

# 4

*... you will be my witnesses...  
to the ends of the earth  
(Acts 1:8).*

*A service of authority which makes us act from  
our conscience (Good Father):*

## **LEADERSHIP AS WITNESS**

Let us look at authority as witness in which there is consistency between doing and being. What we are referring to is acting in accord with conscience when there is coherence between what we express as feelings and ideas and our deepest self. This kind of authenticity is clearly founded in the experience of the Father's merciful love and the power of the Spirit at work in us. We know we are called and sent by Jesus Christ, who is our living rule and our goal. We must grow toward human and religious maturity and that allows us to give witness by the moral consistency of our lives. Our life becomes a reflection of God's grace in us. In his writings the Good Father often spoke of this idea of authentic witness in different ways. His own life is a good example of this.



## A. THE SCRIPTURES

*\* By his faithfulness he was proved to be a prophet, and by his words he became known as a trustworthy seer. (Sirach 46:15)*

*\* My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...(Lk. 1:46-47)*

*\* For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice. (John 18:37)*

*\* He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth. (John 19:35)*

*\* You will be my witnesses ...and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)*

*\* For you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. (Acts 22:15)*

*\* I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit (Romans 9:1)*

*\* ...and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. (Galatians 2:20)*

*\* ...an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:1)*

*\* For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-*

*controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word... (Titus 1:7-9)*

*\* ...we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. (Hebrews 13:18)*

*\* ...tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it--not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:2-3)*

We see leadership as witness in the Sacred Scripture. First there is Jesus, whose personal coherence makes him a free and consistent man. The people see this as both attractive and challenging. He reveals the Father's heart. He witnesses to the very mystery of God, *fascinans et tremendum*. Let us look at some of the New Testament references, aware that the Bible is very rich on this point.

*\* Jesus presents himself as the witness of the Father and of truth:... he came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. (John 1:7) I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. (John 3:11) For Jesus, witnessing to the truth defined his mission: For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. (John 18:37)*

\* John the Baptist is the great witness of Jesus. John testified to him and cried out: *This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."* (John 1:15) *And John testified, "...And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."*

\* The apostles and disciples see themselves as witnesses: *With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.* (Acts 4:33) *Now after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.* (Acts 8:25) *Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God...* (2 Timothy 1:8) *This life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.* (1 John 1:2) *But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.* (Revelation 12:11) His identification with Jesus is so deep that Paul will say:... *it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.* (Gal. 2:20)

\* The followers of Jesus become his witnesses. There are many examples but we will look at just one, the Samaritan woman. *Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done.* (John 4:39) St. Paul, while instructing the followers of Jesus, in a way speaks to us of the attitudes of a leader: *Stand therefore, and fasten*

*the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:14-17)*



## B. THE GOOD FATHER AND HIS WRITINGS

If we look at the letters of the Good Father, we can see the style that he wanted to communicate to his community by his own ministry and life. We have to consider this aspect that we are calling leadership as witness. In his letters he often calls the brothers to authenticity, to coherence in their behavior, to honesty and to give personal witness. This was usually linked to the importance he attributed to acting in conformity with one's conscience. A brief look at his writings will illustrate what we mean.

### **The importance of witness in all we do**

*We do not wear our faith written on our forehead, but we must render it respectable by our way of life, by works which do honor to the faith, which preserve and sustain the faith. Love of God, detachment from ourselves, love for our brothers, mutual support and upbuilding - this is the glorious witness which faith calls for from us* (Father Coudrin, Sermon on Faith, RV, n. 27).

### **Authenticity in relationships between brothers**

*In life and in death I will never forget you in my prayer.* (1342/7.3.1828/7, 119). *My heart is yours in this life and*

beyond. (159/1.4.1804/1, 429).

## **Authenticity in recognizing and speaking the truth**

*My dear friend, you will make no declaration which is anything like an oath. That would be awful coming from your mouth. (One of the two royal ordinances of June 16, 1828 declared that from that time on no one would be able to teach if they did not state in writing that they did not belong to a Congregation not legally recognized in France)...I can not approve the plan of Monsignor to name seminarians to be teachers in our houses . It is something which will never be appropriate for the sons of the heart of Jesus. Sint ut sun taut non sint. Goodbye. I embrace all the brothers and I have confidence that you will continue to be firm in the faith. (1407/27.9.1828/7, 178) He says refuses to lie even though it would save the community's schools. I trust in God. I will not compromise my conscience.. ” (1452/15.1.1829/7, 217-218).*

## **His realism with regards to work by insisting on not working too much**

*Take care, my friend. I do not want you to preach so much that you kill yourself. (756/30.3.1822/ 5, 127). And above all don't kill yourself...Take care of yourself, if you can't keep at the Mission take some rest. (902/1.1824/5, 300). If you can't work that much, you have to rest...I would much rather you do what you can and not kill yourself. (1000/20.12.1824/6, 60). Our young brothers should not kill themselves. It's always a bad thing when you do too much. ...As for the teachers, we have no more available. So try not to wear yourselves out. It would*

*be better to send away students than to kill yourselves...* (1208/17.2.1827/6, 356). *Don't kill yourselves and go to bed early.* (1552/22.3.1830/7, 323). The Good Father repeatedly insists on this and invites the brothers not to do more than they are able. He wants them to be realistic and accept their limitations. *God does not want us to do more than we are able.* (902/1.1824/5, 300).

### **The Good Father calls the brothers to act always in accord with their conscience**

*My good friends, try to conduct yourselves according to the true principles that you know as well as I do. The distance is so great and it is so difficult to meet that in many things you must do what you think best little by little....*(47/19.8.1802/1, 135). *Never worry about what you have to decide. If you follow your conscience you will never make a mistake, at least in the sense that you are culpable.* (45/11.8.1802/1, 132). *Do what you think is best.* (577/9.4.1819/4, 127).

### **They must never be dominating and must give example**

*Since you have named a prior, treat your brothers with a sense of trust, which will make them become attached to you. For, my friend, you really have a way of treating everyone as a big boss and I assure you nothing could be worse. When one is in a position of authority, a little understanding goes a long way.* (786/7.10.1822/5, 164). *I can't say it enough, get along with everyone, neque dominantes in cleris. I know well what you are going through. But I also know that you are not always right. Above all don't be a hypocrite.* (793/6.11.1822/5, 176). *We*



*encourage you to fulfill the duties of your position in such a way that you can give a faithful account of your administration on the day of the Lord. (1151/8.9. 1826/6, 280). May you all try to act justly with great gentleness and consistency. (1552/22.3.1830/7, 323).*



## C. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULE OF LIFE

We are delegated by the community and missioned by the church to exercise authority and leadership in different ways. Our mission is both leaven and sign. Our apostolic responsibility and the way we exercise the power and influence, which is part of any authority, must lead us to ask ourselves if the authenticity of our power is based more on our role or on our authentic witness as a follower of Jesus. Interior authority, which is the basis and support for apostolic action and which draws strength and power from conviction that transcends roles and functions, is an authority which has interior strength. (Mt. 7:29, Mk. 1:22,25,27, Lk. 4: 32, 9:1)

