment policies and annual budgets prior to the beginning of the fiscal year.”*

“Treasurers should present periodic reports to the Major Superiors and their Councils regarding the administrative, managerial and financial state... document all transactions and contracts according to the established legal requirements of the respective civil state and use modern systems for the storage and archiving of data.” (Guidelines, 1.2)

b/ Legal responsibilities of individuals who have contracted loans without that right or permission

Several cases are possible. “*If individual members have, with the permission of the Superior, entered into contracts concerning their own property, they are responsible*” (c. 639 § 2). The Superior’s permission is not a guarantee.

On the other hand, if a member is a **representative (proxy) of the Superior** and enters into a contract with the goods of the entity or its own assets, the juridic person is responsible because the individual acts in the name of the Institute.

“*If a religious has entered into a contract without any permission of Superiors, the religious is responsible*” (c. 639). She must assume the legal consequences of these acts. Her Institute is not

Reflections

obligated to repay her debts or to pay the bail potentially required to get her out of prison.

Superiors who would claim to act in the name of the juridic person without receiving the required permission of the Superioress General, for example, those who overstepped their mandate, are answerable for resulting damages.

In terms of canon law, *“However, an action can always be brought against a person who has gained from a contract entered into”* (c. 639).

Finally, we should mention canon 1298, which indicates that ecclesiastical goods should *“not be sold or leased to the administrators themselves or to their relatives up to the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity without the special written permission of the competent ecclesiastical authority.”*

This reminds us that every person in authority in a religious Institute should maintain a healthy distance from the business affairs of her family.

IX - ENCOURAGE SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

Within the congregation

The congregation, before being a local community, a region or a Province, forms what we often call an “apostolic body” (you have the name of ‘Company’). A body consists of many members, but all are interdependent. Remember what Saint Paul said to the Christians of Corinth (1 Cor 12:14-26).

“Now the body is not a single part, but many... The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I do not need you.” ...

God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another.

“If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.”

Our religious vocation, while it touches each one of us in the most intimate part of ourselves, is not an individual vocation.

It is a call to live with others, in community, to establish a unique and specific fraternal body together.

Many forms of solidarity are lived out in the family of a congregation: mutual assistance, comfort, concern for the weakest, the most fragile, etc.

It stands to reason that there is a necessary financial solidarity **within an Institute** among those who have more and those who have less. The Treasurer, with congregational leadership, sees to this. It is not always easy to implement in an Institute that is developing with newer implantations in countries with younger members while it must also cover the expenses of old age in places like Europe.

Canon 670 tells us, *“The institute must supply the members with everything that, in accordance with the constitutions, is necessary to fulfill the purpose of their vocation.”* *“Everything that is necessary”* naturally includes material needs.

Without financial means, the congregation will be immobilized in its plans, missionary projects and development plans, but also in providing for what is necessary for each Sister, especially the elderly and sick.

Within the congregation, it is essential to talk about the financial management of the Province or region in order to make each

Reflections

Sister aware of her responsibility in this area. Modern technology makes it possible to present a balance sheet that is clear and understandable for all.

As an Institute, we should also be concerned about the Sisters' formation in economics. The *Guidelines* ask for this, stressing formation in economic matters during initial formation. They also ask that all the members of the Institute gain awareness of all these practical matters for better *“living out the vow of poverty in the context of the current socio-economic situation.”*

Collaboration with the local Church and other Institutes (*Guidelines*, 2.1 and 2.2)

Canon 586 stresses, *“A true autonomy of life, especially of governance, is recognized for each institute. This autonomy means that each institute has its own discipline in the Church and can preserve whole and entire the patrimony described in Canon 578.”*

It continues in paragraph 2, *“Local Ordinaries have the responsibility of preserving and safeguarding this autonomy.”*

Dialogue with the local Ordinary is always important, even essential, particularly when closing a house or a work or alienating property, even if the law does not require permission but merely consultation with the bishop.

The same paragraph mentions that it is wise to dialogue with other institutes in the region *“in such a way so as to avoid leaving a city or a diocese without the presence of religious”* (2.1).

IN CONCLUSION

Monsignor Carballo, Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic Life, gave this guidance following the Symposium, which will serve as my conclusion.

1 - *“Today the world does not ask us not to have assets but to administer them in full transparency, respect for the law and the spirit of poverty. Transparency is fundamental for the efficiency and effectiveness of the mission.”* Transparency and prudence.

2 - Planning: Institutes should plan their expenses. Good planning helps accomplish the mission and is essential to the Institute's development. An Institute cannot respond to everything or respond immediately. We must learn to plan expenses out over time to avoid any waste.

3 - Take responsibility in the administration of our goods, in how we live the vow of poverty today. Learn to discern in community regarding this economic dimension. Community life can take away our sense of responsibility because we know that ‘the community will provide.’

