

*English*



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*English*

# Prologue

LET US JOIN HANDS AND WALK TOGETHER  
TO OUR HEAVENLY HOMELAND<sup>1</sup>

*Directory of the Third Order, 119*

**Author:** Fr. Gustavo Nieto, IVE

**Original Language:** spanish

*Rome (Italy) July 30<sup>th</sup> 2019*

**D**earest Third Order members and friends:  
Welcome to all!

Blessed be God who grants us this joyful meeting with you, laity and friends of the Institute of the Incarnate Word, who have come from more than 58 different countries! I am so very happy to be able to receive you and personally express our appreciation and gratitude for your splendid contribution towards the cause of Christ.

The fact that we are here in Rome, the seat of Christ's Vicar on earth, as «a single Family, united by the same faith, the same ends, the same mission, the same charism, the same nature and the same spirit»<sup>2</sup> makes our encounter more significant. This represents an unparalleled occasion to witness together our perfect communion with the Church and confess that our motto is «with Peter and under Peter»<sup>3</sup> and that we have no greater aspirations than that of serving the propagation of Christ's Kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SAINT LUIGI ORIONE, *Letter to the Sons of Providence, July 25, 1936*, 151 and 152.

<sup>2</sup> *Directory of the Third Order*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Directory of the Third Order*, 2018; *op cit. Constitutions*, 211; cf. *Ad Gentes*, 38.

<sup>4</sup> *Directory of the Third Order*, 236.

You – who have chosen to be the leaven that renews humanity from within – are the answer of God, always close to men, to the innumerable needs of the evangelization of this world and an irreplaceable support for our Institute's mission.

Because it is our purpose to bring the Incarnate Word to all men, to permeate the values of society with the aroma of Christ, to transform the hearts of men with his adorable Presence, to undertake epic works for his cause, to make the love of Christ reign in families, to light the blazing lamp of truth of the Incarnate Word in the four corners of this world, even in the most difficult situations and the most adverse conditions. And you are the valiant and coherent witnesses of the duty and mission of the evangelization of cultures, who help us to bring Christ to the remotest regions and to take possession of reality for the Lord, inculturating the Gospel in the most hidden places of human life.

Your collaboration in all our missions, tertiaries and friends, is a very important and efficacious help so that the mission entrusted to us within the Church might spread to and arrive in those remotest places and areas of society (and those pertaining to the life of the laity) to which it would be very difficult for us to arrive in any other way. I assure you that your help in our missions is vital.

Without a doubt, these are days of special blessings for all. It is my fervent prayer for each one of you that in this first international meeting of the members of the Third Order and friends of the IVE, the spirit of family may grow among us and act as a stimulus so that when you return to your countries, you may continue working with great commitment, «ordering temporal matters according to the plan of God<sup>5</sup>»<sup>6</sup>, knowing that you are not alone in the mission, but that you have a whole Religious Family that supports you and expects great things of you. Because, believe me, «the extension of the Kingdom of God and the mission of our Religious Family in the world depends in great part»<sup>7</sup> on committed laity like you, since only the close union of strengths is capable of fully achieving all the aims of the Institute's apostolate and firmly protecting its interests.<sup>8</sup>

5 Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 31.

6 *Directory of the Third Order*, 7.

7 *Directory of the Third Order*, 369.

8 Cf. *Directory of the Third Order*, 236; *op. cit. Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 18.

As Saint Don Orione said to his religious: “Let us join hands and walk together to our Heavenly Homeland. Let us edify one another through our mutual good example.»<sup>9</sup> I wholeheartedly encourage you to continue witnessing Christ, the Incarnate Word, always and everywhere.

I cannot conclude before expressing my profound and heartfelt gratitude to all those who organized this event: priests, religious, the sisters Servants of the Lord, benefactors, and of course, once more: our beloved laity and friends.

Thank you all for the great effort that you have made to come. Please take my words of encouragement and great appreciation home to all the members of the Third Order who were not able to come and my most sincere thanks for their support for our missions.

Invoking the protection of Mary, Queen of Apostles and Star of the new evangelization, upon each one of you, I wish you all well in time and in eternity.

In Christ, the Incarnate Word.

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<sup>9</sup> SAINT LUIGI ORIONE, *Letter to the Sons of Providence, July 25, 1936*, 151 y 152. Cited in the *Directory of the Third Order*, 119

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# *Introduction*

## INTRODUCTION

*The plenary conference themes*

*Author: Fr. Andrés José Bonello, IVE*

*Original language: spanish*

The commission, which has determined the themes what the plenary conferences will treat, estimated that the plenary conferences are essentially important for the uniting of our religious and laity in our Religious Family's bosom under the urgent and exciting mission's noble standard of the Evangelization of the culture.

Although we have asked each presenter to freely treat the topics according to their preference of perspective and tone, we believe that it would be convenient to establish, before and in writing, the reasons which lead us to put such a centrality on such themes.

This writing is the following text, which, despite being already in the *IVE Meeting's* "Guide Book" is perhaps even more useful now in order to introduce these "Acts," which will give the possibility to see the existing connection between one topic and another, and may be a reason for reflection, discernment, and examination about our charism especially in the next *IVE Meeting* which we hope to be able to accomplish every three years.

We can reduce this meeting to two goals to reach: reflecting on *what we must be* in order to reflect on *what we must do*. The chosen plenary conference themes originated from both goals.

## 1. To live and announce the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word

The IVE Meeting is a means to concretize our true end: to profess, with a single voice, of our convicted and ardent desire that Jesus Christ, man's only Savior, be explicitly present in every man and every aspect of human reality,<sup>1</sup> since there is no other name under heaven given to the human race by which we can be saved.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1925, Pope Pius XI noted that the great «manifold evils in the world were due to the fact that the majority of men had thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives; that these had no place either in private affairs or in politics.»<sup>3</sup> The Pope sternly declared that «as long as individuals and states refused to submit to the rule of our Savior, there would be no really hopeful prospect of a lasting peace among nations.»<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ wants to reign because for this he came into the world.<sup>5</sup> This is what we must ask him during these days: «Reign, Lord, over every man and all human reality!» With this desire we want, here, «to offer him our persons for this work... and to distinguish ourselves in his service»<sup>6</sup> so that He might reign.<sup>7</sup> And we do this with complete confidence and with the courage that comes from the knowledge that it is He who calls everyone<sup>8</sup> to «follow him in suffering, in order to rejoice later with Him in his victory.»<sup>9</sup>

With one voice, as one Family, both laity and consecrated, «we pledge all our strength to inculturate the Gospel, that is, to extend

1 «We specifically pledge all our strength to inculturate the Gospel, that is, to extend the Incarnation to all men, in the whole man, and in all of the manifestations of man, in accordance with the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church.» *Constitutions*, n.5

2 Cf. *Acts of the Apostles*, 4:12.

3 Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quas Primas*, Introduction

4 Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quas Primas*, Introduction

5 Jn 18:37.

6 Cf. SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises* n. 97.

7 Cf. 1 Cor. 15:25.

8 «And [Jesus] said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."» (Lk 9:23)

9 Cf. SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises* n. 95.1

the Incarnation to all men, in the whole man, and in all of the manifestations of man.»<sup>10</sup> These days should be public testimony that only by openly declaring the urgent necessity of Jesus' Reign in today's world will man be able to find the way towards a hope that will no longer disappoint,<sup>11</sup> and satisfy the emptiness and anguish left in his soul by the dramatic atheism of our time.

In a world deaf to the voice of Jesus, we want our profession *to resound through all the earth*, and so we must be united by the close bond which is Christ, made brothers and sisters in Him, both consecrated persons as well as tertiaries and lay friends of our Religious Family.

We must coherently pass from *what we must be*, contemplating and imitating the mystery of the Incarnation, to *what we must do*, that is, evangelizing culture. For this, the following topics were chosen as a reflection of the plenary conferences.

## **2. «To focalize our apostolate in the mystery of the Incarnation»: *The reflection themes over the essence, means and urgency of the Evangelization of the culture.***

When asking ourselves about «*our apostolate's particular style*»<sup>12</sup> we remember that Though it is true that «there is nothing that is strictly new in our apostolate,»<sup>13</sup> but «we are unique in re-proposing existing apostolates which were originated in other congregations, like the Spiritual Exercises, oratories, popular missions, etc.»<sup>14</sup> However, we must not forget that «what we are unique for is the focalizing in the mystery of the Incarnation.»<sup>15</sup> In order to truly focalize ourselves in this mystery, the themes of the conferences are established in the following way:

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Constitutions*, n. 5

<sup>11</sup> C. FABRO, *Introduzione all'ateismo moderno*, EDIVI, Segni 20, Introduction.

<sup>12</sup> *Directory of Consecrated Life*, n. 2. Cf. also the circular letter of Fr. Nieto from September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 (Italian edition in G. NIETO, *Custodite il Carisma*, ED.IVE, Montefiascone 2019, Fr. 197).

<sup>13</sup> Notes of the V General Chapter (2007), n. 8. Cited by G. NIETO, *Custodite il Carisma*, ED IVE, Montefiascone 2019, Fr. 203.

<sup>14</sup> Notes of the V General Chapter (2007), n. 8. Cited by G. NIETO, *Custodite il Carisma*, ED IVE, Montefiascone 2019, Fr. 203.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

*First conference***The Mystery of the Incarnation and our Times**

*Reason and end of this plenary conference  
(entrusted to Fr. Miguel Ángel Fuentes, IVE)*

While in ancient times, the attempts to deny the Incarnation were real although rather isolated,<sup>16</sup> Saint John Paul II considers that our times are marked by such a denial.<sup>17</sup> The close union between the human and the Divine made in the single Person of Jesus Christ is denied today in the continual attempt to separate God from man's reality, as if they were opposites. In this way, the supernatural world, on which human reality depends absolutely, stays «consigned to a distant past or a distant heaven»<sup>18</sup> and, as much as some contemporaries say that they admire Jesus, «He remains distant.»<sup>19</sup> Truly, considers the Great Pope, Jesus Christ is not known; nor is he loved or obeyed.

The rejection of the union between God and man brought about by the Incarnation brings «disturbing consequences.» We are witnesses of an indifferent culture of death, before which the prophetic words of Chesterton are confirmed: «take away the supernatural and what remains is the unnatural.»<sup>20</sup> Fruits of such a denial are abortion, euthanasia, and the deterioration of the family and sexuality. In addition to this, «when Christ is excluded or denied, our vision of human purpose dwindles; and as we anticipate and aim for less, hope gives way to despair, joy to depression.»<sup>21</sup> Another disturbing consequence of denying the Incarnation is that «the individual relationship with God is seen as purely personal and private, so that God is removed from the processes that govern social, political and economic activity.»<sup>22</sup>

We must not become accustomed to the culture of death, the destruction of the family, of the political societies disconnected from the Gospel. We must declare war on these realities, and for this it is necessary to raise the standard of the Incarnation of the Word. For only Christ can raise man, and all of man's reality, from the consequential

16 Cf. SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Parts*, Homily VI.

17 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to the Master General of the Order of Preachers*, July 11, 2001.