The clearest link between our consecration and our mission is the ability to integrate being and doing. This allows them to influence one another in a dialectic movement. Ideally this supposes communion in mission as the support of apostolic service. (Constitutions, art. 38-40)

The service of authority, when rooted in an experience of religious life, is seen as a mission from the Lord which comes through the community. This

gives an important nuance to our authority. Ours is delegated power. (Constitutions, art. 11)

The authenticity of our life and work is inspired by *the attitudes, options and tasks that led Jesus to the point of having his Heart transpierced on the Cross*. (Constitutions, art. 3)



## D. LIVING THIS TODAY

**Self-awareness in community** is a basic aspect of a leader's authenticity. We have to really be ourselves rather than to play roles or wear masks. This self-awareness is closely related to truth and humility, which is the recognition of ones inherent fallibility and limitation. It is about seeing authority and any other ministry as our personal response to God's call and not as a way to seek our own advantage. These are key to an authentic personality.

Self awareness should lead each brother to the knowledge and acceptance of himself as well as the knowledge and acceptance of others. The search for authenticity requires awareness of ones possibilities and ones limits, what is not going to change and what can change, ones virtues and defects, ones errors and ones sins. Authenticity takes account of all of that and gives it expression in one's personal life plan and that of the group.

The leader must encourage growth. That involves helping people know and accept themselves. The goodness and mercy of God that forgives, heals and lifts up, inviting us to himself, will always be the basis for the knowledge, acceptance and growth necessary to be authentic.

Journeying toward authenticity involves a long process of conscience formation, which accepts one's reality and acts in truth believing that *the truth will make you free*. Briefly we have to know ourselves, accept ourselves and transcend ourselves.

### **The life of a free, convinced and mature Christian bears fruit in authenticity**

Authenticity has a lot to do with freedom. Authority can only be exercised authentically in freedom. One's fundamental option must be accepted freely or it will be no more than an exterior norm. Seen from that perspective, one's personal history is an ever clearer explanation of one's fundamental option. In his conscience a brother understands, interprets and orders different events and decisions bringing them together in a plan of life. Each person is called to be the one responsible for his own story. He does that in the context of having chosen an ideal toward which he freely moves. The leader helps him accept this process and reach his ideal. Authenticity can not simply be the disordered expression of what is within. It is rather giving priority and order to everything that makes up a person. This takes shape according to one's fundamental option and convictions which must be continually given flesh in attitudes and actions.

One responds to God's call throughout life, not just at any one specific moment. This involves growth

and maturation as well as exploration. We become authentic by responding to the call and giving it expression. We are aware that as witnesses we have made an irrevocable choice. We have begun to live this choice and we are called to grow in that until the very end. In no way does this involve personal impoverishment or irresponsibility with respect to one's life. Rather it leads to real happiness including self-fulfillment, the gift of self to others, communion with the one who calls us, a focus outside of ourselves etc. The choice is never complete when made. It must always mature and grow to fullness. Coherence and consistency are fruit of long effort.

### **Authenticity in our witness as religious**

The church asks religious to be *witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God's design* (Religious and Human Promotion, n. 24). Religious families...*have the mission of being clearly readable signs of that intimate communion which animates and constitutes the Church, and of being a support for the fulfillment of God's plan.* (“Fraternal life in Community”. Congregavit nos in unum christi amor. n° 10). *By constantly promoting fraternal love, also in the form of common life, the consecrated life has shown that sharing in the Trinitarian communion can change human relationships and create a new type of solidarity. In this way it speaks to people both of the beauty of fraternal communion and of the ways which actually lead to it.* (Vita Consecrata, n. 41)

We could say that it is largely through communion that the vitality of religious life is seen. This vitality is also evident in vigilance and attention, generosity and availability for today's world. These are the best proofs of our authenticity. Vitality is especially important in difficult situations, in the midst of destruction, discouragement, loneliness, indifferentism, fatalism, insecurity and fear. At times like those, people look to our religious communities to see how we conduct ourselves. Brothers in authority have to see that no one dies before they die, that all respond to the grace they have been given. Leaders must animate the community to give witness to its trust in God.

### **Lacking authenticity**

We will take a brief look at how we may lack authenticity. This can give a clearer idea of what we mean by authenticity and also its opposite. When a lack of authenticity appears in the life of one who is authentic it sounds as a dissonant note. This happens for different reasons.

- Human respect. It can be caused by what others will say. We act according to what others expect of us and not according to our own convictions and choices.
- Conformism. The Christian, rather than clearly following Christ, conforms to the values, attitudes and behavior of the culture and its priorities.
- Lack of identity. There are people who do not really give themselves to who they are or what they

believe. They create for themselves a vacuum which they have to fill. They lack a clear identity. This leads them to adopt false roles or to seek to be noticed in different ways. They want to be “someone.”

### **Threats to authenticity**

Apostolic authority and leadership demand special attention so as not to allow oneself be tempted by attractive and very real situations in the world such as praise, corruption, the abuse of power etc.



# 5

*Indeed, in Christ Jesus  
I became your father through the gospel  
(1 Corinthians 4:15b).  
Authority Which is merciful  
and fruitful*

## **FATHERLY-MOTHERLY AUTHORITY**

Consecration to the love of God leads us to relate to men and women as he does. God reveals himself to us with the characteristics of a father-mother. As such he is a source of life. The love of God bears fruit. God's love includes all the different aspects of our own way of living and being in relationship. A leader who lives in an ongoing relationship with the God of Jesus Christ, who is Father and Mother, makes his own God's paternal and maternal way of relating. He does this in his openness and mercy, in his commitment and firmness. He becomes one with God's fruit-bearing love and he promotes a family spirit.



## A. THE SCRIPTURES

- For you are our father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us... (Isaiah 63:16)
- As a mother comforts her child so I will comfort you... (Isaiah 66:13)
- Have you not just now called to me, "My Father, you are the friend of my youth..." (Jeremiah 3:4)
- If my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will take me up... (Psalm 27:10)
- As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD *has compassion for those who fear him.* (Psalm 103:13)
- *I was a father to the needy and I championed the cause of the stranger...* (Job 29:16a)
- *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* (Matthew 9:36)
- *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.* (Luke 6:36)
- *But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.* (Luke 15:20)
- *I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment.* (Philemon 10)
- *And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children: "My child, do not regard lightly the*

*discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts." (Hebrews 12:5-6, Deuteronomy 8:5, Proverbs 3:11-12)*



## B. THE GOOD FATHER AND HIS WRITINGS

With faith in God's love the Good Father experiences a relationship with God and shares that with others. For him God's love was a consolation in the midst of the suffering caused by selfishness. He often saw God as even too good (Cf. CS 10, nn. 102-103). His concrete lived experience of God's goodness led the Good Father to deeper faith in our being children of God (Cf. CS 10, n. 101). God is our Father.

