

Subject II:

"The service
of animation and
the leadership in
the apostolic action
SS.CC."



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Congregation of the Sacred Hearts
General Government



LETTER OF THE GENERAL SUPERIOR

Dear Brothers,

Best wishes from Rome.

I would like to offer a brief introduction to this document you have in your hands.

It is entitled, *The Service of Authority and Leadership in the SS.CC. Apostolate Work*. The introduction will help you understand the context of the document and the different elements that make it up. So I will not repeat what you will read there. However I think it is important to offer some comments on the value that I see in this work that you are just now receiving.

The context for the document is the process of clarifying the ministry of authority and leadership that is so necessary right now in the Congregation. An important aspect of the booklet is to help us identify

the characteristics of how we exercise authority and what type of leadership we must provide in our apostolates. For us as apostolic religious to look at this aspect is to treat something essential to our vocation and mission as members of the Congregation.

In its content and the methodology used of highlighting certain characteristics from the Good Father and his writings, the Constitutions and Rule of Life and ways of living our charism at this time in our history, the document treats not only the exercise of apostolic authority but also spirituality. Many times, during visits and in various meetings, I have experienced the urgent need that brothers have for reflection and input on this area of spirituality for mission. Without pretending that we find in this document a complete response to that need, however I do believe that brothers will find here suggestions and input which can help all of us to continue growing in this area.

Considering how we have chosen to respond to this question, I sincerely believe that this will affect not only the exercise of apostolic authority and its spirituality, but in a certain way the Congregation's apostolate itself as an expression of our common mission. So I see this work offering different points for reflection and further study of basic elements of our life as religious of the Sacred Hearts at the service of the churches and peoples

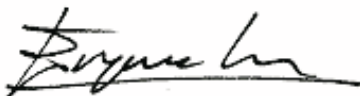
among whom we find ourselves.

In our attempt to define and clarify the ministry of authority since the last General Chapter, we have always thought that key to the process would be dialogue and sharing among those responsible implementing the process, in this case the General Government and all the brothers of the Congregation or at least a great number of them. For that reason, the material you have already received and this booklet can be considered, as the introduction says, *a collective work*. But neither do the former documents nor this one pretend to be *definitive*. These are areas we have to keep working on. They are more points for the ongoing discussion than anything else. We have some idea of the direction we have to take and we must keep moving forward.

Besides introducing the document, I would like to invite you to use it for study, reflection and discussion. It's a resource to be used for ongoing formation, which is something we all need in order to continue to be effective in our common mission. It could also be an interesting resource for initial formation. So I would invite the formation teams to give attention to this booklet which is being made available.

Finally, I would like to thank especially all those who have participated in the creation of this document. As the introduction says, they were many. I trust that their incredible dedication to this work has been worth the effort and that this booklet will be a help to our apostolate.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Enrique Losada', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Enrique Losada ss.cc.
Superior General

REFLECTIONS ON THE SERVICE AUTHORITY AND LEADERSHIP IN THE SS.CC. APOSTOLATE

I. INTRODUCTION.

This document is the fruit of a long period of concientization and reflection concerning the *service of authority and leadership* in our Congregation. The topic came up more explicitly in the Enlarged General Council in Poitiers (1998) and was taken up again in the Thirty-sixth General Chapter (2000). The chapter published a document on the topic and one of its decisions was that:

The General Chapter asks the General Government to put into place a process of defining and describing the leadership which the Congregation needs at this time. (Thirty-sixth General Chapter, Doc. 5, Decision 1)

When the General Government developed its Government Plan, it decided two things in this area: a) to work on this description at three levels (the service of the local superior, the apostolic service of the brothers, the service of the Provincial, Vice-provincial and Regional Superior) and b) to develop a participative process of study which would include both the

experience of the brothers today as well as the life of the Good Father. To that end, first we consulted *the brothers having experience in government*, then during a meeting organized by the Latin American inter-provincial conference (Meeting of provincial councils in Belo Horizonte, Brazil) we consulted the participants, and then three *Guides for Sharing Experiences* were sent to a sampling of brothers (Guide I, for local superiors, Guide 2, for brothers responsible for apostolic works, Guide III for Major and regional Superiors). On a few occasions we also asked the help of consultants within the congregation who helped us to revise and improve the texts.

On the basis of that input we developed a working document which, besides bringing together the apostolic experience of the brothers, also would include our congregational tradition expressed especially in the letters of the Good Father and in our official documents (the Constitutions and Rule of Life). The process, which included selecting, studying and reflecting on past and present experience, meant we had to begin *defining and describing the leadership which the Congregation needs at this time*. It was thus that we finally arrived at characterizing ss.cc. leadership in the apostolate under nine headings. It seems that these characteristics, in as much as they point to attitudes and styles of apostolic service, also will mean considering some organizational aspects of our apostolate. This could lend greater coherence to the relationship between personal attitudes and organization. In that sense the chapter said:

...*spirituality requires organization and vice versa...*(General Chapter 2000, p. 18).

Pointing out certain characteristics evidently does not mean that each brother possesses or must possess equally all the characteristics. Each person has their own gifts and abilities which will come out in one way or another in the apostolic ministry. However we would wish that the Congregation as a whole would incarnate and transmit to the church and the world today this ensemble of characteristics which is so much in keeping with our ss.cc. style of community.

In the course of trying to describe the type of leadership that the Congregation needs today, the reflection has led us not only to a description of characteristics, but to a richer awareness of a spirituality of our ss.cc. ministry.

During 2002 we sent the major and regional Superiors the document entitled *Orientations: Animation of the Local SS.CC. Community*, suggesting ways the document could be used in developing orientations for local superior. We are now sending this second document: reflections on *the Service of Authority and Leadership in the SS.CC. Apostolate*.

We have adopted the following schema. Each characteristic is treated under four headings.