18 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to the Master General of the Order of Preachers*, July 11, 2001.

19 *Ibidem*.

20 G.K. CHESTERTON, *Heretics*, Baronius Press LTD, London 2006. pg. 58.

21 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to the Master General of the Order of Preachers*, July 11, 2001.

22 *Ibidem*.

misery brought on by the denial of His Mystery and of His reality as true God and true Man.

Having established this urgent conviction of affirming and announcing the Incarnation of the Word, we can better understand the essence of what our Religious Family is called to be.

### *Second conference*

#### **The charism of the institute of the Incarnate Word**

*Reason and end of this plenary conference*  
(entrusted to Fr. Gonzalo Ruiz Freites, IVE)

In raising up our small Religious Family of the Incarnate Word, God wants to reaffirm the Incarnation of the Word. Before the dramatic denial of the Incarnation of the Word, the Holy Spirit grants a charism, a special grace received by the Founder and ordained for the edification of the entire Church, in order that those who receive it may witness in their lives the virtues of Christ in the Incarnation: living ourselves the virtues of self-emptying, of transcendence, being essentially Marian as Christ was during His Incarnation. In this way, being «chalices full of Christ, chalices that allow the superabundance of His grace to overflow upon others,»<sup>23</sup> we will be able to imbue other men and all of man's reality with Him. All our religious and, in a particular way according to their own condition, *the laity of our Secular Third Order together with, all those who share in the urgent task of evangelizing culture* are called to this charism, which is carried out first in the person himself in order to later offer it to others.

The laity are included as an essential part of this charism, which will be treated in the next plenary conference.

### *Third conference*

#### **The Formation of Lay Leaders for the Social Kingdom of Christ**

*Reason and end of this plenary conference*  
(entrusted to Fr. Daniel Cima, IVE)

We must be truly «convinced that the sanctification of the laity is of immense value to the Church's life.»<sup>24</sup> From this conviction it follows that the Institute should «give priority to the formation of lay leaders»<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Constitutions*, n. 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Constitutions*, n. 176.

<sup>25</sup> *Constitutions*, n. 172.

«so that they can direct temporal matters according to the plan of God.»<sup>26</sup> If their proper temporal duties are neglected the evangelization of culture cannot be carried out.

Man searches to live in society by nature.<sup>27</sup> «The social nature of man itself requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion: that he should share with others in religious matters; that he should profess his religion in community.»<sup>28</sup> Religion cannot be a private act, without impacting society,<sup>29</sup> and Jesus Christ is not only king of the internal sphere, but also of all creation. This involves having laity, true leaders in the temporal sphere, who know how to direct and supernaturally elevate it.

Fidelity to our specific purpose demands that the religious work together with our Third Order members and, in general, with all our lay friends who are convinced by the importance of the inculturation of the Gospel. This common effort cannot be *optional* for us, rather it is «an essential and constitutive part of the Institute... that cannot be overlooked, insofar as it is the prolongation of the Institute's actions in the proper spheres of the life of the laity.»<sup>30</sup>

The laity, in turn, must not forget their apostolic vocation. The dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* refers to them in a notably strong text: «But the laity, by their very vocation, *seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.* They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. *They are called there by God* that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world *from within* (... and) in this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.

<sup>26</sup> *Constitutions*, n. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 95, a. 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Dignitatis humanae*, n. 3.

<sup>29</sup> As an example, the institution of the feast of Christ the King itself was a necessary effect of the devotion to the Sacred Heart: «The way has been happily and providentially prepared for the celebration of this feast ever since the end of the last century. The kingship and empire of Christ have been recognized in the pious custom, practiced by many families, of dedicating themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; not only families have performed this act of dedication, but nations, too, and kingdoms.» (PIUS XI, *Quas Primas*, n. 26).

<sup>30</sup> *Directory of the Third Order*, n. 5.

Therefore, since *they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.*»<sup>31</sup>

Saint Don Orione once said «today, whoever is not an apostle of Jesus Christ and the Church is an apostate.»<sup>32</sup> Therefore, we want these days to be a profound prayer and reflection about the laity's apostolic duty, keeping in mind that, now more than ever, «the laity must take up the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation. Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church and motivated by Christian charity, they must act directly and in a definite way in the temporal sphere.»<sup>33</sup>

#### *Fourth conference*

### **The Secular Third Order of the Institute of the incarnate Word**

*Reason and end of this plenary conference  
(entrusted to Sr. Mary Mother of Faith, SSVM)*

The challenges of effectively inculturating the Gospel today make the direct, explicit and communitarian work of the IVE lay tertiary necessary. This lay vocation allows them to enter certain temporal environments that can be difficult for a consecrated person: reaching «there where the priests and religious cannot go or enter, be it because their numbers are not sufficient to complete such obligations or be it because these are not suitable or worthy places of a consecrated person. In this way, redemption spreads also to the lowest or most hidden places.»<sup>34</sup>

And so, to achieve the evangelization of culture, we must count on the help from the laity: «It is an essential and constitutive part of the family of the “Incarnate Word.” The Religious Family of the Incarnate Word cannot do without it, in so far as it prolongs the action of both Institutes in the proper spheres of the life of the laity.»<sup>35</sup>

31 *Lumen Gentium*, n. 31. The cursive is ours.

32 SAINT LUIGI ORIONE. *Letters of Don Orione*. August 2, 1935. Edit. Pio XII, Mar del Plata, 1952, Fr. 89. Cited in the *Directory of Spirituality of the IVE*, n. 126.

33 *Apostolicam Actositatem*, n. 7.

34 *Directory of the Secular Third Order*, n. 91.

35 *Directory of the Secular Third Order*, n. 5.

They must spiritually nourish themselves, in the light of the mystery of the Incarnation, in order to be able, with their lives and apostolates, to instill all their realities with the Gospel, like the family, political society, public education, work, etc. And it is not just a mere exterior identification with the mission of the religious priests and sisters, but the tertiaries of the IVE also live in communion of grace through the charism to which they are united, thus participating in the common spiritual goods of all the members of the Institute of the Incarnate Word.

Even though not all the participants of this meeting form part of our Third Order, this conference will be useful in order to better understand its essence, and as well as to orient them in their own Christian vocation as laity and in giving testimony to Christ in the world.

### *Fifth conference*

## **Life and the Family: Concrete and Urgent Points Regarding Evangelization of Culture**

*Reason and end of this plenary conference*

*(entrusted to Eduardo and Clara Maggiora, IVE Third Order Members)*

The proclamation of the Incarnation of the Word opposes the culture of death with the culture of life. Today, the main duty of the IVE tertiary is to proclaim, through his life and works the defense of the family as of inestimable value and of all human life from conception until natural death. These admissible truths are even more convincing if we see them put into practice by others. «Such a truth— vital and necessary as it is for life—is attained not only by way of reason but also through trusting abandonment to other persons who can guarantee the authenticity and certainty of the truth itself.»<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, through their own witness as family, the Maggiora couple and their son, Javier, will discuss the value of the family and life and how they specifically live it out.

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36 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et ratio*, n. 33



### *Sixth conference*

### **Presentation of the Religious Family's Missions**

*Reason and end of this plenary conference*

*(entrusted to Fr. Jesús Segura, IVE and Sr. Maria Stella del Mare, SSVM)*

«The mission, received from the founder and submitted to the Church for approval, is to bring to fullness the effects of the Incarnation of the Word, “the epitome and root of all good”<sup>37</sup>, this is to be done especially in the vast world of culture, i.e., the “manifestation of man as an individual, as a community, as a people, as a nation.”<sup>38</sup>»<sup>39</sup>

The Evangelization of culture must include precisely *every manifestation of man*, that is, *all cultures*. This requires that those called to such a vocation «not be evasive to the missionary adventure,» but that they go to the whole world,<sup>40</sup> and proclaim the Gospel to all men.

Therefore, we will conclude by presenting our Religious Family's missionary activity in the five continents. In addition to being formative, this exposition is aimed at sharing, together as a Religious Family, all the good that God does through our missionaries. We express our highest appreciation to them for the noble labor of evangelization that they carry out, some in very distant lands and in very difficult situations.

### **3. Conclusion**

In brief, the “thematic track” of our conferences has been: Begun by a true conviction of the *necessity* of affirming the Incarnation in our time (1<sup>st</sup> conference), we must be conscious that *for this* God raised up a Congregation, inspired a founder with a charism to *prolong the mystery of the Incarnation* (2<sup>nd</sup> conference). Charism, which although essentially consists in being identified with the Incarnate Word, cannot only be limited to a private ambient or prayer, but also the social ambient must be explicitly guided by the Gospel having true Catholic leaders (3<sup>rd</sup> conference) among whom there are some who will want to be more directly designated as Third Order members (4<sup>th</sup> conference). They, united with, guided by, and spiritually enlightened by the religious,

<sup>37</sup> SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on St. Matthew*, II, 3.

<sup>38</sup> SAINT JOHN PAUL II, To European Intellectuals December 15, 1983, 3.

<sup>39</sup> *Constitutions*, n. 32.

<sup>40</sup> Mk 16: 15.

must carry the evangelization forward in temporal affairs, of which life and the family are specifically urgent today (5<sup>th</sup> conference), as today they are imprisoned by a true culture of death. These are not the only areas, rather every authentically human manifestation must be elevated by the Gospel. The last conference will be directed to present how our small Religious Family furthers the work of evangelization through its missionaries in the 5 continents (6<sup>th</sup> conference).

These topics, supported by the sermons in the Masses based on the love for the «three white things»<sup>41</sup> (the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary, the Pope), must be a light which guides us in this wonderful call that we have received, both by religious and by the laity, to be “a new Incarnation of the Word»<sup>42</sup>.

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41 «Intimately united to our love, are the “three white things of the Church”: the Eucharist, which perpetuates the Incarnation under the species of bread and wine by the action of the Catholic priesthood; the Most Holy Virgin Mary, who gave her yes so that from her flesh and blood the Word was made flesh; 20 the Pope, in whom the Truth, the Will, and the Sanctity of Christ become flesh. » (*Constitutions*, n. 12).