### **The Family Spirit**

His desire to base everything on the experience of God's love and to focus his faith response on loving God led the Good Father to make the new community like a family. He nurtured the family spirit. This was recognized, for example, in the General Chapter of 1898: *The family spirit with which our venerable founder, the Good Father, so deeply marked his work and which our older brothers, his first Sons have transmitted as a precious heritage to us.* (CS 10, n. 553, CF. nn. 554-567) Note the terms used in that quotation: Good Father, brothers, sons. These are terms that not only evoke a family, but also speak to us of the fecundity of the charism received and handed on from the time of the Good Father.

## Like a father with his family

Without a doubt, our founder came to see himself as a father with his family. He expresses his concern to Sister Ludovine de la Marsoniere, the Superior of the new house in Cahors, and asks her: *Details, my child, for a kind Father who thinks of you constantly... Believe that I share all your difficulties, that your trials are mine...*(CS 10, n. 479; Cf. n. 373; LEBP, 2037/8.7.1835/8, 320) This feeling is expressed in many letters where he addresses the sisters and brothers as *dear daughters* (Cf. CS 10, nn. 476, 516, 519, 532) or *my sons* (Cf. CS 10, nn. 357, 478, 528) At the same time he reminds them to love one another as brothers and sisters: *My dear friends, for the sake of the Good God, do have the sweet charity that he prescribes among brothers who should never stop loving one another...*(CS 10, n. 485).

This fundamental characteristic is an important aspect of the fruitfulness of the charism that he passes on. And so the Good father says in a letter to Sister Ludovine: *"... the Good Mother is in town since this morning: I am speaking for her and for all the Brothers and Sisters when I say that we love you with all our hearts. Likewise, love one another in the bonds of charity which gave us two more children last evening. All yours.* (CS 10, n. 487) This trait which goes back to the very beginning of the community helps us understand why the term *father* became the regular affectionate way for referring to our founder.

His letters also contain expressions of affection, tenderness and care for the weak. (Cf. LEBP 143/29.11.1803/1, 386; 119/1.8.1803/1, 319; 1756/13.1.1833/8, 153; 426/9.5.1811/3, 210) However it must be said that his fatherly style of authority also involved the difficult balance between trusting others and making demands on them. Being close and trying to understand did not prevent him from being demanding and firm when it seemed necessary. *You are a father and you must not only be tender as a mother but you must also provide firm leadership.* (LEBP 80/26.11.1802/1, 220).

### **Handing on God's love experienced in the family**

For the Good Father, the love of God experienced in our religious family is something that must also be shared in our mission. We must help the world understand what the love of God means. It was on this basis that this new religious family would understand its very identity. (Cf. CS 10, n. 125) The followers of the Good Father understand their mission as confided to the community as a family (Cf. CS 10, n. 561). This sense of being a family becomes the best witness of God's love which radiates from the community bearing fruit for the world and for the Congregation.

*(T)he Good Father often stressed the motives his children should have for loving one another, adding that outsiders should*

*see charity as the distinctive quality of each house. The hope of personal salvation will no doubt bring postulants; but even more effective would be the fact that in the houses of the Congregation there was love for one another, the willingness to excuse one another, and the expression of true brotherhood toward one another. (CS 10, n. 565)*

The tenderness of Jesus' heart for the salvation of souls awakens in the Good Father these attitudes of which we have been speaking. For him they are the expression of zeal that is a response to the love of such a good master. (Cf. 10, n. 345) In the early years of the community each person who entered became a zealot of the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In other words, entering meant entering into the fatherly-motherly dynamic of God's love. Even if the term zealot was no longer used officially in our documents, the reality behind the expression remained very present in minds and hearts. (Cf. CS 10, nn. 351, 412)



## C. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULE OF LIFE

Our present Constitutions reflect the heritage of the foundational vision of the Good Father. They say that *Simplicity and the family spirit are the characteristics of our relationships within our international Congregation, which desires to be open to all people. Our community life gives witness to the Gospel and makes our announcement of redeeming Love more convincing.* (Constitutions, art. 7) We are called by our consecration to live the dynamism of saving love and that fills us with zeal for our mission (Cf. Constitutions, art. 2) On the one hand, our Constitutions say that the experience of God's redemptive love makes us enter into relationships in the way one would in a family. This family spirit then becomes a witness of God's love for the world. On the other hand, the experience of saving love does not only lead us to respond in zeal to the love of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary but it also opens us to a mission inspired by the love which the men and women we serve awaken within us. In the same way God manifests his fatherly-motherly love to us by the simple fact that we are his children.

The Rule of Life also speaks of this. Our awareness of the merciful tenderness of God leads us to become living witnesses of this tenderness by our



understanding, gentleness, availability, sharing and hospitality. The dynamic of God's merciful love allows us to make these sentiments our own. So we can live united in the simplicity and cordiality of a family. This is a source of zeal for the work of reconciling all in Christ. (RV, n. 19)



## D. LIVING THIS TODAY

In the Scriptures the love of God to which we are consecrated has fatherly and motherly characteristics. God appears as a father and as a mother. This is seen in his merciful love for his children, a love which is tender, compassionate, firm and demanding.

The mission of our Congregation is to contemplate, live and announce to the world God's love made flesh in Jesus (Cf. Constitutions, art. 2). Because of that, fidelity to our mission challenges us to be the expression of God's love in all we are and do. In our consecrated life we must be capable of being father and mother like God. The charism we have received and our Congregation's history help us face this challenge. We see this reflected, for example, in the consecration to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The heart of Mary joined to the heart of Jesus accentuates the motherly tenderness toward men and women who become her children in the person of St. John (Cf. CS 10, n. 390) We can also see this in the fact that from the very beginning we have been considered one Congregation of sisters and brothers. We have a past and we have a possible future of mutual collaboration as we develop the masculine and feminine aspects of God's love. We also have two models of fatherhood-motherhood in our founders. It is not

insignificant that we call them Good Mother and Good Father.

Paternal-maternal leadership calls us to look once again at various aspects of our life. We would point out the following:

### **Mercy, tenderness, compassion**

Primarily this touches on an experience of faith. We know ourselves loved by God with a love that is gracious and unmerited. We can certainly say, as did the Good Father, that God is too good. But this love of God that we experience as grace and gift is superabundant. It first touches us in the very core of our being and then opens us out to love of neighbor. The commandment of love is also expressed in mercy. Jesus invites us: *Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful.* We must hear this call in our exercise of authority, so as to fulfill it with tenderness and compassion for the brothers and sisters that we accompany. We are called to enter into the attitudes of the heart of Jesus, the Good Shepherd: *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* (Matthew 9:36)

Justice, as an element of our exercise of authority, is also included in the dynamic of God's merciful love. To be truly human, justice must be penetrated and motivated by mercy, forgiveness and tenderness. We must be just but the measure of justice is God's merciful

love.