- The Scriptures
- The Good Father and his writings
- Constitutions and Rule of Life
- Living this Today

If someone were to ask us, “what questions is the booklet meant to answer?” we would say the following:

1) It is meant to clarify our apostolic identity as religious of the Sacred Hearts in the church.

2) It tries to respond to the desire to deepen our understanding of ourselves as a community in mission and to move forward together as brothers with a common focus. By looking at these characteristics we can grow in a common idea of the religious life and apostolic ministry. That can allow us to overcome divisions in this area.

3) It is meant to connect us anew with our origins (refoundation) and encourage us to give ourselves anew to our service of apostolic authority.

Clearly the Thirty-sixth General Chapter did not explicitly discuss this idea of *lack of identity*. However we wanted to include the relationship of identity and the service of apostolic authority given that it seems clear that this is frequently a challenge and a limitation to our apostolate. How can we find inspiration in our

ss.cc. charism so as to shed light on our apostolic service? That is not so as to be different but rather that we might make the contribution that gives reason to our existence and enriches the church.

As regards ways to use this document, we would invite all the brothers and communities to actively receive these reflections and to continue the dialogue already begun and so as to respond in an ever deeper manner to the topic that the General Chapter proposed. There is no doubt that there will be different ways of using this document and the Superiors at the different levels can find the best ways for the brothers to make use of it. We would also point out that this document could be used to great advantage in initial and ongoing formation and in the reflection of commissions and pastoral teams.

We can not conclude this introduction without thanking the many brothers who contributed to this work. We can speak of a collective work, with all the richness that implies. There is also the added richness of the diversity proper to an international community. We want to thank the brothers who have shared their experience in governing and animating the congregation, all those who shared their experience by responding to the three guides, the Latin American conference and the participants in its meeting of provincial, vice-provincial and regional councils, and to all the consultants who offered their input in revising and improving the texts. A special thanks goes to the team

of three brothers, who were asked to be editors. They have done an invaluable service. Finally we thank all those who have helped in the publication of the document, the brother who did the final redaction, the translators, the General Secretary and the printers. Thanks to all.

**General Government SS.CC.
Rome, June 29, 2004
Feast of SS. Peter and Paul**

* **ABBREVIATIONS:**

Texts

Abbreviations:

CONSTITUTIONS Constitutions, art.

RULE of LIFE RL, n° (RV)

LETTRES et ÉCRITS du BON PÈRE
N° letter,/date/addressee/ LEBP
Text (volume, page)

LETTRES et ÉCRITS
de la BONNE MÈRE LEBM

CAHIERS DE SPIRITUALITÉ CS 10, n°

36th GENERAL CHAPTER 2000 CG (CG)

BIBLICAL CITATIONS from the "New Revised Standard Version".

It's an ecumenical translation, very close to the original and it is appropriately inclusive.

ANNEX: Lists of the apostolic features in three languages.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF SS.CC. APOSTOLIC LEADERSHIP

1

*But it is your providence, O Father,
that steers its course,
because you have given it a path in the sea,
and a safe way through the waves... "*
(Wisdom 14:3)

Service of authority
which seeks the will of God and trusts
in Providence:

LEADERSHIP: TRUSTING IN PROVIDENCE

The first characteristic of the exercise of authority in our ss.cc. apostolate which we want to treat is one that makes us aware that our work is God's work. We want to be leaders who serve apostolically trusting radically in the Good God. We can speak of leadership which trusts in providence.



A. THE SCRIPTURES

** This God--his way is perfect; the promise of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all who take refuge in him. (2 Samuel 22:31; Psalm 18:31)*

** But Maccabeus did not cease to trust with all confidence that he would get help from the Lord. (2 Maccabees 15:7)*

** Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the LORD God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. (Isaiah 12:2)*

** Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. (Jeremiah 17:7)*

** Happy are those who make the LORD their trust... (Psalm 40:4a)*

** Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:35-37)*

** So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6)*

** And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence. (1 John 2:28a)*

** And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. (1 John 5:14)*



B. THE GOOD FATHER AND HIS WRITINGS

If there is something that is clearly always present in the mind of the Good Father it is that what he does is not his but it is the work of God. In a letter to Father Raphael Bonamie he points out: *The Heart of our Good Master Whom I serve will have pity on His work and on His servant who until now has relied much more on His Grace than on the talents or the minds of men.* CS 10, n. 198). The Good Father understands his own role (leadership-authority) *as simply instrumental. Faith was the basis of his courage in situations that humanly speaking were almost insurmountable.* CS 10, n. 199)

Understanding Life from the Perspective of Providence

Various commentaries on the Good Father's life and spirituality show how he understood his life and experience as under God's providence. His writings manifest a faith experience which contributed to his formation as a spiritual person. The profound crises which he was to experience, both outside (economic, political, social religious) and within the newborn community (lack of finances, inexperience, health problems etc) led the founder to appeal to God in

radical faith. (Cf. CS 10, nn. 92-94)

Belief in a Provident God

His vision of a provident God led the Good Father to constantly turn in trust to God: *His experience with human limitations and fragility of the support that others could offer was keen but it must be noted that at no point did that cause the founder to become discouraged...but rather he found in having recourse to Providence the secret of fruitfulness and the strength to overcome all difficulties.*(CS 10, n. 96) This basic attitude (which can be seen in his way of referring to God) is what distinguished and colored the way he exercised authority and animated the community. We could say that he relied on God in everything and trusted that he was on his side. As the Good Father saw it, it was from this provident goodness that we received all God's gifts: *The 'Good God' gives us His grace, His blessing; He sustains and guides us during our life. He accomplishes His work in us and through us.* (these were the expressions he used most commonly) (CS 10, n. 98)

We could mention some of his many sayings which demonstrate what we are saying:

- When I finally left the Maumin's, I prostrated myself at the foot of an oak tree not far from the house, and I offered my life to God. I had become a priest with the intention of suffering everything, of sacrificing myself to the Good Lord and, if need be, of dying in His service. However, I always had the

presentiment that I would escape....(CS 10, n. 60)

- However, the Good God often miraculously multiplies our natural resources, and this strengthens my faith that we are His children. (CS 10, n. 101)

- I live only to bind together at a great price the work of the Heart of the amiable Master Who showers me with favors. Even if I am ungrateful, He still loves me, and I feel that He will love me always; yes, always. It would be impossible for me to write to you of His immense power within me...(CS 10, n. 102)

- In the Circular Letter in which he announces the approbation of the Constitutions he says: Prodigies of divine goodness have been necessary to sustain us amid the storms. The Lord has not ceased to shower miracles of His Providence upon us. He has led us, as it were by the hand. Each day we receive proofs of His protection. (CS 10, n. 109)

The words of the Good Father not only manifest his own vision of providence. His vision becomes a proclamation. It will characterize his way of accompanying and animating those who are under his care. In other words, it marks his apostolic style and his authority as founder and Superior General:

- The Good God loves you, I remind you, so begin again with a little more gaiety. You are where God has placed you. Remain there calmly. (CS 10, n. 107)

- Arm yourself with courage and in a very short time you will be happy and wise. The Good God looks with great mercy upon you poor as you are, and I would never want to

oppose that in any way...(CS 10, n. 108)

- Never be discouraged... Taste God in life's journey. He alone is good. His will is the only good. Outside of His Heart all is but bitterness...all is nothing except to love God. Let us then live for Him alone and let us die out of the desire to please Him. This is true happiness. (CS 10, n. 126)

As we attempt to clarify and define our service of authority, it is interesting to remember this fundamental characteristic which we need to make our own today. In the Cahier on some characteristics of the Good Father we read: *The Good Father strove to live in the presence of God, to work for His Glory, to adore His Designs, and to do His Will in all the most important and most decisive acts of his life. These acts were an apostolic activity full of initiative and sensitivity to providential signs. ..Christian hope sustained him in even the most contradictory circumstances. He felt that his most fundamental duty and that of his followers consisted in a spirit of Faith, Hope and Abandonment to God.* (CS 10, n. 114) This way of living his faith and his consecration challenges us in the midst of all the difficult situations in which we must exercise our apostolate today.

Finally, this provident goodness is revealed in Christ. Providence is at work in Jesus and is found in him. The life and the writings of the Good Father are clearly Christocentric. The centrality of the person of

Christ is symbolized and expressed in the devotion to the Sacred Heart.



C. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULE OF LIFE

Our Constitutions help us to see that the source of our communion in mission is a personal encounter with the risen Lord in prayer. They speak of prayer as adoration, praise and the silence of one who surrenders to the action of God within. From this encounter with God in prayer we believe that it is He who calls us and gives us his Spirit, transforming us into his witnesses (Cf. Constitutions, art. 50)

Leadership that trusts in providence is a characteristic of our apostolic leadership that is manifested both in interior receptivity and in exterior activity. Some articles of the Rule of Life help us appreciate this aspect of the proclamation of God's love, which is poured forth upon us and awakens in us trust.

In Article 50 of the Constitutions reflects an interior receptive sense of leadership which trusts in providence. From the personal encounter with the risen Lord there flows an attitude of surrender and an awareness of being called, an apostolic vocation resounding in the depth of one's heart. The Rule of Life invites us to believe in the value of apostolic action in itself; for if realized according to the plan of God

it deepens and sanctifies us. (Cf. RV, n. 29)

Leadership which trusts in providence exteriorly and actively means that we continually invite others to seek the will of God and to grow in a deeper confidence in his Providence.

Leadership that is conscious that our activity is the work of God must be, at the same time, leadership that awakens that sentiment in all men and women and that helps them discover the call to be instruments of God's action placing radical confidence in Him. The Good Father invites us *to call men back to the confidence and the love of Jesus Christ.* (RV, n. 24) In our vocation we have this beautiful privilege of proclaiming the Good news in a world not accustomed to hearing it. We are to be preachers who invite people to trust in the redemptive power of love, who awaken the awareness of God's infinite tenderness and merciful goodness. Above all we preach love. (Cf. RV, n. 25)

The action flowing from leadership that trusts in Providence also nourishes inner receptivity as well. When we trust in God, are concerned for others and are interested in the well being and peace of all, a process of deep purification begins. We learn how to recognize and accept our limitations. Working for Christ and his Gospel and seeking only the Reign of God, we have to continually renew our intention to work purely for God and to renounce any selfish motives and the

tendency to seek self-satisfaction and personal success.
(RV, nn. 29-30)



D. LIVING THIS TODAY

Sustained by the Creative and Provident Love of God

Divine Providence, which was an element of our founding charism, is fruit of the sovereign will of God. His Fatherly love is superabundant and is expressed in his eternal will to create and to sustain what he has created. So God continues to reveal himself in what he has created, always in favor life against death and light over darkness.

From this experience of being sustained by God's creative and provident love, leadership that trusts in God's providence can become a source of growth as a Son of God which in turn unites us and identifies us with *the childhood of Jesus*. We become sons who trust in the Father; we grow in confidence and simplicity founded in the certainty of his love. We are sons of a Father who, as he does with everything in our life, also sustains our evangelizing mission. In accepting our apostolic service as sons trusting in the Father's providence, we are not only overwhelmed by an attitude of surrender, but we are also called to purify ourselves of unconscious motivations and personal self-seeking which impoverishes our ministry.

Confidence in the Father opens us to confidence in others

Radical confidence in God the Father, also enables us to trust ourselves and others: the men and women with whom we share our apostolate and those whom we are called to serve. We are able to perceive the action of the creative and provident love of God both in ourselves and in our neighbor. Fraternity, which is the fruit of recognizing that we are children of the same Father, is not only the purpose of our apostolic service but also must be a means by which we carry out that service.