42 BLESSED ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY, Elevation 33. Cited in the *Constitutions*, n. 31.

# Conferences

## THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION AND OUR TIMES

*Author: Fr. Miguel Ángel Fuentes, IVE*

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**S**aint Paul affirms that “all things were created through him and for him” (Col 1:16). This “Him” refers to Jesus Christ. *He* is the Center of the Universe and of History.

The day of the Incarnation divided the history of man into two parts. From the moment that the Virgin of Nazareth said “yes” to the angel who asked her, in the name of the Eternal Father, if she would be the Mother of His Son, man’s history was measured by a before and after: before Christ; after Christ.

In addition to this, there is another cut in History. It’s a cross-section. A line that starts in Paradise, where God created Adam and Eve, and extends unto the end of History with the last man’s death. This cross-section also divides history in two parts: those who are with Christ and those without Him or against Him.

Here we have two incisions which form a cross: one crosswise or horizontal; the other perpendicular or vertical. Christ is present in all History, but in a different way.

Before His Incarnation He was only *prefigured and prophesied*. We could only suspect, glimpse, have a presentiment, dream, and wish.

After this time, He is incarnated: He has a body and human soul. He can be seen, touched, heard, felt, kissed, embraced, as well as wounded, hit, and killed. The Apostle Saint John recalled in his old age that he and the Lord's other disciples had "touched" the Word of Life, made flesh; they had seen and heard Him. They spoke, therefore, what they knew through their own experience.

But both before and after the Incarnation, He can be possessed by faith and love in the heart; or can be rejected by disbelief, indifference and even hatred.

These two coordinates give us, then, a complex situation when it comes to distinguishing men. There are those who lived before and after the Incarnation and Birth of Christ. But also there are those, such as the Old Testament prophets and patriarchs who were already united to Him through a hope and faith which they maintained through clouds and shadows; and those united to Him by the New Testament's luminous faith and an ardent charity that springs forth from the Lord's Eucharistic Heart. And there are those who rejected and killed the prophets who spoke to them about this Messiah-Christ who was going to come. And those who profaned the ancient sacrifices which prefigured Him and disobeyed the commandments which prepared hearts to receive Him when He would come. And now there are those who turn their backs on this Christ who is blatantly present in their lives; this Christ who says to them, as He said to His adversaries: "you do not want to come to me to have life (...) you do not accept me." (Jn 5: 40, 43)

Saint Augustine, trying to unravel this mystery which shapes and envelops us, says that only *Two Cities, Two Peoples* exist in this world. *The City of God* and the *City of the World*. That which belongs to men of God and that of worldly men. The city of those who belong to Christ and of those who are against Christ.

The City of God began in Heaven with the Angels who remained faithful to God; it took root, in this world when Abel, the first martyr, died for love of God, having offered Him pure sacrifices – offerings that,

by their cleanliness and freshness, stirred the envy and resentment of his murderous brother. All those who are of God, before and after the Incarnation, belong to this city, always gazing at the Incarnate Christ. Before His Incarnation, they saw Him through veils in the predictions and prophetic figures, and they waited for, desired, sighed for and looked for Him. How many names of these illustrious citizens have we often heard: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Moses, the Prophets...! And how many other Old Testament saints are there: kings, warlords, heroines, queens, simple shepherds and housewives whose names have been transmitted to us by the sacred books! And there are many more who only God knows, even including other people – like Job – to whom He sent His grace, which is always the grace of Christ, through channels which only God knows! These, says Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, already possessed faith in Christ, only that it was faith in the Christ *who was to come*. With the Incarnation, rivers of men and women who believe entered this City of God, now, that *Christ has already come, already given His life for us and resurrected, and will return at the end of times in order to complete His work of judging the living and the dead*. Until all things are put beneath His feet, as Saint Paul says (Eph 1:22), that is, until He reigns over all men and over all things.

The Worldly City began with the Angels who rebelled against God, turning themselves into demons, and continued with all those men who preferred themselves above God. Those before the Incarnation closed their ears to the prophets who announced to them the Messiah who was to come, and persecuted and killed them. Those who rebelled time and time again against the patriarchs and against those who in the name of God tried to guide them to the heavenly homeland. They are those to whom God says in the Psalm: “I loathed that generation; This people’s heart goes astray; they do not know my ways.” (Ps 95:10) This City continues to have its citizens today: they are all those who, although knowing of Christ, and including some who are baptized, live as if He were not God, or as if He had not become incarnate, or as if His law did not have absolute value.

Saint Augustine says that the City of the world has been built on love of self unto the contempt of God (*amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei*). All those who before and after the Incarnation love themselves more than God belong to this city. Those who lived before the Incarnation tried – consciously or unconsciously – to impede His coming.

And those born after His Incarnation, try to frustrate the transformation and divinization of the world which is the Incarnation's salvific work.

The City of God, however, is built on the love of God unto the point of hatred of self (*amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui*). All those who love God more than themselves and are guided by the law of God belong to this city. Those who lived before the Incarnation tried to prepare for it and hasten its coming with their sacrifices and prayers, like those who prayed moaning with Isaiah: "Let justice descend, you heavens, like dew from above, like gentle rain let the clouds drop it down. Let the earth open and salvation bud forth; let righteousness spring up with them!" (Is 45: 8). Those who were born after the Incarnation fight so that the Incarnation might transfigure all human realities until everything reflects Christ and His grace.

Therefore, the Incarnation is the center of everything. It's the eye of the storm, the field of all battles, the "sign of contradiction," as Simeon called Him when receiving the child from Mary's arms. It is the "stumbling block" according to the old man's words, whereby all men are divided like the waters. Some stand up on the block and others stumble because of it. Later, Jesus, himself, would say "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters." (Mt 12: 30) Mary's eyes were brimmed with tears as she heard the aged Simeon pronounce these words about her Son. Yet as a young, valiant mother, she held Him firmly against her chest and was ready to be despised with Him and to be pierced with the same sword which would be raised against Him: Queen of the seven swords, Corredemptrix, shield of the Son Incarnate.

When we say "Incarnation," we are saying that the Word of God has become a real man. Jesus Christ is true God and true Man. The Second Person of the Holy Trinity assumed one human nature in order to offer it as a voluntary sacrifice, until the last drop of Blood for the sins of men; so that this Blood may purify all men's consciences. It does not matter how many or which sins are committed. He did this in order to redeem men from slavery to sin, the devil, and death in which their guilt had imprisoned them.

It's understandable that the one who has men under his power, the Devil, opposes the liberation of the Incarnation with all possible strength. Because the Incarnate Word's battle is properly against the Devil and

all those within his army. Revelation calls him, he “*who deceived the whole world*”; (Rev 12: 9) and whom the letter to the Hebrews calls: “the one who has the power of death.” (Hb 2: 14) Revelation describes him as gathering an army of men and demons in order to make war, putting obstacles to and annihilating the work of the Lamb of God, the Incarnate Word. Saint John calls those who are enrolled in this army opposing the Incarnation the “sons of the Devil,” and those whom they fight “the sons of God”: “In this way, the children of God and the children of the devil are made plain; no one who fails to act in righteousness belongs to God, nor anyone who does not love his brother.” (1 Jn 3:10) Because the devil is the true chief. Saint John says that all sinners are his. “Whoever sins belongs to the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning.” (1 Jn 3:8)

I have found the most explicit phrase regarding opposition to the Incarnation in the two most widely-read authors of our time. They are the fathers of a philosophical school, which has contributed to the cultural revolution that has pushed our civilization into a real cultural devastation, also contributing to the unnatural, oppressive situation which tyrannizes the times in which we live. These two, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, are the principle mentors of the Marxist school of Frankfurt who in their most emblematic work clearly affirm: “The humanization of God through Christ, is the *proton pseudos*<sup>1</sup>. This expression is put in its original language: Greek. They probably found it in Freud’s work, *A Project for Scientific Psychology* (1895), who took it from its true definer: Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> With this phrase, the Ancient Greek philosopher refers to the premise of a syllogism (reasoning), which, being false, necessarily gives a false conclusion. *Proton Pseudos* means, in fact, the “first falsity” or the “original falsity”. It is that error, craziness or lie, that once it is accepted, will bring us to deceive ourselves in everything that we try to deduce from it. So, for example, if I start from a false affirmation: “All men are trees;” anything that I may try to deduce from it will be false.

1 HORKHEIMER – ADORNO, *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*, Edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr Translated by Edmund Jechcott, Stanford University Press. Stanford, California 2002. Fr. 145.

2 ARISTOTLE, *Posteriors Analytics* Book II, Part 18, 66a, 16. Probably “According to Anderson (1962) (*Studies in the Prehistory of Psychoanalysis*) Freud took it from the Viennese doctor, Max Herz, who had employed this phrase in a similar context, in his read monography before the “Section of Neurology” [of which Freud was secretary] of a scientific congress celebrated in Vienna in 1894 (cf. Letter of Freud to Fliess of February 7, 1894)” (Juan Bauzá).

I will say that John is a man, so he is made of wood; and that Mary, also being a human person may have branches instead of arms, as all trees; and that Peter, who is also man, will break and burn as all trees; and that Rosa, being of the human race cannot have feet, but roots... In this way, the affirmation “all men are trees” is a *proton pseudos*, the original falsity, which brings all my reasoning about human beings way out in left field.

By saying that the Incarnation is the *proton pseudos*, the original falsity, Horkheimer and Adorno are proclaiming that everything taught by Christianity, which emerged from faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God, is false and a lie. Therefore in order to be in the truth we should deny the Incarnation and combat all that comes from it. We must not lose sight of the fact that we are not talking about crazy philosophers, but of two of the most prestigious and respected authors of the twentieth century from which the lastcentury’s principle philosophical and cultural movements have taken their sources.

We should not be surprised. What they say is already in the heart of that first opposition to the Christian faith, that opposition which the Apostles and the first Church Fathers confronted in their times: the Antichristian Gnosticism heresy. Saint John Paul II valiantly and clearly reminded us of this in 1986 before the University of Lyon’s Academic Body, whose members were mostly gnostic: “Gnosis [was] one of the first radical answers to Christianity.” A radical answer! That means “total opposition”. He continues “who would dare to say that the gnostic temptation is not an obstacle for the Church? The essays of Christian interpretation by philosophers like Hegel were truly a way of emptying the Christian faith of its substance, interpreting the self-emptying of the Son of God (the Incarnation) as a losing of the identity of God, and the annulment of the abyss between God and creature.”<sup>3</sup> This holy Pope saw in Hegel, the continuation of the Gnostic heresy against the Incarnation. Hegel, the most influential modern philosopher... teacher of the aforementioned Horkheimer and Adorno and their army of disciples. His doctrine encapsulate cultural Marxism, intolerant feminism, the materialistic currents of our times, and *gender ideology* which is the most radical undoing of the human person. Gender ideology is the anti-human, anti-metaphysical “rock bottom”.