### **Attention to interiority**

A fatherly-motherly style of leadership demands that we give special attention to helping individuals as they grow and assimilate their lived experience. On the one hand, this means emphasizing the formation of individuals and communities in the area of mission. On the other hand, we are called to accompany and care for individuals as they try to find meaning in life and integrate what they experience with their faith. We are called to personalized authority, which knows how to integrate action with interiority and commitment with prayer.

Such a type of leadership will mean being close to the real situation of people. This will lead us to the heart as the integrating center of the person, remembering that we are called to seek the transformation of the human heart. (Constitutions, art. 6)

Therefore, some dangers to be avoided are: doing ministry because of the status that the role provides, being a distant as a leader and not touching the inner person or providing leadership that limits itself to exterior norms.

A fatherly-motherly leader tries to know the hearts of their children. He tries to accompany them

as they interiorize the call of Jesus in the Gospel. Such accompaniment will be demanding at times and involve correction out of love for the other.

## **To be fathers**

Speaking of animating a community, Enrica Rosanna says: *Henry Nouwen wrote "In order to grow in love and to make love the law of power means becoming a father." I am convinced that this is exactly right. A father, with the motherly-fatherly heart witnesses, with what one is and one does, to a great Gospel truth: You, brother/sister are important to me.* (L'animazione comunitaria: istanze, problemi e strade aperte, in Jose Rovira ed. *Animare la comunità religiosa*, Milano 2000, p. 14)

Here we can also echo a frustration that is often heard in our world: living in a society without fathers.

This expression *a society without fathers* seems to refer to the absence of certain elements associated with the image of father that are necessary for the integral development of individuals. The father, according to this image, is the one who is firm and who inspires the child to be daring and to venture out and especially to take responsibility for his own life. The father provides protection and security and at the same time pushes the child to accept and confront reality. From this perspective we could see paternal authority as favoring adult autonomy in individuals and developing within

them a transformative and creative attitude with respect to reality.

Speaking of this fatherly characteristic of our ss.cc. ministry will mean clarifying what this fatherhood really looks like, what it means and what are its essential values. At the same time we should not fall back on cultural traditions, which are very present in our societies and churches but which reflect authority more as patriarchal than as fatherly in an evangelical sense.

### **To be fruitful**

Following on the previous point, we should not be surprised that a fatherly exercise of authority can create a sentiment of sonship in those we serve. However these sons begotten in Christ Jesus (to use St. Paul's term) must be adult sons, who are sufficiently autonomous to face life and its challenges. Our apostolate is one that must engender life, impregnated by the fruitfulness of God's love. This was the kind of authority the Good Father had and which is seen in his mercy, tenderness, compassion, openness and in his ability to be demanding and give correction.

We are called to be instruments of life which is born from the creative love of God. Our apostolate must be creative and co-creative with God. The community is enriched by the generative capacity of our authority which we exercise in a family in keeping with our congregation's tradition. We always accompany those confided to us with a father's love. We want to

welcome them with a fatherly-motherly heart like the heart of our God. To have an attitude like this is a gift that will create bonds with sons and daughters and nourish the family spirit of the communities we serve in ministry.

Having said the foregoing, we must be careful not to misinterpret the meaning of “paternal’ and fall into paternalism which neither educates nor helps to develop the autonomy and responsibility of others.

# 6

*By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king's anger;  
for he persevered as though he saw him who is  
invisible (Hebrews 11:27).*

Authority that envisions the future and leads the  
community toward the future

## **VISIONARY LEADERSHIP**

Visionary leadership is idealistic, able to step back from the immediate, capable of envisioning different possibilities, intuitive, imaginative, creative and able to imagine a future that arouses hope. It means working at the level of both consciousness and unconsciousness, vision and dream. The founding experience of the Good Father and his commitment to make that reality, in spite of the difficult social and religious situation in which he found himself, is a good example of this characteristic. Many vocations in the history of Christianity, starting with Jesus of Nazareth himself, had this visionary sense. It involves raising questions and in some way breaking with the status quo. It demands maturity in listening to the will of God. It means going to the desert, or as in the case of St. Benedict the cave or as in the case of the Good Father the loft. In places such as those visions emerge



and grow. There also comes the moment of commitment in which the ideal seen as God's will is patiently brought to reality.



## A. THE SCRIPTURES

- \* *...you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us.* (Numbers 10:31)
- \* *See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way...* (Mark 1:2)
- \* *The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* (Luke 3:4)
- \* *And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.* (Luke 24:49)
- \* *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:2)
- \* *...and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.* (Colossians 3:10)
- \* *By faith ...he (Moses) persevered as though he saw him who is invisible..*  
(Hebrews 11:27)

*\* Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. (1 John 3:2)*

*\* Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. (Revelation 21:1)*



## B. THE GOOD FATHER AND HIS WRITINGS

Father Juan Vicente Gonzalez ss.cc. speaks of the historical context of the Good Father's life as *an obscure atmosphere...which put the faith of priests and people to a severe test. All seemed to crumble; everything was to be feared.* (February 1791) (CS 10, nn. 41-50). However during his time in the Motte d'Usseau *his mind was not inactive; he prayed; his habitual prayer was the prolonged celebration of Holy Mass every night-a prayer which was for him the source of an unalterable peace. He also read the History of the Church...Truly, this experience at the Motte signified something really new and decisive...The seclusion of the ...In this attic, a mysterious force was born; it led the young priest to leave his hiding...This same force would guide and accompany him throughout his life.* (CS 10, nn. 56-57) Juan Vicente Gonzalez also refers to this vision in his book *Servidor del Amor, Pedro Coudrin* (Gonzalez, Juan Vicente, *Servidor del Amor: Pedro Coudrin*, Santiago de Chile 1990, p. 79) emphasizing how important this moment was for his life and work, *for him everything began there.* Juan Vicente tries to describe the meaning of the vision and discover its results in the mind of the 24 year old priest. He says that the Good Father felt himself chosen and loved by God and, at the same time, called to found a missionary community. There are various versions of the vision of the Good Father in the writings of the primitive

one and that leads him to put flesh on the experience.

Bernard Couronne speaks of the experience in the loft as a *test* and an *extraordinary spiritual experience*. Bernard says that in the midst of sorrow, solitude and uncertainty concerning the future, the Good Father experienced the desert. It was there that he discovered the closeness of a gentle God who spoke to the heart (Cf. Couronne, Bernard, *Petite vie du Pere Marie-Joseph Coudrin, Fondateur de la Congregation des Sacres Coeurs*, Desclee de Brouwer, Paris, pp. 41-49). His vision in the Motte d'Usseau, which Bernard calls *a sudden insight...the idea of a double community of men and women, poor and without means preaching the Gospel everywhere* (Couronne, Bernard, o.c. p. 47), demonstrates his capacity for vision, which opens him to the future with idealism and motivates him strongly and daringly...*for I became a priest with the intention of suffering all, of sacrificing myself for the good God and, if necessary, of dying for him. However, I always had a certain feeling that I would be protected.* (Couronne, Bernard, o.c. p. 49)

This aspect of the Good Father's vision can have new meaning for us today for we can also find it difficult to spread the Gospel. His vocation was characterized by daring, strength and courage in a time of uncertainty and weakness. Isn't this something which should characterize our apostolic ministry? Given the challenges, threats and changes which we experience on different continents and in different countries don't

we need a critical consciousness? Don't we also need time in our own "Motte d'Usseau" where we could envision responses, imagine the future, listen to the Lord so that we can then makes the necessary changes together in creative fidelity?