Providence: the care of God for people

Finally, providence is the way God cares for men, women and all of creation so that we arrive at the end for which he created us. As sons and apostles, as those who minister and those who are ministered to, we must be convinced that our God watches over his creation and that nothing will be lacking to those who trust completely in Him. This is the conviction that allows us to entrusting today's concerns to God and tomorrows as well. So we can say each day, *I will both lie down and sleep in peace; . . .* (Psalm 4:8) or, *In you, O LORD, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame* (Psalms 31:2, 71:1). Divine providence frees us from different kinds of fatalistic thinking, preserves and governs the world and especially the life and history of humankind.

Between Personal Responsibility and God's Action

To speak of divine Providence is not the same as falling into *providentialism*, so common in the past, nor into its post-modern derivative, *fatalism*. Belief in Divine Providence clearly preserves the necessary balance between personal responsibility and the action of God in our ministry. We must try to lead in such a way that we seek the will of God and at the same time are co-responsible for making it happen. We know that the Lord gives the growth and we also remember what it means to take our own responsibility. We can both *let God be God* and also rest in hope.

We believe in the necessity and importance of apostolic leadership that is aware that its work is that of God. This is leadership which inspires us to animate Christian communities trusting radically in the Good God and his Providence.

2

The Spirit of the Lord es upon me...

(Lk. 4: 18).

Authority that is inspired and inspiring:

LEADERSHIP IN THE SPIRIT AND THROUGH THE SPIRIT

The basis of SS.CC. apostolic leadership is living deeply the spirituality of the Congregation. The foundation of any kind of leadership is the personal experience of knowing oneself loved unconditionally by God, who is pure love. This is the provident God who has led us by his Spirit to enter the Congregation in order to follow Jesus and share in his mission. Trust in the love of God opens us to the action of his Spirit, this openness itself being a gift of God. A heart which possesses a deep conviction and experience of the love of God, can then exercise the ministry of authority with freedom and generosity.

SS.CC. apostolic leadership is conscious that this ministry is a grace. It is strengthened by the recognition of the movement of the Spirit in oneself and others and is open to the future with hope. The Spirit instills an apostolic energy and zeal which shapes the life of

the ss.cc. leader. In his desire to be faithful to the Spirit, and trusting in his presence, he is daring, creative and takes risks. Exercising leadership according to the ss.cc. charism leads to an ever deeper communion with Jesus and configuration to him and to the creation and animation of communion at all levels.



A. THE SCRIPTURES

** ...he has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft...(Exodus 35:31)*

** The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you (Luke 1:35)*

** But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.(Luke 2:19)*

** And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. (Matthew 3:16)*

** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1)*

** The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free...(Luke 4:18)*

** But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)*

** When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. (John 15:26)*

** ... that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me*

and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:21)

** When the day of Pentecost had come...All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1, 4)*

** ...but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5)*

** ...and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit...To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12: 3b-4, 7)*

** Do not neglect the gift that is in you (1 Timothy 4:14)*

** ...let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5)*

** The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." (Revelation 22:17)*



B. THE GOOD FATHER AND HIS WRITINGS

The Good Father wanted to do everything in his life following *the light of the Holy Spirit*. The formula of his first vows is stated this way: *I, Brother Marie-Joseph, make vows of chastity, poverty, obedience according to the light of the Holy Spirit for the good of the work.* (CS 10, n. 175)

In his letters he repeatedly asks for prayer to receive the Spirit. In the Circular dated July 20, 1819, in which he convokes the first General Chapter, he points out: *You understand, very dear Brothers, how important it is to beg the light of the Holy Spirit upon our deliberations. We urge you, then, you and all our brothers, to beseech the Lord in constant prayer that He deign to bless our efforts.* (CS 10, n. 163). He desires that the Spirit assist the brothers (Cf. CS 10, nn. 159, 161, 165). He asks that they take time to deliberate and to consult the Holy Spirit (Cf. CS 10, n. 162). In no way does he want to go against the Holy Spirit who guides the Work. In a letter to the Good Mother, after showing his displeasure because of a new foundation (Mortagne), he says to her: *However, I would be distressed at contradicting the Spirit of the Good God...*(CS 10, n. 164). In the same way he asks the assistance of the Spirit of God to choose the best

missionaries. (CS 10, n. 169)

In difficulties, turn to the Spirit

When there are difficulties in living communion in some of the communities, he invites them to appeal to the Spirit of God, *who is all charity* (CS 10, n. 165), (Cf. CS 10, nn 166, 171). He continuously invites them to allow themselves be led by the Holy Spirit who creates deep communion, the family spirit and relationships that are close, simple and affectionate.

The Good Father also trusts in the action of the Holy Spirit in other people. He encourages them to discern and supports their decision (Cf. CS 10, n. 168). Trust in the action of the Holy Spirit in his sons, leads him to trust them, to give them real autonomy and to try to support them with his personal esteem. (Cf. 10, nn. 232-234)

A Pastor who does the will of God

The Good Father is a pastor whose guiding principle is to do the will of God for the good of the church. This is what he gives his insight and his energy to. Openness to God's will comes before everything else. At adoration and in his reflection he tries to discern what the Spirit is asking of the church in general and

the Work in particular. He tries to remain current of what is going on in the church and society. He sought the best way of serving the cause of God in the midst of the political and ecclesial events in which he lived. He did not allow himself to get attached to one way of doing things. He listened to all, particularly the Good Mother, in whom he recognized someone with special gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Attitude of Availability

He also invited his sons and daughters to have a similar attitude of openness, adaptation to circumstance, and of ready willingness to respond to the needs of the moment (Cf. LEBP 2114/25.11.1836/8, 358) Constant openness to the will of God was a way to and an expression of holiness, which he understood as the goal of the believer and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Sanctification, as openness to the merciful love of God, something we do individually and also with others. Authentic apostolic leadership helps others appreciate and experience holiness as growth in love. The Good Father exercised a kind of leadership in which his own experience and his authenticity were an invitation to others to set out on the path toward holiness and encounter with God. He also called the members of the Congregation to offer this service to

others. (Cf. LEBP 1375/1.4.1828/7, 132 and LEBP 1793/21.6.1833/8, 192)

In the midst of intense apostolic activity, the Good Father knew how to find moments for silence, meditation, and reading and particularly for adoration. He knew how to be open to the Spirit's lead and for that reason he had to find particular times to let the Spirit act. He was a zealous pastor, who ran countless risks in the course of his life. His attitude toward the mission was one of service and sacrifice, which was an expression of his profound experience of Eucharist and adoration.