3 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to the Academic Body of the Catholic University of Lyon*, October 7, 1986. Translated from the Italian.



We shouldn't be surprised that all theological battles, which are the only really important ones, are about the Incarnation. Saint Leo the Great used to say that "we come to the conclusion that hardly anyone has gone astray, unless he has refused to believe the reality of the two natures in Christ under the confession of one Person"<sup>4</sup>, that is to say, the Incarnation. Here all swords cross. This was not started from Mary's "Yes" which opened the world's doors to the Divine Word, but it started from the Pre-announcement of the "Yes" in the beginning of time when God said: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel." (Gn 3:15) And even before, when, as Revelation says: "then war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back" (Rev 12:7). The Church Fathers affirmed that the Dragon and his Angels rebelled when God revealed the future Incarnation that is, that His Eternal Son would assume a created nature, a *human* nature. Some angels refused to adore a nature inferior to their own, even when it would be hypostatically united to God. Revelation, before describing Michael and the Dragon's battle, tells us that he was prowling over the Woman at the point of giving birth, in order to devour her Son (Rev 12: 4). This Son is the Incarnate Word. The battle begins in order to defend the Woman's Son, the Son of God, hated by this Dragon, who the Author of Revelation identifies as "the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world," (Rev 12: 9). "His fight, incarnated with Christ and against the work of Redemption, – a celebrated theologian of the past century said – permits us to infer that Satan resisted recognizing Christ's supremacy, recognizing that Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is the Head and Heart of Creation."<sup>5</sup>

It has always been like this; however, our times see it in an unprecedented intensity. In 2001, Pope John Paul II reminded the Dominicans that their order had been founded by Saint Dominic Guzmán precisely in order to combat one of the many "recurrent" forms of Antichristian Gnosticism. This heresy's "central idea," the Pope recalled, "is the denial of the Incarnation, refusing to accept that 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (...), full of grace and truth' (Jn 1:14)."

4 ST. LEO THE GREAT, Homily on the Festival of Nativity, VIII, 4.

5 SCHMAUS, M., *Teología Dogmática, II. Dios Creador*, Rialp, Madrid (1961), §123. Translated from the Spanish.

And he continues a little further on: “It is clear that... the great untruths never die but lie hidden for a time, to reappear later in other forms... We live in a time marked in its own way by a denial of the Incarnation. For the first time since Christ’s birth two thousand years ago, it is as if he no longer had a place in an ever more secularized world. Not that he is always denied explicitly: indeed many claim to admire Jesus and to value elements of his teaching. Yet he remains distant: he is not truly known, loved and obeyed, but consigned to a distant past or a distant heaven. Ours is an age which denies the Incarnation in a multitude of practical ways, and the consequences of this denial are clear and disturbing.”<sup>6</sup>

Among the consequences of the denial of the Incarnation, the Pope mentions the loss “of the meaning of human existence”, which brings at the same time “despair and depression”. He also spoke of the “a profound distrust of reason and of the human capacity to grasp the truth; indeed the very concept of truth is cast into doubt.” At the same time, “life is not valued and loved; and hence the advance of a certain culture of death, with its dark blooms of abortion and euthanasia. The body and human sexuality are not properly valued and loved; hence the degradation of sex which shows itself in a tide of moral confusion, infidelity and the violence of pornography. Creation itself is not valued and loved; hence the specter of destructive selfishness in the misuse and exploitation of the environment.”<sup>7</sup>

Do we not feel fully denounced in our current situation, like a multifaceted shape, whose many faces are the negation of the truth, the rejection of life, repudiation of nature, repulsion of the supernatural and eternal, desperation, relativism, desolation of rights, the triumph of injustice, the reign of the ephemeral, and the disengagement from all commitment?

Half a century ago, the revolution of the pill separated love from procreation; later the revolution of divorce separated love from fidelity; at the same time, the sexual revolution separated sex from love; the egotistic revolution separated the individual from society and his neighbors, including his children, who were assassinated by abortion, and his parents, who were eliminated by euthanasia or abandoned in nursing homes; the revolution of prosperity separated wealth from honor and justice; the radical feministic revolution separated woman

<sup>6</sup> SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to the Master General of the Order of Preachers*, June 28, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

from man and from her own femininity; the educational revolution tries—and has almost succeeded—to separate children from their parents, in order to hand them over to a totalitarian State which brain washes them. The gender revolution, aims—and has almost succeeded—to separate sexual identity from human nature, which means nothing, and of which you cannot even speak without being punished by the ideological and totalitarian society. What is there left for us to separate and annihilate? What kind of society are we building?

Thirty years ago a society like the one which I have just described was only found in the so-called *dystopias*. This is how we name such fantastic descriptions of totalitarian societies in which terror reigns and the denial of God and everything natural is imposed: anti-human, anti-society, anti-truth, anti-family, anti-love, anti-life. A kind of hell is established in this world, sometimes represented with apocalyptic features, but other times dressed in brilliant colors, surrounded by technological advancements and a science which end up stifling beauty, poetry, love, innocence, heroism, hope, joy, and laughter.

Many of you have read or at least have heard of novels such as Orwell's *1984*, Huxley's *A Brave New World*, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Yevgeny Zamyati's *We*, and Philip Dick's *Faith of our Fathers*. Or perhaps you have seen some of the many movies inspired by these dystopias. For example, do *Metropolis*, (Fritz Lang, 1927), *The Matrix* (Wachowski, 1999), *Terminator* (Cameron, 1984), *The City of Lost Children* (Caro and Jeunet, 1995), *Twelve Monkeys* (Gilliam, 1995), *The Hunger Games* (Ross, 2012), *The Maze Runner* (Ball, 2009), *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982; 2017), etc. sound familiar? Frequently, behind the distressing adventures, fantastic arguments and trivial elements of these books and films, a kind of black omen is hidden, a desperate warning about the catastrophic direction in which our civilization is headed. What is worse is that some—or perhaps many—of the things presented as nightmares of the future, are already a part of our reality.

What none of these works say directly is what we have tried to explain above: that all of this originates in the rejection of a truth: “And the Word was made flesh.” If so, when the Incarnation is rejected, that is, Jesus Christ, His doctrine and law... everything wobbles and is reduced to rubble; and a demonic society emerges. There is no middle ground.

“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” (Mt 12: 30) “Scatters,” that is, destroy, undo, ravage. “Take away the supernatural, and what remains is the unnatural.”<sup>8</sup>

If the rejection of the Incarnation is the origin of all these evils, its acceptance is the origin of all good. The Word was made flesh in order to redeem man and the world; He assumed a nature like ours in order to enter the world as Lord, King and conqueror of all things. And He conquers them in as much as He assumes them, because as Saint Gregory Nazianzen, and many other Church Fathers say what has not been assumed has not been healed.<sup>9</sup> Assuming means transforming. The Incarnation must, then, be prolonged until all human realities, and all men and women are conquered. The family, education, culture, art, customs, politics, economy, science, work, military, cities, towns, human relations, justice, sports, friendship... everything must be assumed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This implies that the Incarnation’s work is not finished, nor can it be finished while there is still something left to conquer.

*If there yet be ground  
that does not bend the knee  
to HIM who set us free  
Then earth is without bound!*<sup>10</sup>

We must prolong Christ’s Incarnation, allowing ourselves to be conquered by Christ’s Person, doctrine and morality; and once we are conquered, we must conquer everything around us. And not from outside, as someone who varnishes things with a merely Christian luster, but from within, giving these things a new soul: the soul of the Gospel, which is faith and charity springing forth from Christ. While the world’s realities are not transformed, elevated and perfected according to the principles of Christ, nothing – or very little – will have been done and the seeds of death which we have described above will threaten to dominate us and the world.

It is a gigantic work. Difficult. But possible, very possible. Because it is not our work, but God’s work. We knew that it would be like this. It was prophesied. In the end the Lamb will conquer and will make His City reign; this is the fruit of the Incarnation. The sacred book of Revelation

8 GILBERT K. CHESTERTON, *Heretics*, Baronius Press LTD, London 2006. pg. 58.

9 GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Epistle 101*.

10 JOSE MARIA PAMAN, *El Divino Impaciente*, Act 1, scene 1 “¡Mientras exista un confin / de tierra, sin adorar / al / que nos vino a salvar, / la tierra no tiene fin!”

tells us of this city in which “nothing accursed will be found there anymore. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will look upon his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more, nor will they need light from lamp or sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.” (Rev 22: 3-5)

But not everyone will enter this City, only “those who wash their robes [in the Blood of the Lamb] so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates.” (Rev 22: 14) The others will stay outside: “Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the unchaste, the murderers, the idol-worshippers, and all who love and practice deceit!” (Rev 22: 15)

Our work is to try to convert all people and transform everything so that the City of God, the Heaven of the blessed, may be crowded with those, both us and them, whom the Word made flesh came to save

This is the mission, the goal, the work to which we have been called in this Religious Family, as consecrated and lay persons, as individuals and families.

May God give us every grace in accompanying Him until the end in this divine enterprise.

*English*

## THE CHARISM OR PATRIMONY OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE INCARNATE WORD

*Author: Fr. Gonzalo Ruiz, IVE*

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### *1. The Charism of a Religious Institute*

Before developing the theme of the charism of the Religious Family of the Incarnate Word, it is necessary to explain the term “charism” itself.<sup>1</sup>

The word *charism* is both an old and new word; it recurs both in religious and profane language. Today it is common in modern language, particularly in ecclesiastical language and in institutes of consecrated life. But the important thing is the concept that the word contains. Indeed, even though for a long time, it was not used to define that particular vocation in the Church which is consecrated life, the reality of a charism has always existed, because it is an integral part of the Church’s very nature.

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<sup>1</sup> In this point I follow V. DE PAOLIS, *Il carisma e i carismi della vita consacrata*; e anche “Partecipazione dei laici al carisma degli istituti religiosi”, in *Informationes SCRIS* 24 (1998) 72-108.