## C. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULE OF LIFE

Defining our mission as to *contemplate, live and announce the redemptive love of God made flesh in Jesus* implies that what energizes the congregation is a forward-looking, significant lived experience both personal and communal and ministerial action that brings this all to expression.

Article 38 of our Constitutions speaks of our mission and consecration, which *create among us a bond of communion*. According to the article such communion must be evident at three levels:

1) The affective level: *Interpersonal communion...above all we are brothers.*

2) The knowledge level: One *ideal*: brothers who have a common vision, a motivating ideal, as the primitive community that had *only one heart and one soul*.

3) The action level: community in mission: brothers with a common vision of being a leaven of communion and reconciliation in our world and signs of the fullness of life in God's reign.

This is one of our characteristics which is straightforward and can provide focus. However, this is not easy to put into practice. To be apostles with vision is to live this common ideal as witnesses and educators

of a brotherly/sisterly, visionary and reconciling church.

We are speaking of leadership and authority in our apostolic ministry and so we can see how this characteristic is connected to apostolic zeal of which we spoke previously. Reflecting on number 24 of the Rule of Life, we see that besides the Good Father's radical self-gift (his zeal), creativity and daring were characteristics of his apostolate. He was bold and open as he faced new situations and emerging challenges. Number 24 of the Rule of life says: *He promoted the most demanding projects, having himself the daring courage of the humble. Faced with what we today would call the "dechristianization" of society, he summoned us to the most profound of vocations.* Always looking toward the future, he discovered in reality what seemed to be God's will.



## **D. LIVING THIS TODAY**

### **To have a vision of the future**

Some aspects of leadership and authority are more important than others. Some brothers, who hold positions of responsibility in our apostolic works, would say that one of the most important aspects is developing a vision for the growth and development of the community. They say that it is necessary to have a vision of the future, to develop the ability to analyze the present and make action proposals. This would be called a pro-active stance.

The role of the leader is then to make the transition from the present to the future, to redefine reality and change it. He has to transform the reality he does not like into something more attractive. The visionary person manages change. He is both student and teacher. He motivates change and provides inspiration. He is a social architect.

### **Necessity of letting go and searching**

As a consequence, visionary leadership means knowing how to get others to let go and to explore.



To face new situations means some how letting go of the past in order to seek the future. At times the hardest part is precisely letting go of traditional ways of understanding a situation. Often we think that the most habitual approach is what provides the most security.

## **A process of animation**

The brother with visionary authority has to make sure that those who work with him in ministry have the space to let their creative imaginations work. It's only human that sometimes, because of fatigue or discouragement, people in authority begin to think that everything has already been said or done and it's useless to try something new. Even if hopelessness leads a majority of the group to feel this way, the visionary leader must open up, demonstrate and encourage new possibilities. In that way he awakens creativity in his collaborators.

## **Ministry that gives direction**

Visionary authority is a ministry that offers direction. *The leader knows how to constantly help his co-workers' discover meaning in their work. He knows how to make them participate in his vision of things. In that way he calls forth new abilities, new energy and new imagination so that his co-workers find new solutions to serve people better.* (Grun, Anselm, Orientar personas, despertar vidas, Estella

2000, p. 67)

Vision as spiritual experience produces conversion and opens one to the future. Because of that the visionary leader will try to implement a plan which allows the vision to be implemented in reality. Instead of allowing the vision to remain just theory or nice wishes, he will try to find ways and means and to tap the community's strengths and other resources to implement the vision.

Everything we have been saying about visionary leadership can be seen in the Congregation has spoken of in recent years as *refounding* or *creative fidelity*. The Thirty-sixth General Chapter gives direction in the Introduction to the Chapter Decisions: *We have sought to be animated and led by our shepherd Jesus, who, as he did for the man in the story, approaches us, questions us and offers us a new opportunity to grow. At the same time, he summons us to take action, opening ourselves to new and creative ways of fidelity.*

Finally, in speaking of this aspect of authority in ministry, we can look to Moses whom the letter to the Hebrews holds up as the example of a visionary leader (Hebrews 11:39). Moses kept his vision even though he knew he would not be able to enter the promised land. His authority did not depend on his own talents or limits. His generosity led him to make

real a vision which gave life to his people much beyond the limits of his personal existence.

# 7

*Woe to you when all speak well of you,  
for that is what their ancestors  
did to the false prophets  
(Luke 6:26).*

Authority that critiques and initiates change

## **CRITICAL LEADERSHIP**

Looking at our history, our charism and the challenges of today, we can speak of a style of leadership that is critical. It works from different criteria and has a distinct style of authority than that of today's society. It offers a style of leadership and authority in keeping with the message of Jesus and the essential values of the Gospel. Society and culture exercise a strong influence on us. This can happen even in very subtle ways. They shape our consciousness and little by little we find ourselves accepting values and behavior which are out of sync with the Gospel and our life choices. Examples of such values would be denial of truth and the emphasis placed on comfort, the superfluous and

pleasure. We are all well aware that we live in such a culture and society and at times we can speak in quite a critical way. However it is often quite difficult to confront the reality.



## A. THE SCRIPTURES

*\* I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. (Deuteronomy 18:18)*

*\* Then I remembered the prophecy of Amos, how he said against Bethel, "Your festivals shall be turned into mourning and all your songs into lamentation." (Tobit 2:6)*

*\* For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. (Jeremiah 20:8)*

*\* He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me... You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition." (Mark 7:6,8)*

*\* The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not first wash before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness." (Luke 11:38-39)*

*\* ...he began to speak first to his disciples, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy." (Luke 12:1b)*

*\* I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. (John 17:14)*



## B. THE GOOD FATHER AND HIS WRITINGS

### To Carry Out the Mission Given by God

For the Good Father, the mission he tried to carry out, was first of all a mission given and sustained by God. He was called to be faithful to that mission. This was what he tried to do from the very beginning of his priestly ministry. His ordination was an example of his fidelity to his God-given vocation in the midst of very difficult times. (Cf. CS 10, nn. 45-46) Shortly after his ordination he gave clear proof of his fidelity. *We know that he sang a High Mass in Coussay on Easter Sunday, April 8. At the end of the liturgy, instead of reading the prescribed text of the local authorities convoking the citizens of Coussay for the election of the constitutional pastor, he made a courageous declaration which, in this circumstance was regarded as a provocation and he was obliged to leave Coussay the same day. He sought refuge at the Chezeaux farm and soon reached Poitiers where the Vicar General invested him with full powers. Finally, he retired to the Motte d' Usseau... His vocation appeared to be a strong and courageous decision, in a time of insecurity and of weakness among many of the clergy.* (CS 10, nn. 47-48)

The many decisions that he would have to make in the course of his mission would be in keeping with

his faithfulness to God's work. He passed this on to his brothers: *Never worry about what you have to decide. If you follow your conscience you will never make a mistake, at least in the sense that you are culpable.* (LEBP 45/11.8.1802/1, 132).