In many of his letters Father Damien, an outstanding son of the Good Father, very movingly expresses this kind of availability, openness and acceptance of the will of God. He also refers to its source, the *secret* of his great courage and self-sacrifice.



C. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULE OF LIFE

The Constitutions present our apostolic activity and especially the pastoral leadership that the brothers exercise in the context of a community that has received the charism of our founders and tries to remain faithful to that gift. The starting point is the acceptance of the charismatic gift of our vocation (Cf. Constitutions, art. 11) and the Spirit's action in each brother. He becomes more and more absorbed in the mission of Jesus as a way of living his religious profession. (Cf. Constitutions, art. 12-13) It is a charismatic experience, the movement of the Spirit to which each brother responds freely. It becomes central to his identity and key to the development of his human liberty and dignity. Configured to Jesus (*in Jesus we find everything*) we become *free* to be with him and *available* to be sent.

A ministry whose foundation is the Spirit

The Constitutions also reflect the essentially communal nature of our mission (Cf. Constitutions, art. 40-41). The result of the charismatic experience is life in communion, unity in the depth of our being and a *family spirit*. This is expressed at different levels and in diverse ways. Our ministry as ss.cc. religious is based

in this experience of the Spirit who helps us grow as persons in communion.

The exercise of apostolic leadership is received and exercised as an expression of obedience to God's will and of trust in the action of the Holy Spirit in oneself, in the religious community, in the church and in the world. It is a constant attitude of fidelity to God's will which involves a continual exercise of discernment, openness, availability and docility. As the apostles, who were anointed by the Spirit on Pentecost, the zeal that is so much a part of our charismatic tradition produces leaders who risk, who daringly take initiative, who come up with new responses to challenges, who have the daring of the simple, who are not prevented from acting because of limitations, who are not put off by the sacrifices demanded, but who trust in the strength of the Spirit and are enflamed by his love (Cf. RV, n. 24). This is the only way to be faithful to the Good Father's style of leadership, which he passes on to us. (Cf. RV, nn. 16-19).

Leadership and growth in ones vocation

In this process of creative fidelity and ongoing conversion, article 43.2 of the Constitutions offers some criteria which, while meant for our apostolic ministry in its enriching tension with community life, are perfectly applicable to the exercise of apostolic leadership. Authentic apostolic leadership calls for an

attitude of continual conversion which leads one to a more intense and joyous living of consecration and service. When apostolic leadership is experienced as trust in the will of God, in spite of the difficulties and sacrifices it involves, it becomes a way of growing in our vocation to holiness of which the Good Father speaks (Cf. Constitutions, art. 43.2). Leadership that is open to the Holy Spirit's action, recognizing him present in other people, especially the little ones, becomes a spiritual experience which nourishes and enriches community life and prayer (Cf. Constitutions, art. 43, 2, b). The exercise of leadership in and through the Spirit leads to a deeper living of one's vocation (Cf. RV, n. 29).

To act only for Christ and his Gospel

Leadership in and through the Spirit, is aware of ones deepest motivations, seeking to work only for Christ and his Gospel. It is leadership which emphasizes what is deeply spiritual and which does not fall into activism even though it is a source of enormous apostolic activity (RV, n. 30).

The vision the Constitutions give us of the mission to which we are called and of which our ministries are an expression, leads us necessarily to moments of personal encounter with the risen Lord, especially in the Eucharist and adoration. Our communion in mission finds its deepest roots there

(Constitutions, art. 50). Surrender to the action of the Holy Spirit, availability and generosity of heart, which absolutely necessary for the exercise of leadership, find in the living of the Eucharist (bread shared, feet washed) their source. In our ss.cc. spirituality leadership in and through the Spirit finds its summit and source in the Eucharist and adoration (Cf. Constitutions, Art. 5).

The intimate relationship between action and prayer

We are speaking of a style of leadership which accepts the close connection between action and prayer. Any apostolic vocation requires action and prayer. They give a vocation depth and consistency. In animating the People of God, *Action also purifies prayer; in a certain sense, it is the test of the genuineness of our prayer* and also *Prayer is a place for conversion, where the poor man returns to his God* (Cf. RV, nn. 29 and 31).



D. LIVING THIS TODAY

The Spirit breathes where he will

Leadership in and through the Spirit, recognizes and rejects the temptation to want to control the Spirit's action. It accepts the risks of *parresia* (courage, audacity which the Spirit gives) and is open to the unexpected and the surprising. It tries to scrutinize the signs of hope and builds on them. The church today needs this type of ministry that does not suffocate the signs of renewal and hope both in the younger and in the older churches.

To know the signs of the times

This is a unavoidable element of leadership in and through the Spirit. The changing world in which we live continually challenges apostolic leaders. Faithfulness to the Gospel and the mission call for an understanding of reality in light of the paschal event. This is no easy task. It requires asceticism, learning and acquiring the habits of contemplation and critical thinking. Basic attitudes founded in trust in the Spirit's action (faith, hope, generosity, daring, audacity etc.) grow in contemplative Eucharistic adoration, in study and silent meditation of the word of God. At the same

time it calls for an analytic study of the world around us, which involves reading, study and shared reflection and a critical attitude with respect to events (Constitutions, art. 35,2; Statutes, nn. 1 and 7) There is nothing more creative and daring than the Spirit of God. No one is going to penetrate and understand the world more deeply than the one who looks and listens with the eyes and heart of Jesus.