During the Symposium, Monsignor Carballo mentioned the congregational behaviors that do not help young members know the real cost of things during formation *“when these young people are used to receiving everything without participating in the material life of the house.”*

4 - Collaboration with lay people. It is important to accept help from lay collaborators and experts of all sorts (tax and administrative experts).

Father Jean-Paul MARSAUD
Son of Charity

Closing of the Visitatrixes' Inter-Assemblies Meeting

*“Go therefore... and behold,
I am with you always...” (Mt 28:19, 20).*

May 27, 2018

Happy Feast of the Holy Trinity!

In my prayer with the Scripture readings for today, I realized how blessed we are to be concluding our Inter-Assemblies Meeting on a day that the Gospel clearly states that we must go out to bring the Good News to all. How appropriate that the great commission should be the focus of our liturgy as we close this meeting. These days have challenged us to more fully understand our call to discern, accompany, and exercise authority at the service of communion, and now we go forth to put our discoveries into practice. What assurance in our Lord's promise: *“And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

Encouraged by, grounded in, and enriched by this presence, we pray that we will continue to open ourselves to the culture of encounter and reflect the joy of responding to Christ as authentic servants of those who are poor. Yes, encounter, mystique of communion, joy, and radical choices... All these expressions spring from grateful hearts and an intense desire for growth that impel us forward.

In my opening presentation, I spoke of the grace of gathering during the Easter Season – a time characterized by rejoicing and

Alleluia's as well as by the assurance of God's unconditional love for us. We recalled the determined and hope-filled women who went to the tomb to anoint Jesus, manifesting their love for Him. Remember: “They didn't hold back...” They refused to be swayed from their desire to approach Him or from their joy-filled mission. We also reflected on the response of St. Louise, who in a similar way turned to the Lord, trusted in His love, and in a time of darkness and confusion received a “light” that guided her forward. We have sought to learn from these holy women during these weeks together at the Mother House. Now, I dare say that the spirit here evidences that we wish to follow their examples!

We have each worked very hard, we have prayed well, we have discerned both individually and as a group, and I have no doubt that we have developed relationships among ourselves. The bonds will continue to strengthen in the days, months, and years ahead.

As I reflect on our shared experience, I am filled with gratitude and admiration. Our personal encounters, framed by our desire to fully live the boldness of charity for a new missionary momentum, have been a blessing. We also drew on the wisdom of Cardinal Tagle, Father Tomáš, Father Henri Aubert, Brother Jean Paul Marsaud, Sister Catherine Prendergast, our own missionary Sisters, and our brother priests of the Congregation of the Mission who through the celebration of the Eucharist gifted us daily.

Those who are poor have been respectfully present in our discussions. Through testimonies of experiences from every continent on which we serve, we were given the privilege of entering more deeply into the world of those living in poverty. We were moved by simple sharing. We heard about modern day slaveries, exclusion, violence, insecurity, what we can change and what we are powerless to change... We were reminded how much those who are poor teach us and call us to *be more*... We had the joy of seeing glimmers of hope as a direct result of our Sisters' presence in the lives of those who are poor and well-organized and creative networking and collaboration endeavors.

Closing of the Visitatrixes' Inter-Assemblies Meeting

My heart was touched daily by the witness of the bold, energizing and very engaged manner that each of you – 64 united hearts and souls – entered into this experience of attentive listening and sharing. Your example encourages and edifies me. This special opportunity for connection and unity gives me many reasons to praise and thank our Lord. It has been a sacred time to concretely live the spirit of communion.

It is my hope – and indeed my expectation - that the prayer, the conversations, and the networking that we have talked about during our time together will continue to lead us forward through these next three years and beyond. The General Council is committed to supporting and accompanying you in your service of authority and to discerning the Assembly theme and process that will be most life giving for the Company and those whom we serve. It is all of the Sisters who will help us more fully center our lives on Christ, lead us to the peripheries, and be evangelized and formed by those who are poor.

May we explore more deeply the newness of the Gospel, opening not only our minds but also our hearts to the words of Cardinal Tagle who encouraged us to take seriously our responsibility to develop a culture of encounter, evoke noble truths, build bridges, inspire trust and promote the common good. Let us pray to do all of this with charity... I am encouraged by our choice to continue to dare to face the important questions before us and seek to live simply and radically in today's world. It is evident that we want to accentuate internationality, community life, formation and a culture of vocation, and apostolic life. I am convinced that our authentic living as servants of those who are poor will pave the way for newness and boldness. Let us fully live the richness of our charism, finding Christ in those who are poor and finding those who are poor in Christ (C. 10). Thank you for your profound invitations to be more. May we have the courage to respond!