## **Fidelity to the Mission**

Faithfulness to his conscience and to the mission God gave him, led the Good Father to take risks and to refuse to accept the order of the French government with regard to those working in schools. The law required that teachers declare themselves members of an approved Congregation, which was not the case of our Congregation. If they had signed a statement such as the law called for, it would have provided the possibility to continue working in the schools. However, for the Good Father not even that laudable purpose would justify lying or denying the mission of the Congregation. We can see this in several of his letters from that period: *My dear friend, do not make any declaration which would be equivalent to an oath. It would be an act of impiety coming from your mouth (One of the two royal decrees of June 16, 1828 declared that no one could be a teacher unless they stated in writing that they did not belong to a Congregation that was not legally recognized in France)...I can not approve the bishop's plan to name seminarians as teachers in our school. It is something which will never be appropriate for children of the Heart of Jesus. Sint ut sun taut non sint. Farewell. I embrace*



*all the brothers and I trust that you will all remain firm in the faith.” (LBP 1407/27.9.1828/ 7, 178)*

In another letter, this time to Regis Rouchouze, the Good Father says: *Yes, my dear brothers, we can never serve God by means which he himself disapproves. Priests were lost to the first oath (the Civil Constitution of the Clergy?). The one they are now proposing (Cf. Letter 1407) will be implemented purely and in all its rigor. Judge for yourselves if a child of the divine Heart would be allowed to conform to such a thing.*

*And so, even if this costs you, let us abandon ourselves to Providence. Providence knows how to take care of us and our children...I expect you to stand firm. Let us not pine for the onions of Egypt. (LEBP 1453/15.1.1829/7, 218-219; Cf. 1444/4.1.1829/7, 212; 1452/15.1.1829/7, 217-218).*

## **To remain faithful to Christ and his Gospel**

Juan Vicente González ss.cc. describes the Good Father's life during this period: *Since the beginning of 1828 and even before, the Founder could see storms gathering for the church and the congregation....Faced with the danger coming from the society around him, he felt for a long time that the only true security consisted in being deeply faithful to the Gospel and authentically in communion with Christ and not with the world. He had an instinctive repugnance of compromise and of getting into power struggles with the enemies of the Church. When Christian values and the interests of the Church were at stake, diplomatic niceties exasperated him...He considered the laws*

*to be illegitimate and any subterfuge by his sons to save the schools, he considered dishonest.*

*Father Coudrin became determined in his refusal to authorize any declaration, oath or promise since he considered the law evil. He ordered the brothers to continue teaching until the gendarmes arrived to close the schools. He wanted the people and the nation to be aware of the evil and he wanted his own to remain in the truth. (González, Juan Vicente, *Servidor del Amor. Pedro Coudrin*, Santiago de Chile, 1990, pp. 376-377)*



## C. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULE OF LIFE

Article 5 of our Constitutions reminds us that the celebration of the Eucharist and contemplative adoration make us enter into the sentiments of Jesus before the Father and the world and remind us of the need to transform the world according to the criteria of the Gospel. We want to radiate the values of the Gospel in the midst of our society and culture. *The task of making the Gospel meaningful in a world subject to change demands that we be attentive to the reality that surrounds us, to its structural dimensions, its values, and its sin.* (Statutes, n. 1)

As ss.cc. religious we live our vocation in relationship to a reality that we constantly contemplate (in the apostolate and in the silence of prayer) through the prism of the Gospel. The contrast between the two sources of our contemplation leads us to see the contrast between the values of the world and those of the Gospel. That distance touches our heart and becomes a constant source of dissatisfaction. That creates in us a critical sense and leads us to seek new ways to transform the world. Contact with people in need constantly leads us to critique and to distance ourselves from the values of the world. We also allow ourselves to be evangelized by the poor we encounter. (Statutes, nn. 5,7)

According to our Constitutions, our religious life as Gospel witness to the world is already a critique. *The vows, through their evangelical content, prophetically denounce the most characteristic manifestations of “the sin of the world”: those, which strike at the fundamental values of human life.* (Constitutions, art. 15). The religious community must continually examine whether it is really a sign of God’s love for those it serves and among whom it lives. (Constitutions, art. 41.5)

Our Rule of Life describes this critical/dissident sense in the following way: *Neither should it be surprising that many are at odds with the type of society in which they live. They do not find it sufficiently just, but rampant with inequalities and new forms of social and psychic slavery. They do not find it brotherly enough, but perpetually dominated by conflicts between power blocks, races, nations, and classes. They do not find it sufficiently centered on the development of the whole man, but lacking a spirit of gratuity and contemplation, motivated solely by profit and dried up by a rationalistic technology. They do not find it open enough to certain new values in the world, but wrapped up completely in its own structures.* (RV, n. 13) This attitude, which is proper to one called to proclaim the Gospel, brings us face to face with the challenge of refusing to conform to the values of the world in the name of the Gospel and human liberation.



## D. LIVING THIS TODAY

### The word “non-conformity”

This concept can cause various reactions and even have a pejorative meaning. It can also help us to realize the resistance we all feel toward change. It is difficult to imagine any kind of change, either within or outside the church, that does not include some kind of non-conformity. The sense in which we are using the term here is that of being critical of our reality in terms of Gospel values. It also entails the creative renewing power of the Gospel which gives birth to other possibilities. A non-conformist attitude, when it comes to authority, seems necessary for real creative fidelity so as to bring about real transformation. In open societies, non-conformists have rights and also duties. They propose alternatives and fight for them patiently, respectfully and tolerantly. This is what the prophets did right up to John the Baptist. Jesus Christ was a non conformist who responsibly, patiently, courageously and lovingly challenged the religious and cultural status quo, proposing an alternative life style. He lived what he proclaimed. Martin Luther king and Ghandi are examples of responsible non-conformists. As many others, known and unknown, they were able to envision alternatives based on their values and work toward realizing them. It is frequently such non-

conformists who affect the lives of others, open new paths to liberation and are recognized as such in spite of suffering persecution. It is significant that many of them were opposed in one way or another and in some cases murdered.

### **Within the Congregation**

The Good Father's witness and some events in the history of our Congregation show that this characteristic has been important. Many times it has been a source of creative initiatives and significant contributions to church and society especially in mission, social ministry, education, youth ministry, theology, research on Sacred Scripture, liturgical renewal and other areas. In keeping with our tradition and given the reality of society and church, this is an aspect of leadership and a way of being pastors that we must continue to develop. This means living our commitment in a way that is open to the new possibilities inspired by the Gospel and our charism, being able to propose new ways of Gospel living and not allowing ourselves to be co-opted by the values of the world. This challenges us to be pastors and leaders who minister out of responsible non-conformity and creative fidelity. This means being pastors and leaders who can be responsible non-conformist and creatively faithful.