The word charism is unknown in Old Testament biblical language, but it is present, though partially, in the New Testament, particularly in the Apostle Paul's letters, appearing 16 times (and once in 1 Pt. 4:10).<sup>2</sup>

The word is clearly of Greek origin, it comes from *charis*, which means "grace", a free gift, a gift given out of benevolence<sup>3</sup>. St. Paul always uses it in this sense, but in the majority of cases an essential aspect is underlined: the charism is a free gift from God (the Holy Spirit) to edify the Church. It is, therefore, a grace that benefits not only those who receive it, but principally the Church as whole.<sup>4</sup>

At least three times St. Paul presents a list of charisms. Here are the texts:

*-1 Cor 12: 8-10: To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues.*

*-1 Cor 12: 28-30: Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles?*

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- 2 The texts in which the word charism is found in St. Paul are the following: Rm 1:11: *For I long to see you, that I may share with you some spiritual gift so that you may be strengthened;* Rm 5: 15-16: *But the gift is not like the transgression....And the gift is not like the result of the one person's sinning... the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal;* Rm 6:23: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord;* Rm 11:29: *For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable;* Rm 12:6: *we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us;* 1 Cor 1:4-7: *I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ;* 1 Cor 7:7: *Indeed, I wish everyone to be as I am, but each has a particular gift from God,\* one of one kind and one of another;* 1 Cor 12:4: *There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit;* 1 Cor 12:9: *to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit;* 1 Cor 12:28: *then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues;* 1 Cor 12:30-31: *Do all have gifts of healing?... Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts;* 2 Cor 1;11: *... as you help us with prayer, so that thanks may be given by many on our behalf for the gift granted us through the prayers of many;* 1 Tm 4:14: *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate;* 2 Tm 1:6: *For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.*
- 3 Cf. H. ESSER, "Gracia", en *Diccionario teológico del Nuevo Testamento*, Salamanca 1990, Vol. II, 236-243; A. VANHOYE, *I Carismi nel Nuovo Testamento*, Roma 2002, 18-28.
- 4 In theology we speak of "gratis datae" graces, to distinguish from the "gratum faciens" graces (that is, sanctifies those who receive it).



*Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?*

*-Rm 12: 6-8: Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be sincere...*

De Paolis says: “St. Paul distinguishes different types of charisms: sometimes he refers to the free gifts of God in general, other times to very precise and specific gifts, such as evangelization, teaching, government, prophecy, healings, miracles, glossolalia. But indirectly, even *virginity* is considered by Paul to be a charism, as a gift of God given to some and not to others. In the letter to Timothy the imposition of hands, itself, is called *charism*. It can also be noted that these gifts are more or less important for the edification of the community. These gifts are offered to individuals, but for the good of the community. St. Paul even speaks about charisms that have a greater or lesser importance, and calls *charity* itself a *charism*, at least indirectly, (1 Cor 12: 30). Often after the list of charisms, a recommendation of charity follows, as a profound reality that gives meaning and authenticity to the charisms. Indeed charity is the greatest charism, which gives meaning to all others (1 Cor 13: 1ss)”.

From these observations we see that the term has a vast breadth of meaning. All charisms are free and gratuitous gifts of God to a person, but some of them are gifts that *God ensures in a stable and permanent way to his Church*, precisely because they are necessary for her edification. Thus, for example, Sacred Orders, teaching and the consecrated life, which belong to the nature and holiness of the Church, as *Lumen Gentium* teaches, and which therefore will never be lacking in the Church.

These gifts of God are not for the private good, but for the community, for the whole Church. They are not personal talents, or inherent natural gifts, but gifts given from above to a person for the good of a supernatural community, that is, the Church. De Paolis concludes: “In this perspective, the word *charism* enters the religious language of Paul to indicate a very specific reality. These are gifts given by God to individual persons in order to edify the Church; however, it cannot be denied that these gifts fit into the personality of each individual.

Therefore they cannot be obtained through human effort, not even the hierarchical power of the Church.” They come exclusively from above.

## 2. *Charism of the Consecrated Life and Charisms of Institutes*

In recent Magisterial documents after the Second Vatican Council, the term *charism* is used to designate the nature of consecrated life in itself but is also used more universally. (Charism in the nature of consecrated life itself is considered as a gift of God for the edification of the Church. This is a gift that Jesus Christ wanted for the Church. He left the form of life that He chose for Himself, His Mother and His disciples). Secondly, *charism* is more universally considered in the way in which it is accomplished in the different religious institutes beginning from the inspiration received from a founder.<sup>5</sup> As such, the term charism is used both to express the consecrated life as a God’s gift to the Church and to indicate what is specific to a particular institute by which it is distinguished from other institutes.<sup>6</sup>

Saint Paul VI introduced this double meaning into Magisterial texts in *Evangelica Testificatio*: “Only in this way will you be able to reawaken hearts to truth and to divine love in accordance with the charisms of your founders who were raised up by God within His Church. Thus the Council rightly insists on the obligation of religious to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical intentions and to the example of their sanctity. In this it finds one of the principles for the present renewal and

5 For example, *Mutuae Relationes*, 11 says: “The same charism of the founders (ET, 11) reveals itself as an experience of the Spirit, transmitted to its own disciples to be lived, guarded, deepened and constantly developed in harmony with the ever-growing Body of Christ. This is why ‘the Church defends and supports the nature of the various religious institutes’ ... This particular nature also entails a particular style of sanctification and apostolate, which establishes a particular tradition in such a way that it is possible to grasp the objective elements consistently”. The apostolic exhortation *Redemptionis donum* says: “It is difficult to describe, or even to list, the many different ways in which consecrated persons fulfill their love for the Church through the apostolate. his apostolate is always born from that particular gift of your founders, which, received from God and approved by the Church, has become a charism for the whole community. That gift corresponds to the different needs of the Church and the world at particular moments of history, and in its turn it is extended and strengthened in the life of the religious communities as one of the enduring elements of the Church’s life and apostolate. In each of these elements, in each field-both of contemplation, so fruitful for the apostolate, and of direct apostolic action-the Church’s constant blessing accompanies you” (n. 15).

6 Here I mainly follow CARDINAL VELASIO DE PAOLIS, *op. cit. La vida consagrada en la Iglesia*, Madrid 2011.

one of the most secure criteria for judging what each institute should undertake. In reality, the charism of the religious life, far from being an impulse born *of flesh and blood* or one derived from a mentality which *conforms itself to the modern world*, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within the Church.”<sup>7</sup>

### ***3. The Patrimony of a Religious Institute***

The Code of Canon Law does not use the word “charism” to refer to the institutes of consecrated life, both because of the breadth of its meaning (as we saw in St. Paul) and due to its current use with different senses. Instead, it uses the word “patrimony” (c. 578) to indicate the charism’s very reality. In this sense the word patrimony gives charism a juridical meaning that the word does not possess. Patrimony is defined as such: “the mind and designs of the founders regarding the nature, end, spirit, and character of an institute, which have been sanctioned by competent ecclesiastical authority, and its sound traditions, all of which constitute the patrimony of the same institute, and must observe faithfully by all”.

In fact, consecrated life is accomplished and is lived within an institute of consecrated life (cf. can. 573 § 2). The profession of the evangelical counsels, therefore, is included in a project of evangelical life, and this project constitutes a *patrimony or charism* (cf. can. 578).

*The patrimony or charism is a project of evangelical life:* every institute of consecrated life is a project of evangelical life; it originates from God, who uses a human mediator, called the founder. This life project is presented to the Church, who after examination, approves it, considers it authentic, and promotes it - after it has been sanctioned as a rule of life, normally in an institute’s constitutions - as a sure path to holiness.

This life project is called evangelical because it contains and proposes Jesus’ form of life, chaste and poor, who by His obedience redeemed the world; it is the form of life that Jesus chose for Himself, wanted for His Mother and indicated to His disciples (Cf. LG, 44, 46). Therefore following Christ is its supreme rule, according to the Gospel and according to the Constitutions (cf. can. 662).

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7 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica testificatio* (June 29, 1971), 11.

However, this life project is unique because it draws its origin, its own end, its own nature and its own spirituality, its own lifestyle, of apostolate and of sanctification from the Spirit. It is what distinguishes an institute from others.

*The patrimony or charism or evangelical project has a collective dimension.* This is because it is not really the founder's charism, but it came through him. The founder's religious experience is transmitted to the desired community, and all those who have a vocation to the institute participate in it. This patrimony can also be participated in by the laity, especially in institutions that establish a Third Order. It is the duty of a religious to identify with Christ's way of life with the characteristic of totality; while the laity can participate in the charism or patrimony or project of evangelical life in degrees. Participating precisely means "taking part" of something in a greater and lesser degree.

*Elements of the institute's charism according to Church documents.* The Code of Canon Law mentions the founder's mind and design for the nature, spirit, end, and specific character of each institute, and sound traditions as elements of an institute's spiritual patrimony. These elements therefore constitute the content of a particular charism, and are the foundation of the sense of identity. This sense of identity is a key element to safeguard the fidelity of every religious institute. They are elements that can develop or evolve, but never change. The members must always refer to these elements if they want to remain faithful to the spirit or charism of the founder, who was the mediator through whom the Spirit aroused a particular religious family for the whole Church's good and edification.

- *The nature:* The nature places the Institute in a type of consecrated life: monastic, apostolic, secular, clerical, and lay.

- *The end:* The end is all that the founder presents as the purpose of the Institute, both in reference to God and neighbor. The end principally refers to the means that must be adopted, and is not identified with the concrete activity, even if it is included. Rather it is the direction of the whole activity, which can vary according to the different times and circumstances, yet it always remains in the same line.

The end is set by the founder who acts as Father and legislator.<sup>8</sup> It includes both the specific way of living the evangelical counsels and the apostolic activity (in an institute of apostolic life).

- *The spirit*: The spirit of an institute is not easy to define, even if it is not difficult to understand.<sup>9</sup> It can be said that an institute's spirit is not only its spirituality, unless all that animates the life of the Institute is called spirituality.<sup>10</sup> The spirit of an institute is the life that a founder instills in it; this includes the spirituality.<sup>11</sup>

- *The character*: The term character is said to include the three previous elements, giving the institution a particular identity. It can be translated as a *character*,<sup>12</sup> but the Latin term says even more.<sup>13</sup> Each institute has its own character and purpose.

- *Sound traditions*: Sound traditions must have a relationship with the elements of the patrimony. Not every habit, even though it is good, can be considered as a sound tradition integral to the charism. One author calls sound traditions the same original experience lived once again, preserved in creative fidelity, deepened and already developed in the community of the disciples.<sup>14</sup> It entails, therefore, an enrichment, evolution and clarification of some internal potential parts. In any case, the Church's judgment is the ultimate and decisive criteria when it comes to deciding whether a tradition is sound or not.<sup>15</sup>

#### ***4. The Charism or Patrimony of the Institute of the Incarnate Word***

In the case of our Religious Family, the central mystery which defines our charism or patrimony is the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word.