To discern and promote charisms

As an instrument of the Spirit, the apostolic leader will be attentive to Spirit's action in others, encouraging them to let themselves be moved by the Spirit, so that the charisms flourish and they discern their vocation. The leader who wants to be an instrument of the Spirit at work in each person calls others to trust in God's unconditional love, tries to find which is positive in each person and values the dignity of each human being. Reflection on his own experience of the Spirit, theological reading and shared reflection help prepare him for this type of leadership.

Communion in the Spirit

Leadership which is inspired and inspiring will create communion in diversity. This was the Pentecost experience. Respecting the variety of persons, talents, mentalities and cultures, the pastor promotes

communion, profound unity and the integration of all so as to give the People of God greater vitality and richness. This is leadership which integrates each person in the whole and promotes each ones gifts. Unity and communion will be the clear proof of the authenticity of ministry that serves God's people and society (Cf. Jn. 17:221)

To believe in the ss.cc. charism

Our spirituality has been officially recognized by the Church in its approbation of the Congregation and has been confirmed in our new Constitutions. There are exemplary men and women who in the course of our history have exemplified this spirituality. We contribute to the mission of the church when we believe in, value and are attentive to the Spirit who continues to act in the members of the Congregation. This is a way of living our particular spirituality and offering it to others. Leadership in and through the Spirit, is joyfully thankful for the charism of the Congregation and seeks to know its theology and recognize its living witness.

3

For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many
(Mark 10:45).

Authority which offers its life that others
might have life!

PASCHAL LEADERSHIP

The apostolic leadership that the Congregation needs today has this characteristic which is well rooted in the experience of the Good Father and our tradition. We call it “paschal” as it supposes the experience of the cross and new birth according to the dynamic of the paschal mystery. It means living that attitude of the suffering servant who gave himself without limit accepting all the consequences. It means following Jesus who went so far as to have his Heart pierced on the cross.



A. THE SCRIPTURES

* *Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him. (Isaiah 42:1)*

* *You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified. (Isaiah 49:3)*

* *He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity... Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases. (Isaiah 53:3,4)*

* *I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (John 12:24)*

* *Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:39)*

* *They need not go away; you give them something to eat. (Matthew 14:16)*

* *...just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28)*

* *He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.(Mark 14:24)*

* *Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want. (Mark 14:36)*

** After he had washed their feet...he said to them... you also ought to wash one another's feet. (John 13: 12, 14)*

** I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)*

** ...but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death--even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:7,8)*

** I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. (Colossians 1:24)*

** Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)*



B. THE GOOD FATHER AND HIS WRITINGS

Juan Vicente González ss.cc. states that the vocabulary of suffering is very abundant in the Good Father's writings. Perhaps one of his best known expressions is what he writes to Isidore David: *My poor children will always be children of the Cross in order to conform perfectly to the Heart of our Good Master* (CS 10, n. 151). The provident goodness of which we already spoke is a providence which is revealed in Christ. The mystery of redemptive love culminates in the cross of Christ, which gives meaning to our suffering and our whole life. It is the great focus of the Good Father's interest.

The Sermon on Suffering

Trying to understand the spirit that animated the life and ministry of the Good Father we can quote his words in sermons and letters. His sermon on suffering merits special mention. In it the young Coudrin comments on the beatitude of suffering (Cf. Mt. 5:5). The Good Father said in his sermon: *It's not that suffering in itself creates happiness; there is such a thing as fruitless tears...It is not enough just to suffer to be happy...It is not enough just to suffer with Jesus Christ...one must suffer for Jesus Christ, one must suffer with Jesus Christ* (CS 10, n. 133). He goes on: *We cannot enter life except through the narrow gate.*

We cannot be His disciples except by renouncing the habits of 'the old man'... . Jesus did not come to the kingdom of Heaven except by the road of suffering (CS 10, n. 135). At another point in the sermon the Good Father says: You are impatient because you do not want to suffer; and because you are impatient you suffer more... . Complain as Jesus Christ complained. Say with Him to God Who afflicts you, 'O my Father, if it be possible, remove this chalice from me, but Your Will be done, not mine! (CS, n. 143)

Certainly this sense of sorrow and suffering is based in the spirituality of his times. However, for the Good Father is not only pious words or sentiments. His Christocentrism is much more than merely devotional. The center of his life is his continual concern for the Work. On August 4, 1804 he writes to Sr. Gabriel de la Barre a significant letter in which he expresses his appreciation for the connection between love, happiness and the cross: *Feast of St. Dominic, who passed through the crucible of tribulations for a similar work, which in spite of my exile (he was in Paris after having had to leave Mende) is my complete happiness. Yes, dear daughter, I live only to unite, at a great price if need be, the Work of the Heart of this amiable Master Who showers abundant favors upon me; though I am ungrateful, He still loves me, and I feel in my heart and soul that He will love me always. Were I to write all about His powerful action within me, I should never stop. Love Him without measure and I tell you that nothing will separate you from His love. Whether we are persecuted or in peace, let us be children of the Cross. Let us burn with desire for the immolation He exacts or permits; and all, yes all will go according to His*

adorable Will which I know and wish to know until death.(CS 10, n. 340)