### **Non-conformism as a moral obligation**

Pedro Laín Entralgo has written: *Moltman heard*

*a friend in New York say, "The worse is that one becomes accustomed to everything little by little." Moltman noted, "The worse is not evil in itself, but the fact that we become accustomed to it and in the end it's all the same to us. There are young people in the prime of life without work. But we become used to that. Hopelessness creates drug addiction. But we become used to that. To buy drugs which create a high, they need money and so they become thieves. But we become used to that. In the light of day in the middle of the street they attack and beat people. And don't we become used to that?" I would add: the television shows us thousands of people dying of hunger. And we also get used to that. Even though we are disgusted and uncomfortable we don't turn off the television. In short, what we have to do is not get used to it. Non-conformity is a moral obligation. It can be a mental, emotional and practical response to the social reality of evil. Each one can do what he can do. (Lain Entralgo, Pedro, *Esperanza en tiempo de crisis*, Madrid, 1993, p. 255)*

We could add the following to the things to which we so easily become accustomed: the acceptance of social economic and cultural system which becomes more and more dominant, passivity in the face of that model which excludes so many, the uncritical acceptance of pluralism which accepts everything and which conceals a spirit of accommodation which just wants to avoid conflict etc.

Pedro Lain helps us accentuate another aspect of non-conformism. It can not remain at the level of speech, it must become action. Each person can do what they can do. And even if one is all alone, the

least one can do is not get used to things. The needs of our world, which can be so far from the Gospel, should move us to action (*The Present Social Context*, Thirty-sixth General Chapter, Rome 2000, pp. 12-13)

### **Leadership that is counter-cultural and non-conformist**

As we develop new forms of commitment in today's world, the challenge is to be attentive to the values coming from our charism that can help us respond apostolically. We are called to develop a style of leadership and authority which is creative and which offers alternatives ways for living the Gospel according to our ss.cc. vocation. We could describe this kind of leadership as counter-cultural and non-conformist. It involves a process of renewal and purification which would allow us to confront the ever quickening pace of change which we experience. This will demand of each of us a new and creative way of speaking. It will mean being open to what is new and critical of what distorts the Gospel. Our attitude with respect to our culture, rather than being pessimistic must be one of hope before new possibilities. It is important not to become disillusioned when faced with the negative aspects of some of these new realities. If there is not personal renewal, the structure can not provide any real progress and in fact it will only become an obstacle and even a threat to the person. On the other hand, when the structure facilitates critical and participative



reflection, it becomes capable of responding to the challenges mission presents to individuals and communities.

# 8

*Learn to do good; seek justice,  
rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan,  
plead for the widow*

(Isaiah 1:17).

Authority that responds to inequality and  
works for justice

## **REPARATIVE AND LIBERATING LEADERSHIP**

Another characteristic that we see from our ss.cc. history and which has special relevance for our ministry in today's world is what we could call reparative or liberating leadership. This is leadership faithful to the mission of Christ and inspired by his love. It is sensitive to injustice and in solidarity with the poor. It promotes the transformation of hearts and works for a just and reconciled society. The centrality of the Eucharist and adoration in our spirituality is clearly part of this type of leadership. Our Eucharistic spirituality leads us to work for the transformation of the world according to the criteria of the Gospel.



## A. THE SCRIPTURES

- ...but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. (Isaiah 11:4-5)
- Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place. (Jeremiah 22:3)
- For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. (Psalm 72:12-13)
- ...we have undertaken to send to renew our family ties and friendship with you...(1 Macabees 12:10)
- Ptolemy...took the lead in showing justice to the Jews because of the wrong that had been done to them...(2 Macabees 10:12)
- He has shown strength with his arm ...he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:51-53)
- Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man carried by four of them....he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." (Mark 2:3-12)
- And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" (the son of the widow of Naim). (Luke 7:11-17)
- I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk. (Acts 3:6)



## B. THE GOOD FATHER AND HIS WRITINGS

The Good Father was deeply aware of the need which existed in the French society and church after the revolution. The response that he realized he had to give (*people know longer know what the love of God is*) was expressed in different ways in our documents. In the Preliminary Chapter of the Rule of 1817, the different works which the brothers and sisters were involved in finds expression in the imitation of the four ages of Jesus Christ. The devotion to the Sacred Hearts, which is mentioned in second place in the Preliminary Chapter and linked to zeal (*Cf. Memoir of the Good Father on the tile Zealots*) gives another glimpse of the kind of response the Founders wanted to offer.

For the Good Father devotion to the Sacred Heart is an expression of the love of Christ and the love of God in Jesus and also our response to the love of God. (*Faith in God's love inspired in those who loved and professed this love, a cult of reparation as one of its principal responses.* (CS 10, n. 350) This cult of reparation is understood in its authentic New Testament sense, as existential worship affecting all aspects of life. We see this in our formula of religious profession when it says, *in whose service I wish to live and die.*

In the mind of the Good Father and the primitive community it was not possible to separate reparation from one of the central values of the community: a life centered in the Eucharist. Reparation is a concept with at times is identified with adoration. The Petition to the Bishop of Poitiers, May 22 1802, reads:... *and this reparation has never been interrupted, day or night, for 9 years in the women's association ...* (CS 10, n. 437) But it goes beyond the practice of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In the letter of the priests of Poitiers to their Bishop, exiled in Switzerland, they treat reparation (without mentioning adoration) in its broadest sense. Speaking of those who make up the Association of the Sacred Heart they say: *The members of the association apply themselves to all sorts of good works, especially those of mercy* (CS 10, n. 432). The draft of the petition to the Pope at the beginning of 1801 says: *The first motive of this Association has been the desire to appease the anger of God to offer oneself as a victim in perpetual atonement so as to intercede effectively for the Church and for the State and to repair the outrages which Jesus Christ receives in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.* (CS 10, n. 434) Later it speaks of the practice of daily adoration. Cahiers de Spirituality 10 says that the witness of many brothers and sisters we allows us *to grasp in a concrete manner the apostolic missionary dimension of adoration in the Congregation.*(CS 10, n. 468)

Adoration was an exercise but it was always linked to a living spirit of immolation, *to satisfy, as much as possible, divine justice* (Cf. CS 10, n. 352), to a spirit of reparation which was explicitly missionary and to a sense of communion with those who suffer.



## C. CONSTITUTIONS AND RULE OF LIFE

The Constitutions help us clarify what we mean by leadership that is reparative and liberating and how we might exercise such leadership today. This involves being aware of injustice and inequality which are so destructive. The Constitutions also provide a starting point for our work of evangelization and suggest implications for pastoral leadership.