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8 Cf. J. LOZANO, *El fundador y su familia religiosa*, 17-18, 22: «In the ancient orders, adopting an end was simply proposing a way of Christian living. From the 12th century, when the religious life began to develop further, different institutes emerged, differentiating themselves in their specific purpose, set by the founder».

9 Cf. E. GAMBARI, *I religiosi nel codice*, 36.

10 Cf. J. BEYER, *Il diritto della vita consacrata*, 69.

11 Cf. J. LOZANO, *El fundador y su familia religiosa*, 36.

12 For example, in the Code of Canon Law Latin - English in canon 642, *indolem* (nature) is translated to *suitable character*.

13 Cf. J. BEYER, *Il diritto della vita consacrata*, 69-70. Translated from Italian.

14 Cf. E. SASTRE SANTOS, "Sobre los Principia Directiva," 224.

15 Cf. V. De PAOLIS, *La vita consacrata nella Chiesa*, 99.

Following our Constitutions and the Institute's V General Chapter (2007), we must distinguish a central essential element and other added elements that we consider "non-negotiable."<sup>16</sup>

### a) Essential Element

As we see in n. 30-31 of our Constitutions: "The specific charism of our Institute requires all its members to work in supreme docility to the Holy Spirit and according to the example of the Virgin Mary, so that Jesus Christ will be the Lord of all that is truly human, even in the most difficult situations and under the most adverse conditions.

"In other words, this charism is the grace to know how to work concretely so as to extend the presence of Christ in families, education, the mass media, the scholarly, and in all other legitimate manifestations of human life. It is the gift of making each person 'like a new Incarnation of the Word,'<sup>17</sup> thus fulfilling our essential call to be missionaries and Marian."<sup>18</sup>

Here we included, mainly the profession of the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and Marian slavery, which makes a professed member a religious of the Incarnate Word. But this is also the heart, the center of all our spirituality (reproducing in us the mystery of the Incarnate Word, trying to become like another humanity of Christ for our own sanctification and for the good of souls), and also the center of our specific end as an Institute, which is the evangelization of culture. Since "culture" means every activity of man as such, that perfects him as man, especially, the manifestations of the life of the spirit. As members of this particular religious family, we have to bring grace to every human activity, without exception, so that in all the activities of man, Christ, the Incarnate Word, will reign.

Essential in this regard is the famous principle of the Church Fathers used by St. Irenaeus of Lyons, which is also quoted in the Second Vatican Council, in the Decree *Ad Gentes*, n. 3:

<sup>16</sup> I follow C. BUELA, *Juan Pablo Magno*, IVE Press, New York 2011, 517-540.

<sup>17</sup> BLESSED ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY, *Elevations* 33.

<sup>18</sup> *Constitutions*, 30-31.

“that which He has not assumed He has not healed.”<sup>19</sup> This principle refers to the human nature of the Incarnate Word, which is most perfect (He is perfect man) and was assumed by the Word thus, in its perfection and completeness, was fully redeemed. In this way everything that is authentically human has been assumed by God in the Incarnation of the Word. In that same way we must first act on ourselves, allowing ourselves to be transformed by grace, and then on all men by bringing the Gospel, which is precisely the life of God’s grace to all men, without exception, to the whole man, without excluding anything, and to all manifestations of the human life. Our own right quoting St. John Paul II says: ‘We need to carry out a renewed pastoral ministry of culture, since culture is the privileged meeting place with the message of Christ: in fact, a faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully accepted, not entirely conceived, not faithfully lived.’<sup>20,21</sup>

The Chapter Fathers in the year 2007 expressed themselves in this regard in the following way: “John Paul II said many times that a characteristic of today’s world is the incomprehension of the mystery of the incarnation [...]; what characterizes us is the focalizing in the mystery of the incarnation: just as the Word, assuming human nature, has united, in a certain way, to the whole man, we also want to work in our life and in our apostolates, in such a way that no apostolic work is foreign to us, precisely because nothing of what is authentically human is foreign to us.”<sup>22</sup>

This is why we must bring the newness of Christ not only to individual men, but also to civil societies, where He must reign. In fact, social life is natural to man, who is a “political animal,” as Aristotle defined him.<sup>23</sup> He is a being that lives in society. It is a serious harm for individual men that Christianity is confined only to the private sphere, to the sacristies. Christ must reign and for this the intermediate societies (schools, town halls, clubs, associations, etc.) and the state itself must be impregnated with

19 The Conciliary text quotes, in note 15, these Holy Fathers: SAINT ATHANASIUS, *Ep. Ad Epictetum* 7: PG 26,1060; SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catech.* 4,9: PG 33,465; MARIO VICTORINO, *Adv. Arium* 3,3: PL 8,1101; SAINT BASIL, *Epist.* 261,2: PG 32,969; SAINT GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Epist.* 101: PG 37,181; SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Antirrethicus, Adv. Apollin.* 17: PG 45,1156; SAINT AMBROSE, *Epist.* 48,5: PL 16,1153; SAINT AUGUSTINE, *In John Evangelist.* tr. 23,6: PL 35,1585; CCC. 36, 236; etc.

20 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Foundation Letter of the Pontifical Council for Culture* (May 20, 1982)

21 *Directory of Evangelization of Culture*, 241. Translated from Italian..

22 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 5. Translated from Spanish.

23 *Politics*, I, 1253.

Gospel values, and although it has its own ends they must be reasonable, that is, in conformity with human nature (to natural law), and also they must be subordinated to the supernatural order as all citizens are destined to reach their perfection and save their souls.

Our own right quotes Saint John Paul II, saying: “The foundation of the evangelization of culture is precisely the mystery of the Incarnate Word.” The term acculturation or inculturation, as it is a neologism, marvelously expresses one of the elements of the great mystery of the Incarnation.<sup>24,25</sup>

Thus the mystery of the Incarnation illuminates all our spirituality and activity. Our right says that faced with the humanity of Jesus we must try “to practice with intensity ‘the virtues of the self-emptying: humility, justice, sacrifice, poverty, pain, obedience, merciful love... in a word, take up the cross’<sup>26</sup> [ ...] that is, in the context of the self-emptying of Christ in his redemptive incarnation: ‘The fidelity to the one Love (of the consecrated person) is manifested and strengthened in the humility of a hidden life, in the acceptance of suffering for the sake of completing in their own flesh what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions (Col 1:24), in the silent sacrifice and abandonment to God’s holy will, in the serene fidelity even as their strength and personal authority wane. Fidelity to God also inspires devotion to neighbor.’<sup>27,28</sup>

### **b) Non-Negotiable Elements added to the Charism of the IVE**

There are numerous elements that we consider as part of our charism, and which must be lived by everyone, but by everyone according to their own state. By the religious who made the profession of vows precisely to imitate the life of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, they must be lived in fullness or wholeness. But in part, that is, in a participated way they must be lived by the Third Order members. These elements were studied and determined in the Fifth General Chapter of the Institute (2007). In each element we will quote texts of our own law, which draws heavily from St. John Paul II’s teaching.

24 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Foundation Letter of the Pontifical Biblical Council* (April 26, 1979).

25 *Directory of Consecrated Life*, 336.

26 *Constitutions*, 11.

27 *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Vita consecrata*, 24.

28 *Directory of Consecrated Life*, 225.



### 1. *Dignified celebration of the Holy Mass*<sup>29</sup>

“We must be characterized by the importance given to the celebration of Holy Mass, as well as to the reverential way it is celebrated. For this we must emphasize liturgical life.”<sup>30</sup> “The marked Eucharistic devotion is a characteristic of ours.”<sup>31</sup> Our priests must be masters in the *Ars Celebrandi* (our religious brothers and sisters and our laity must strive to live the *Ars Participandi* ever more perfectly).

Our right says, principally quoting St. John Paul II: “Our liturgies should be lively and alive. Lively, that is, strong, effective, and luminous. Alive, meaning that they should have life; they should be an immediate experience of Christ in the Sacrament... In effect, “the liturgy must favor and make the sense of the sacred shine forth. It must be imbued with reverence, adoration and glorification of God.”<sup>32</sup><sup>33</sup>

“The participation of all the baptized in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ is the key to understanding the exhortation of the Council to ‘full, conscious and active’ participation in liturgical celebrations.”<sup>34</sup><sup>35</sup>

### 2. *A serious spirituality that does not remain in the sensible or superficial, an example of which being our regular practice of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.*<sup>36</sup>

Our spirituality must transcend from the merely sensitive. Our members must be willing to go through the purifications of the soul (the “dark nights”). For this reason we have as spiritual masters the great spiritual Doctors and Masters. Our Constitutions say: “We want to form virtuous men (that is, “virtuous” in the sense of *vir* and *vis*: to have the strength of the man) according to the doctrine of the great teachers of spiritual life, especially Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas,

<sup>29</sup> Notes from the V General Chapter, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Notes from the V General Chapter, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Notes from the V General Chapter, 6.

<sup>32</sup> SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to the Priests on the occasion of Holy Thursday* 1986, 8 (March 16, 1986); cf. Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of 1985, Final report.

<sup>33</sup> *Directory of Liturgical Life*, 4; cf. SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Lettera Dominici Coenae*, 8 (February 24, 1980); *Directory of Liturgical Life*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to visiting Bishops of the United States “Ad limina Apostolorum”*, 3 (October 9, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> *Directory of Liturgical Life*, 25. On the silences and the attitude of adoration in the liturgy, look at the *Directory of Liturgical Life*, 63, where it mentions SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to visiting Bishops of the United States “Ad limina Apostolorum”*, 3 (October 9, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Notes from the V General Chapter, 4.

Saint John of the Cross, Saint Teresa of Jesus, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, and according to the examples of all the saints of all times that the Church proposes as models of virtue for us to imitate.”<sup>37</sup>

Such spirituality is valid at all times, particularly so today, in a world and in an ecclesial situation that requires much discernment. Saint John Paul II teaches, which is quoted by our own right: “All this especially applies to the evangelization of the culture, which demands from us a spirituality with unusual nuances. ‘All this demands a new approach of cultures, attitudes, [and] behaviors aimed at in-depth dialogue with cultural centers and at rendering fruitful their meeting with the message of Christ. This work also demands a faith on the part of responsible Christians that is illumined by continual reflection when confronted with the sources of the Church’s message, and a continual spiritual discernment pursued in prayer.’<sup>38</sup> ‘True inculturation is from within: it consists, ultimately, of a renewal of life under the influence of grace.’<sup>39</sup>”<sup>40</sup>

### 3. *Docility to the living Magisterium of the Church*<sup>41</sup> of all times

Our Constitutions say: “To permeate cultures with the Gospel, we regard the following elements as fundamental: the teachings of the Second Vatican Council’s *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*<sup>42</sup>, the Apostolic Exhortations *Evangelii Nuntiandi*<sup>43</sup> and *Catechesi Tradendae*,<sup>44</sup> Blessed John Paul II’s speech to UNESCO<sup>45</sup> and others on the same subject<sup>46</sup>, the Puebla Document<sup>47</sup>,

37 Paragraph 212.

38 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to the bishops of Zimbabwe*, 7 (July 2, 1988).