And now, it is with a deep joy that, in your name, I give thanks to the Lord for the many people who made this meeting such a

beneficial and memorable experience for us:

First of all, although he is not here in person, I thank Father Tomáš for being with us last weekend and for his sharing. I am conscious of the many responsibilities he carries as leader of the Vincentian Family and his full daily schedule. I am personally grateful that he takes so seriously St. Louise's desire that the Vincentian priests be our spiritual guides and collaborators in formation. Although his time with us was short in hours, the quality of his presence spoke volumes. His genuine interest in our needs and in working closely with us is very evident.

I sincerely thank you, Father Bernard, for accompanying us spiritually on this "pilgrimage". It was you who initially encouraged us during our journey through your retreat conferences and homilies. We are also most grateful for your daily presence and availability.

I also wish to thank the Sisters who offered themselves in order that all would go smoothly throughout our meeting, namely:

- The Sisters of the Mother House, who have facilitated our work by being so available to us and continually meeting all of our needs – from our dining rooms to our meeting rooms, to the bedroom areas, indeed everywhere at 140 rue du Bac;
- The Sisters in the Secretariat, who met you at airports, prepared materials and so much more;
- The translators, who have enabled so much of our communication;
- The team in the control booth who prepared the prayer reflections and helped us here in the Conference Hall;
- and Sister Marie Odile Herbet, our Secretary General, and Sister Teresa Sanno, our Treasurer General, whose presence was appreciated and whose unassuming service keeps us moving forward.

I extend my gratitude to Sister Hanna Cybula and Sister Maria Teresa Mueda who tirelessly helped to assure prayerful and well-prepared liturgies.

Closing of the Visitatrixes' Inter-Assemblies Meeting

No words could adequately express our appreciation to the members of the Preparatory Commission. They began their task long before the opening of this meeting and worked long hours during it. Sister Micheline Tremblay, Sister Françoise Petit, Sister Iliana Suarez, Sister Mary Ann Evidente, and Sister Aleksandra Wydra. We have been touched by your wisdom, your total availability and your flexibility – accomplishing everything with competence, a smile, and an assuring sense of calm.

Sisters, I believe that you have seen first-hand how fully engaged all of the members of the General Council have been. For me, this has been a tremendous support, and I believe they have been an affirming presence for you during these days.

I also want to thank you, Sisters – the Visitatrixes present. These past three weeks would not have been as rich as they were had you not given of yourselves fully as we met together in work groups, forums, and plenary sessions, as well as at times of prayer and relaxation. In addition, I offer special thanks to those of you who assisted us by serving as moderators and secretaries in work groups and forums.-

Thanks to your sharing and work, we are able to serve you better. We ask for your prayers and promise you our dedication and open and ongoing communication. We will do our best to pursue the work that you have entrusted to us for the preparation of the upcoming Assemblies.

I would like to conclude by inviting Christ to dwell ever more deeply in our hearts, and by calling upon the intercession of St. Vincent and St. Louise who, I am confident, are smiling on their Daughters at this very moment. May our Holy Founders continue to encourage each of us to learn from and imitate Mary, who welcomed our Lord so totally in her life. In simplicity, I echo the prayer of consecration, which we had the privilege to offer at Chartres just one week ago. I have edited it slightly for us this morning. I am convinced that it is the best way for us to continue

our sacred pilgrimage towards our Assemblies.

Let us pray:

O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, following in the footsteps of St. Louise, we implore you to look upon the Little Company of today, with its weaknesses and its good will, as totally yours. You are our “only Mother.” We entreat you to be ever mindful of this.

Assured of your love and compassion, we are confident that you will obtain for us fidelity to the spirit and the grace of spiritual discernment to be, today, truly in the service of Christ in the poor and the grace of union among ourselves so that we may truly be missionary.

Help us to enter resolutely in the way of authentic conversion. May the radicality of the evangelical counsels of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience truly be alive in us and sustain our will to be totally given to God to serve Him corporally and spiritually in the person of the poor. Mary Immaculate, keep the entire Company under your protection in complete fidelity to the designs of God for it.

We recommend to you the Provinces that are suffering, and in particular those confronted by situations of war or violence. Grant that the Daughters of Charity everywhere may be witnesses of the Gospel and of the love of Jesus Christ. Amen!

May each of us now go forth filled with gratitude for all that has been, and may we live in joyful anticipation of what is yet to come, assured that God is with us always!

Sister Kathleen APPLER
Daughter of Charity

**“This tradition, so dear to the Company,
of celebrating the feast of its Superioress
the very day that the Church celebrates
the feast of the Queen of Heaven,
is an annually-repeated affirmation
of its total belonging
to its only Mother.
It should also cause
each one of us to ask herself
if she fulfills well her duty
of praise and love
for our divine Mother
due her as Mother of our God
and our true Superioress.”**

Mother Guillemin, August 15, 1962