The Heart of Jesus, love obedient to the point of the cross

As the primitive community evolved, the symbolism of the Heart of Jesus became more and more a part of its spirituality. Maintaining concepts like those spoken of above, the community associates the Heart of Jesus with his obedient love which led him to the cross where his heart was pierced. In his circular of April 14, 1817, in which he communicates Rome's approbation, he says: *Let us not loose sight of the fact that Our Lord wants us to enter very specially into the interior crucifixion of His Heart. Like Magdalen, we should remain at his feet and like Saint John, accompany Him unto the cross.* (CS 10, n. 368) In 1832 he writes to Fr. Benigne Cahill: *Remember always, dear Begnine, that you are a child of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who was obedient unto death, and even to death on the cross.*(CS 10, n. 157) To Brother Severin Coulonges he writes on February 18, 1836: *A good servant of the Divine Heart of Jesus should not expect to live without suffering. To suffer very patiently is the only change which, for the moment, is very necessary for you.*(CS 10, n. 158)

In many other texts (for example Letters 1331/20.2.1828/7,112; 1241/13.4.1827/7,27; 870/3.9.1823/5,226) we see this a constant in the life of the Good Father. Looking at the writings of the

Good Mother would mean getting into the realm of mystical experiences which are difficult to understand. The Good Father was a pastor who accepted all the sufferings and crosses which were part of his various ministries in the church and congregation.

The letters of Father Damien are an example of the most authentic ss.cc. charismatic tradition especially when he speaks of *the strange happiness* that was his in the midst of his own crosses. When he reached the summit of his Calvary from his lips there came those unforgettable words of how happy he was to die a child of the Sacred Hearts.



C. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULE OF LIFE

Article 3 of our Constitutions quotes the founder when he says that the focus of our vocation, our rule is the person of Jesus, specifying the historical Jesus, the incarnate Jesus: *his birth, his life and his death*. Article 3 continues, *We make our own the attitudes, options and tasks that led Jesus to the point of having his Heart transpierced on the Cross*, then ends by offering us the mother of Jesus as *model of faith in that Love* and our companion as we collaborate in the mission of Jesus. It is evident that this article from the first chapter on the Vocation and Mission of the Congregation is intended to clearly identify us with the person and life of Jesus including, as a fundamental element of his mission, the cross of Christ.

Article 16 sheds light on what is meant by the above. Configuration to Christ in religious profession is not first and foremost about renunciation or suffering for sufferings sake but about taking upon ourselves the paschal mystery *as a way of life and freedom*. We do not seek suffering or sacrifice just to suffer and sacrifice nor do we embrace the cross and nothing more. Faith in the risen Christ, hope in the infinite love of God and the experience of liberating grace imbued with love and life are what make possible and give meaning

to our embracing the cross. A life which realistically and hopefully faces the reality of ones own suffering and that of others, suffering which comes unexpectedly or that we take upon ourselves as a consequence of certain choices, such a life becomes *a symbol of the Gospel values already present in the world and a witness of the new and eternal life won by Christ's redemption*. (Constitutions, art. 14) The consecration to the Sacred Hearts makes our apostolic leadership capable of generating life because we are united with the Father's plan to save the world through love. (Cf. Constitutions, art. 13)

The Rule of Life (nn. 77-80), basing itself in the New Testament, has much to say about this characteristic which is central and so valid for our ministry of animation. This kind of leadership identifies with the attitude of Christ, as he faces the suffering which is dimension of his fidelity to the Father's will. This is leadership which identifies with the attitude of Christ the servant, *the suffering servant who gives his life as a ransom for all, who gives his shoulders to those who beat him, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not, a man stripped, enslaved as one among many, who gave himself to death...death on a cross*. He is the crucified king, the Lord who triumphs by giving himself in suffering. In John's Gospel the cross is the throne of glory.

In this spirituality of the suffering servant, which from the beginning of our community has so characterized our style of ministry, Mary takes on the

condition of *the handmaid of the Lord . . . her fate is inseparably bound in history to the destiny and mission of her son . . . The heart of the Virgin Mary is totally in accord with Christ's* (RV, n. 78) Articles 79 and 80 of the Rule of Life shed light and give depth to this paschal leadership after the example of Mary. She helps us enter in the mystery of her Son's suffering and complete in our flesh *what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church* (Col. 1:24) and to offer our whole life to God as did her Son, *as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.* (Rom 12:1)

These last quotes connect us with the Eucharistic and reparative dimension of our spirituality and therefore with our style of apostolic leadership. For the ss.cc. minister the celebration of the Eucharist (at which he presides in the case of a priest), which is the basis of apostolic service (Cf. Constitutions, art. 52), involves a living attitude of service. This is expressed in life offered to give life, in the acceptance of sharing oneself and giving oneself as nourishment for others. (Cf. RV, nn. 61-62)



D. LIVING THIS TODAY

What do the cross and death mean in our lives? How can we accept them as followers of Jesus? What place can our crosses and those of others have in our apostolic leadership? There are many questions we could ask and in fact we do ask them in our ministry. At times we find no adequate response. At other times there is only silence and only with time do we come to some kind of answer. The cross, the experience of pain, suffering and death either our own or others', is central to our life. At times it is a great challenge and a source of difficulty and crisis. Even if we can not answer all these questions here, as we try to define and describe leadership, it can be important and useful to offer some reflections which could help us understand this aspect of our leadership.

Jesus did not seek the cross in itself, He tried to banish the cross from his and others' lives. He preached and lived love and he tried to create the conditions that would make love real. Selfishness deforms ones life and the loving servant does not allow his selfishness to become a cross for others. Jesus proclaimed the good news of life and love. He sacrificed himself for

that but the world refused his self-gift. It placed crosses along his path and in the end lifted him up on the wood of the cross.

The cross of Christ was a consequence of his life. For Jesus, the cross was the result of his challenging message and his liberating ministry. He did not flee, he did not compromise, he never stopped proclaiming and witnessing, even though this would lead to his crucifixion. He continued loving in spite of hatred. He accepted the cross as a sign of fidelity to God and humanity.