39 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to the bishops of Zimbabwe*, 7 (July 2, 1988).

40 *Directory of Spirituality*, 51.

41 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 4.

42 Second Part, ch. 2: 53-62.

43 Cf. SAINT PAUL VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, 20 (December 3, 1975).

44 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae*, 53 (October 16, 1979).

45 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to representatives of International Catholic Organizations for education, science and culture* (June 2, 1980).

46 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to the bishops of Zaire gathered in Kinshasa* (May 3, 1980); *Speech at the Episcopal Conference in Kenya, Nairobi* (May 07, 1980); *Address to the Bishops in the Cathedral of Delhi, India* (February 1, 1986); *Address to the faithful during the Celebration of the Word, in the camp of Chambacú, Cartagena, Colombia* (July 06, 1986).

47 Cf. III GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN EPISCOPATE, PUEBLA DOCUMENT (1979) 385-443.

the Encyclical Letter *Slavorum Apostoli*, the Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 55, c, and any forthcoming directives, orientations and teachings of the Magisterium of the Church that may be issued regarding the specific purpose of our small Religious Family.”<sup>48</sup>

This is, in part, the purpose for which many of our priests come to study in Rome. This is how our Constitutions express themselves: “The formation in Rome implies the attainment of a Roman spirit, which entails a ‘crown of virtues: universal openness, fidelity to the Magisterium, a missionary spirit, endurance, and magnanimity.’<sup>49</sup> Being in Rome is a ‘situation that permits [one] to live the supernatural reality of communion with the Church of Rome and with the Bishop of Rome.’<sup>50</sup>... ‘It means having the advantage of living in a community either of priests or seminarians, and having access to the scholarship available in or through the Roman universities. It means being witnesses, day after day, to the living tradition of the faith as it is proclaimed in the See of Peter.’<sup>51</sup>”<sup>52</sup>

**4. Clear intention to follow Saint Thomas Aquinas, as the mandated by the Church, and in this context, the best Thomists, such as Father Cornelio Fabro.<sup>53</sup> “Saint Thomas is of central importance in our formation.”<sup>54</sup>**

“To seek, discover and rejoice in the truth are among life’s most thrilling adventures.”<sup>55</sup><sup>56</sup> “The example of this search and paradigm of the student is of the life and personality of Saint Thomas, ‘prince of philosophy and theology, as he is called by the Popes.’<sup>57</sup> ‘The Aquinaten invites all men to tirelessly seek the truth, because only by investigating with insistence can one arrive at the comprehension of the reality and

48 *Constitutions*, 27.

49 SAINT JOHN PAUL II., *Homily during the vigil prayer at the Capranica College in Rome*, 5 (January 21, 1992).

50 SAINT JOHN PAUL II., *Speech to the North American Pontifical College of Rome on the occasion of the 125th Anniversary of its foundation*, 2 (October 15, 1984).

51 *Ibidem*.

52 *Costitutions*, 265.

53 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 4.

54 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 6.

55 SAINT JOHN PAUL II., *Speech to the young people of Kampala*, (February 19, 1993).

56 *Directory of Intellectual Formation*, 5.

57 SAINT JOHN PAUL II., *Letter on the occasion of the 1st centenary of “Revue Thomiste”* (March 11, 1993).

of He who is the author: “and therefore, the human mind must always travel more and more toward knowledge of God in his own way.”<sup>58,59,60</sup>

“Also in this sense, Saint Thomas is presented as the example of the researcher: ‘Imitating the example of the one who prepared for the encounter with the Lord through fasting, penitence and tears, the seeker of God must walk the way of virtue and contemplation; asceticism is necessary to educate the intellect and purify the passions, with fidelity, obedience, “following the mind of the Church.”’<sup>61,62</sup>

“We must make the words that John Paul directed to the Dominicans our own: ‘I encourage our brother preachers of today...to become true followers of Saint Thomas, capable to confront the “quaestiones disputatae,” and to dialogue with those who are far from the faith and the Church, without ever replacing the science, par excellence, that is theology with the profane science. Thanks to his assiduous study of the monumental work of the Angelic Doctor, the Christian thought takes on a rigorous method and conceptual instruments that allow penetration of the profundity of the sacred doctrine and to develop a reflection that considers the existence and the Divine perfections, within the limits that human reason may come to know.’<sup>63,64</sup>

##### 5. “The apostolic creativity”<sup>65</sup> and the missionary.

“We should receive in a particular manner the request of Pope John Paul II that calls ‘upon the lay faithful to be present, as signs of courage and intellectual creativity, in the privileged places of culture, that is, the world of education-school and university-in places of scientific and technological research, the areas of artistic creativity and work in the humanities,’<sup>66</sup>

58 “[...] et sic etiam humana mens debet semper moveri ad cognoscendum de Deo plus et plus secundum modo”; *In lib. Boetii de Trinitate*, II, 1.

59 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Letter on the occasion of the 1st centenary of “Revue Thomiste”* (March 11, 1993).

60 *Directory of Intellectual Formation*, 8.

61 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Letter on the occasion of the 1st centenary of the “Revue Thomiste”* (March 11, 1993).

62 *Direttorio di Formazione Intellettuale*, 24.

63 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Letter on the occasion of the 1st centenary of the “Revue Thomiste”* (March 11, 1993).

64 *Directory of Intellectual Formation*, 51.

65 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 4.

66 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Esortazione apostolica post-sinodale Christifideles Laici*, 44 (March 14, 1997).

carrying in every field the particular means of the original riches of the Gospel and the Faith, the Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ.<sup>67</sup>

“Pastoral work is a cross for us, not an escape. This is why we must never succumb to unproductive activism, as ‘the activity for the Lord must not let us forget Who is the Lord of the activity.’<sup>68</sup>”<sup>69</sup>

“[...] Pastoral care, finally, must tirelessly propose Jesus Christ, the fullness of every authentically human life and culture: ‘The Gospel brings culture to its perfection and authentic culture is open to the Gospel [...] Far from threatening them or by impoverishing them, the Gospel brings them greater joy and beauty, freedom and meaning, truth and goodness.’<sup>70</sup>”<sup>71</sup>

### 6. *Strong community life and joyful atmosphere*<sup>72</sup>

Joy is something that has characterized our way of life from the beginning. This is why it is very present in our Constitutions and the Directory of Spirituality:

“Joy, the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the effect of charity, requires us to make use of any and all means so that ‘nobody may be disturbed or grieved in the house of God.’<sup>73</sup> We must live fraternal charity: that is ‘*outdo one another in showing honor*’ (Rom 12:10); bear their weaknesses, both physical and spiritual with unlimited patience; be eager to obey one another; seek not one’s own good as much as one’s neighbor’s; practice true fraternal love, live always in the fear and love of God. Love your Abbot (superior) with true and humble charity; do not let anything come before Christ who will take us all together to Eternal life.’<sup>74</sup> Fraternal charity should be lived in such a way that one could say, seeing our life, ‘Look how they love each other and are willing to die for each other!’<sup>75</sup>[...]”<sup>76</sup>

67 *Directory of the Secular Third Order*, 383.

68 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Address in Rome to the International Union of Superiors General*, 4 (May 22, 1986).

69 *Constitutions*, 156.

70 Saint JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture* (March 14, 1997).

71 *Directory of Evangelization of Culture*, 242.

72 *Note from V General Chapter*, 4.

73 SAINT BENEDICT, *Holy Rule XXXI*, 19.

74 SAINT BENEDICT, *Holy Rule XXXI*, 1-12.

75 TERTULLIANO, *Apologetics*, ML 1,534.

76 *Constitutions*, 95-96.

“In a special manner, we ask for the grace of knowledge and joy of the cross which are only achieved in the school of Jesus Christ.”<sup>77</sup> “The saints remind us of the joy that is the fruit of this cross: ‘I have not been able to suffer but to me all suffering is sweet.’<sup>78</sup>”<sup>79</sup>

“From the Resurrection of the Lord arises an essential element of our spirituality, and of all Christian spirituality, joy. For us, joy must be manifested in special ways: in the celebration of the Lord’s Day, Sunday; in having a sense of feasting; and in the recreation, that we call eutrapelia.

“Joy, the gigantic secret of the Christian, is spiritual and supernatural, and arises from meditating on the mystery of the Incarnate Word. The angel Gabriel said to Mary, Rejoice, be glad. *She would say, my spirit rejoices* (Lk 1:47) after Elizabeth had witnessed, *the babe in my womb leaped for joy* (Lk 1:44). The angel said the shepherds, *I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people* (Lk 2:10). Joy is also born from witnessing the mystery of the Resurrection of the Lord: So they departed quickly from the tomb *with fear and great joy* (Mt 28:8). Likewise, the disciples of Emmaus experienced joy: *Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road* (Lk 24:32)? *They could not believe for sheer joy and wonder* (Cf. Lk 24:41), *and returned... with great joy* (Lk 24:52). *The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord* (Jn 20:20). Saint Paul insists: *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice* (Phil 4:4) [...].

“In the end, joy comes from considering that God is, that Christ is<sup>80</sup>: *Take courage, it is I* (Mk 6:50), that truth prevails over lies, good over evil, beauty over ugliness, love over hatred, peace over war, mercy over revenge, life over death, grace over sin, finally being over nothingness, the Virgin over Satan, Christ over the Antichrist, God over everything. ‘God is infinite joy.’<sup>81</sup>

“From the Paschal Mystery and from the Day of the Lord - Sunday - which are the days of celebration par excellence, the holidays must be born among us, since the authentic feast must be born of worship, that is to say, from the praise given to the Creator for the goodness of existence, since on the seventh day God saw what he had done, and behold, it was very good... and ceased from all his work (Gen 1, 31; 2, 2-3).

<sup>77</sup> *Directory of Spirituality*, 136.

<sup>78</sup> SAINT THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS, *Story of a Soul*, ch. XII, 21.

<sup>79</sup> *Directory of Spirituality*, 145.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Ex 3: 14.