Article 4 begins by calling us to be aware: *Aware of the power of evil that opposes the Father's Love and disfigures his design for the world* (Constitutions, art. 4). Our reparative-liberating work is a manifestation of God's desire that people have life and have it abundantly. Apostolic leadership must always be conscious that this option is born of moral indignation at the scandal of poverty and injustice. Contact with those who suffer and presence to the world of the poor moves us to be in solidarity with them.

Right after that *reparation* is presented as communion with Jesus: *Our reparation is communion with Him, whose food is to do the Father's will and whose work is to reunite by his blood the dispersed children of God.* Communion with Christ leads us to the work of reparation. It is the consequence of identification with the attitude of Jesus and with His reparative work. The

Good News of Jesus is at work within us so *that we recognize our sinfulness*. That is the deepest motivation for *solidarity with the men and women who are victims of injustice, hatred, and sin in the world*.

Article 6 points out the urgency of evangelizing action.

In the background one glimpses the zeal which inspired the Founder (Cf. RV, n. 24). Injustice in the world is a call to mission. The elements of this article are

a) The *urgency* of evangelizing action

b) That involves entering into the interior dynamic of the love of Christ for his Father and for the world: *We identify with Christ Jesus* in his love for the Father and his love for the world, for the secular, for the day to day, for the persons we meet every day.

c) A dynamic love for the poor, the afflicted, the marginalized and those who have not heard the Good News.

d) To carry out the mission of making God's kingdom present, the article offers some points. The following seem important:

- **the transformation of the human heart:** person-centered ministry, focus on what is most important, education which creates conviction and commitment.

- endeavoring to be **agents of communion in the world:** ministry which creates communion, facilitates



integration and creates community.

- we work **in solidarity with the poor for a just and reconciled society**: ministry that is sensitive to the needy and poor, being a voice for the voiceless.

We would add another point: **openness and collaboration** with all those who, led by the Spirit, work to build a world of justice and love, sign of the Kingdom. (Cf. Constitutions, art. 4)

If we take a broad look at our reparative spirituality, we see that adoration and reparative ministry are mutually enriching. Articles 52 and 53.3 help us see the depth of the mystery of communion with Christ, the suffering servant of God (Cf. RL, n. 77)

In the Eucharist we celebrate the action of God in our lives and in the world. In adoration we are one with the continuous intercession of Christ before the Father, as he is one with the cry of humanity wounded by sin and we are sent anew on his mission so that through him, with him and in him our life and the world liberated from evil and sin might give glory to the Father.

**The Rule of Life** presents two central elements of our ministry of leadership: its communal dimension and its liberating dimension. *Liberating leadership* reminds

us that in our ministry we are called to create communion and *to be apostles of his (God's) plan of love*. In his love God seeks bring together his children *scattered* by division, exclusion, injustice and inequality of every kind. We are called to restore in Christ those who are lost, rejected and abandoned. The Rule of Life adds: *to make known to men the liberation brought by Jesus Christ, without letting ourselves get wrapped up in conflicts of interest or simply searching for more perfect techniques* (Cf. RL, nn. 23-28).



## D. LIVING THIS TODAY

Liberation is a theme that has been much discussed in the church in recent years. It is necessary to understand what it means and also how it affects the way we exercise authority as Sacred Hearts religious. Our leadership must be reparative and liberating and that will always involve personal and social change.

### **To renew our commitment to build a more just world**

We recognize the General Chapter of 1982 as a powerful moment of renewal for the Congregation. Its three orientations and especially the first one: *to build a more just world in solidarity with the poor* have had a significant effect. The letter of our former superior general, Pat Bradley, on the subject offers interesting input on this characteristic of leadership.

The introduction to the decisions of the Thirty-sixth General Chapter (Rome 2000) invites the brothers *to renew the commitment to construct a more just world in solidarity with the poor; in line with our Constitutions assume the urgency of working for the transformation of the world according to gospel criteria; and continue strenuously to create*

*missionary communities for a world without frontiers.* (Thirty-sixth General Chapter, Rome 2000, p. 13). The chapter's *Message to the Brothers on Our Commitment to the Poor* emphasizes the same point and offers some reflections that can help discern how to live the option for the poor.

## **To promote communion and justice**

The concrete way that each of us can exercise this kind of leadership depends on many circumstances. Our response can in no way be univocal and will be determined by our context. It is good to accept these differences without misinterpreting them. However what the Rule of Life says about presenting the communal and reparative as complementary is an invitation to include in our ministry efforts to build communion, to bring about justice and to oppose whatever contradicts God's will.

## **Seeing the real situation**

Reparative and liberating leadership will lead us to confront reality, as hard and tragic as it might be. *Perfectae Caritatis*, speaking of the renewal of religious life, says clearly in its "General Principles for Renewal" that Religious Life must be redefined, precisely in reference to an unjust world. Any effort at renewal that ignores the real situation distorts the criteria established by Vatican II for a valid renewal and is doomed to be

ineffective. (Cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 2) This is also a valid criteria for the kind of leadership we want to exercise. It should promote renewal, conversion, and contact with the reality of those who suffer from the injustice.

### **A critical sense**

Reparative and liberating leadership helps us be aware of reality and to become part of it while analyzing it as critically as possible. We have to help others to see the broader picture as much as and to be open to it. At the same time we have to help people to avoid a reductive vision that can be the result of ideology or culture. It is to us to offer ministry which broadens awareness of the evils which exist in our world so that people are liberated from all kinds of death (oppression, poverty, violence, sexism, xenophobia etc.)

### **Integral development**

This kind of leadership involves working for liberation with those who suffer injustice, allowing the poor to become the protagonists. *The poor are not simply the primary recipients of our pastoral service but the essential criterion of our mission.* (Thirty-sixth General Chapter, Rome 2000, pp. 13 and 60). Reparative and liberating leadership is not satisfied with helping the poor but promotes the integral development (psychological, existential and spiritual) of individuals and of social

groups in their different aspects (cultural, political and religious).

### **Accepting the consequences of solidarity**

As a consequence of this kind of solidarity, leadership will challenge people to accept the consequences of such choices. This will involve taking on the suffering, the deprivation and the work that result from the poverty and need of those with whom we are in solidarity. This is the meaning of the mystery of the suffering Servant and redemption he offers. Accepting how God's reign grown means we have to contemplate reality with the eyes and heart of God.

### **Contemplation as decisive for reparative ministry**

Solidarity with the poor generates a spirituality in which we realize that evangelization is liberating. To preach the Gospel involves liberation from every kind of slavery and the restoration of human dignity. In such a spirituality contemplation goes hand in hand with action. Liberating-reparative leadership considers contemplation and adoration, as key to reparative ministry. Our reparation is communion with Christ, the suffering servant, pierced for the sin of the world. The reparative ministry that has been entrusted to us must include time for adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Reparation is communion with Christ. Reparative and

liberating leadership invites those we serve to share our Eucharistic adoration as an essential moment of the liberating mission to which all are called.