In order to describe the type of leadership that we have called paschal and to show its importance today, we will now offer some reflections. They place us before the cross which we experience in our own personal lives and our apostolate. We want to enter into the heart of Jesus and take up the cross as he did. He accepted death on the cross as a consequence of his fidelity to the Father's will and out of love for humanity. Suffering, the cross and death are part of every human life. They are always present. They are an expression of the history of humanity broken by human sin. We believe that today we must be leaders who accompany others in their suffering and, at the same time, accept our own crosses, suffering and death. We are called to be leaders who witness to the paradox of death-life, capably of sensing, understanding and

accepting in some way our brothers' and sisters' suffering and crosses as well as our own.

To face squarely suffering and death

It is impossible to be sincere if we do not confront the reality of suffering and death in our world, especially in more economically advanced societies that seem to want to paint over or hide the tragic reality in which we live. We are invited to contemplate the cross of Jesus, the crosses borne by our people, the crosses of those around us and our own crosses. The cross is so present, but it provoke repugnance. We are called to see the reality of the crucified in our world: those who suffer violence, the poor, the dehumanized and those deprived of their rights. We do this in a special way in Eucharistic adoration. To contemplate Christ crucified is, without a doubt, an invitation to live as he did. In adoration we bear our own suffering and crosses and the crosses of our brothers and sisters, so as to accept them with Christ and try to give them meaning and to receive strength to face this mysterious reality.

To find meaning for our own suffering

We have to be clear about suffering and the meaning we give it. The thinkers, philosophers, psychiatrists, psychologists and writers who have treated the topic are innumerable. One of them, Victor Frankl,

thinker and therapist, saw as central to the mature development of the human person the capacity to give meaning to life, including suffering. One of his books is entitled *Suffering Man*. The author, speaking of homo sapiens, also speaks of homo patiens, suffering man. Openness to know, which is so characteristic of the human person, must be completed with openness to suffer. Suffering is converted into transcendent action. Suffering accepted positively takes us beyond ourselves, making us capable of experiencing a higher range of human values than the actions of homo faber, who is enslaved by anxiety and the drive to produce something that is merely material. Homo patiens transforms suffering into action, knowing that by accepting suffering one already transcends it and that it is not only in producing we realize the good but also in living and suffering.

To live in paschal hope and joy

Victor Frankl claims that suffering contains within itself many possibilities of meaning. One of them is that we understand better the reason for our human dignity and as a consequence, the path that leads to solid and true happiness. Frankl appeals to the deep intuition of Dostoyevsky when he says: *Seek happiness with tears*. Suffering, as we have often heard, can be a path to happiness. We can discover in suffering itself the meaning it has for us. Frankl points out: *In reality, suffering, guilt or death, the whole tragic threesome, can*

not deprive life of its true meaning. In that sense we could also consider the experience of Father Damien (and many others) who in the midst of agonizing situations were none the less happy, a strange happiness. His happiness came from peace with the choices he made and from freedom purified of ambition. He received happiness as a gift from the one in whom he rested and in whom he placed all his trust. To reach our final goal it is necessary to experience happiness with its eschatological tension. It is real but not definitive. God more than anyone, is committed to our happiness. As all that is most important in life, it is a grace to which we must respond and which we must cultivate.

Learning and teaching about meaningful suffering

As *homo patiens*, we must learn to grow in the ability to suffer. It is not something innate but rather something we acquire in the course of the decisions we make and attitudes we choose. Apostolic leadership can be a school for learning this. We are learners when it comes to how to suffer meaningfully, how to transcend and experience it in light of the resurrection. At the same time, our capacity to give suffering meaning allows us to share the wisdom gained from our experience of suffering and the cross with those we serve directly or indirectly. We are called to teach the cross of Christ from our own experience. To be children of the cross is not only to find meaning for our own suffering, but also to help to give meaning to the suffering of

those we encounter in our work. We can be tempted to become insensitive to the reality of suffering and injustice which surrounds us. The crosses we encounter in our ministry exhaust, consume and depress us. To be paschal leaders involves a spirituality of life, the mystery of new life where there only seems to be death, the mystery of love where there only seems to be hatred. The cross includes all of this. The cross is a symbol of life, not centered in oneself, the life of a prophet or martyr, the life of one dedicated to the Reign of God. We contemplate, live and proclaim the redemptive cross of Jesus.

The presence of God in abandonment, failure and infidelity

The apostle Paul invites us to rejoice always (Cf. Phil. 4:4). According to Paul the best reason for happiness is bringing others the knowledge of Jesus Christ. For a minister of the Gospel there are few moments which are more painful than those in which God seems absent. Nothing makes sense and there is nothing to hang on to. In these times of crisis, naked faith continues speaking of God who is mysteriously present. Times of failure in ministry, of exhaustion and of burn-out are also moments to encounter the Easter light of the cross, to give oneself in pure generosity and humility and to recognize the kingdom growing like the grain of wheat. Even times of infidelity

and sin are an opportunity to experience the infinite mercy of God and his unconditional love.

Accepting the cross as Jesus means denouncing evil and calling for change

We denounce the human tendency to think only of oneself to the point that we crucify God. We call for love able to bear all, such as the Father handing over his own Son to be put to death by his enemies. Reason can not comprehend the paradox of the cross. The logic of the cross (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:8) is only lived in praxis, as we actually accept the cross and death. It means fighting evil so as to overcome its absurd character. As Paul said and lived: *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ...always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.* (2 Cor. 4:8,10) The suffering borne is suffering and martyrdom for God and his work in our world. Suffering and death for others who are crucified involves overturning the established values of the system. To proclaim and live the cross can mean an invitation to radical love and confidence and totally going outside of oneself. To preach the cross by our witness means being open to the most radical form of witness which is martyrdom. This praxis reveals what is hidden in the drama of the cross and death, ultimate meaning and life. Nudus

Christum sequi (to nakedly follow the naked Christ).
This is the spirituality and the mystery of the cross.