<sup>81</sup> SAINT TERESA OF THE ANDES, *Letter* 101.

And, as Saint Augustine teaches, worship takes place through ‘the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving’<sup>82</sup> and since sacrifice is the main act of worship, it is also the soul of the feast. And all the more sense it takes in the light of the Lord’s resurrection and the perpetuation of his sacrifice in the altars!<sup>83</sup>

**7. *Effective integration into the environment of our apostolic work*<sup>84</sup>: “bite into reality.”**

In order to achieve this we must note two indispensable aspects: first is the fidelity to Jesus Christ; and second is the Thomistic metaphysics that help us to ‘not fight as a shadowboxer, beating the air’ as Saint Paul<sup>85</sup> says: intend to see people as they are; to see young people as they are; to see what problems they have; to see how we can best help them, etc.’<sup>86</sup>

This is how our *Directory of Evangelization of Culture* expresses itself: “The ministry of culture can offer a positive and effective response to the great challenges and even dramas of the ‘post-modern’ man, primarily from the view of metaphysics, by means of the philosophy of being. From the nihilist interpretation, many of the current philosophies have been led away from the sense of the philosophy of being, negating the objective truth and therefore negating the foundation of dignity and human freedom.<sup>87</sup> From here comes the urgency to recover the metaphysics of being, a dynamic philosophy that allows a full and comprehensive openness to reality as a whole, surpassing every limit in order to reach the One who brings all things to fulfillment.<sup>88</sup>”<sup>89</sup>

“The Church is fully aware of a pastoral urgency that calls for an absolutely special concern for culture in those circumstances where the development of a culture becomes disassociated not only from Christian faith but even from human values, as well as in those situations where science and technology are powerless in giving an adequate response to the pressing questions of truth and well-being that burn in people’s hearts’<sup>90</sup>.

82 SAINT AUGUSTINE, *De Spiritu et littera*, XIII, 22.

83 *Directory of Spirituality*, 203. 204. 210. 211.

84 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 4.

85 Cf. 1 Cor 9: 26.

86 *Notee from the V General Chapter*, 5.

87 Cf. SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter, *Fides et ratio*, 90 (September 14, 1998).

88 Cf. SAINT JOHN PAUL II,, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 97 (September 14, 1998).

89 *Directory of Evangelization of Culture*, 11.

90 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christi fideles Laici*, 44.

‘The need for such involvement has marked the Church’s pilgrimage throughout her history, but today it is particularly urgent’<sup>91</sup>. In short, faith must become culture. That is: faith must be embodied in the life and culture of men [...].<sup>92</sup>

### 8. *Selection of ‘outposts’ in the mission*<sup>93</sup>

We refer to those that have been called “landmark assignments (destinos emblemáticos)”: places that represent a badge of honor for our small Religious Family, because perhaps in these missions the missionaries do not see abundant fruit from their work. They are where vocations probably will not arise, and where if we had not agreed to go, perhaps no one would go because of the difficulties. Yet, the silent sacrifice of those who give their life for Christ will not go unrewarded; they are an enormous source of blessing for the entire Institute and for the Universal Church.

We must be increasingly aware of the urgency of the mission, and that the mission is up to all of us: “the number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase. Indeed, since the end of the Council it has almost doubled. When we consider this immense portion of humanity which is loved by the Father and for whom he sent his Son, the urgency of the Church’s mission is obvious.”<sup>94</sup><sup>95</sup>

“But what moves me even more strongly to proclaim the urgency of missionary evangelization is the fact that it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world, a world which has experienced marvelous achievements but which seems to have lost its sense of ultimate realities and of existence itself.”<sup>96</sup><sup>97</sup>

This is why it is necessary to be holy and to seek holiness: “the renewed impulse to the mission *ad gentes* demands holy missionaries. It is not enough to update pastoral techniques, organize and coordinate ecclesial resources, or delve more deeply into the biblical and theological foundations of faith.

91 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris missio*, 52.

92 *Directory of Evangelization of Culture*, 147-148.

93 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 4.

94 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 3.

95 *Directory of Mission Ad Gentes*, 20.

96 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 2.

97 *Directory of Mission Ad Gentes*, 19.



What is needed is the encouragement of a new “ardor for holiness” among missionaries and throughout the Christian community, especially among those who work most closely with missionaries.’<sup>98</sup> “The missionary must be a “contemplative in action.” He finds answers to problems in the light of God’s word and in personal and community prayer.’<sup>99</sup>100

9. **“Works of mercy, especially those with the disabled,”<sup>101</sup> etc.**

“To those who care for the sick: chaplains, religious brothers and sisters, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, technical and administrative staff, social workers and volunteers: John Paul II reminded them that they are called ‘to strive to be ever more generous disciples of Christ, the Good Samaritan. Be aware of your identity and learn to recognize in those who suffer the Face of the sorrowful and glorious Lord...to be credible witnesses of Christ’s love.’<sup>102</sup>103

For this reason it is established that in our seminars and houses of formation we must teach the importance of this work of mercy.<sup>104</sup>

10. **“A providential vision in our entire life.” An example of this is that we consider our enemies as a part, spiritually, of our Religious Family, because they have done us good and do good to us [...] ‘omnia cooperantur in bonum’ (Romans 8:28)<sup>105</sup>**

“Our trust and happiness from knowing that death has already been conquered should be so great! It has been conquered by the Incarnation of the Word and His redeeming Sacrifice. The Incarnation of the Word is the condition and guarantee for the whole universe: ‘The lack of life and the salvation from desperation for all men, the condition *sine qua non* and the guarantee for the whole universe are enclosed in the words, *The Word was made flesh* and the faith in these words.’<sup>106</sup>

98 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris missio*, 90.

99 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris missio*, 91.

100 *Directory of Missions Ad Gentes*, 201.

101 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 4.

102 *Ibidem*.

103 *Directory of Works of Mercy*, 8.

104 Cf. *Directory of Works of Mercy*, 9, which quotes SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the XI World Day for Sick*, Washington D.C., U.S.A., 5 (February 11, 2003).

105 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 5.

106 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Speech to the participants of the Colloquium on the common Christian roots of the European peoples* (November 5, 1981).

‘The Incarnation of the Son of God is the foundation, the source and the pattern of a new supernatural order of existence for all men; in fact, from this mystery they obtain the grace that sanctifies and saves them, and it is a foundation of Christian anthropology that is also projected in the natural sphere of thought and life, with its exaltation of man as person, placed in the center of society and, you can say, of the whole world.’<sup>107</sup><sup>108</sup>

**11. “Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is something proper to our charism, not only with the fourth vow, but also with the presence of the Virgin Mary in all our activities, from the consecration we renew in every Mass to the ending each of our feasts with a song to Our Lady”.**<sup>109</sup>

“Our relation with the Virgin Mary finds a new foundation in our spirituality that wants to be ‘of the Incarnate Word.’ ‘Our Lady gave her Yes as a slave: *Behold, the Handmaid of the Lord* (Lk 1:38) and *for he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness* (Lk 1:48), and then the Word took *the form of a slave, coming in the likeness of men* (Phil 2:7) in her most pure womb.’<sup>110</sup><sup>111</sup>

[...] John Paul II affirms: ‘...surrender to Mary, in the spirit of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, has seemed to me the best means of participating fruitfully and effectively in this reality, in order to draw from it and share with others its inexpressible riches... I think we are confronted here with the sort of paradox often to be noted in the Gospels, the words “holy slavery” signifying that we could not more fully exploit our freedom... For freedom is measured by the love of which we are capable.’<sup>112</sup><sup>113</sup>

“To achieve this disposition of maximum, total and unrestricted docility to the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, we need the Holy Virgin Mary to be the model, the guide and the form of all our actions.

<sup>107</sup> SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Udienza Generale* (March 23, 1988).

<sup>108</sup> *Directory of Spirituality*, 319; *Directory of the Secular Third Order*, 324.

<sup>109</sup> *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 6.

<sup>110</sup> “*Mary Most Holy is a model of docility to divine grace from the “Fiat” of the Annunciation to the painful motherhood of Calvary*”; SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Meditation of the Angelus* (July 22, 1990).

<sup>111</sup> *Directory of Consecrated Life*, 411.

<sup>112</sup> Citation from A. FROSSARD in *No tengáis miedo*, Ed. Plaza y Janes, Barcelona 1982, Fr. 131-132.

<sup>113</sup> *Constitutions*, 83.

For by this means can we say with all the strength of soul and heart, today and always, “Totus tuus” Maria!’<sup>114</sup>”<sup>115</sup>

### *Conclusion*

We end by quoting a paragraph from the Notes of the Fifth General Chapter, “Indeed, the charism is susceptible to suffer modifications or to meet with different situations throughout the history of a religious family: it can develop in its potentialities, expand, and be applied to new situations, but it could also contract and stiffen, for example, when the accidental elements begin to prevail over the substance and then there is no capacity for adaption. The charism is distorted or even completely lost when there is growth but not in the direction that was wanted by the founder. Those who govern must learn to be faithful to the charism and ensure that others are also faithful: for on them depends a great part of the future of this charism. It must be passed in a living tradition, or as we express in our Constitutions, it should be ‘a school of training.’ Here lies the great responsibility of those who govern the Institute: the charism is God’s gift to the Church that is in the hands of the Superiors.”<sup>116</sup>

But our lay Third Order members also participate in this charism. St John Paul II says in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*: “The laity, by virtue of the secular character of their vocation, reflect the mystery of the Incarnate Word particularly insofar as he is the Alpha and the Omega of the world, the foundation and measure of the value of all created things.”<sup>117</sup>

St. John Paul II continues: “One of the fruits of the teaching on the Church as a communion has been the growing awareness that her members can and must unite their efforts, with a view to cooperation and exchange of gifts, in order to participate more effectively in the Church’s mission. This helps to give a clearer and more complete picture of the Church herself,

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114 Saint Louis Marie Grignon of Montfort is inspired by this formula of Saint Bonaventure, (inter opera) *Psalt maius*, Canticum ad instar illius, Is 12 (*Opera omnia* - Vives, Paris 1868) t. 14, 221 a.b.; Cf. SAN LUIGI MARIA GRIGNON DA MONTFORT, *Trattato della Vera Devozione*, n. 216.

115 *Constitutions*, 19.

116 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 4.

117 Paragraph 16.

while rendering more effective the response to the great challenges of our time, thanks to the combined contributions of the various gifts.”<sup>118</sup> Collaboration is useful or fruitful in many ways: “Today, many Institutes, often due to new situations, have come to the conviction that their charism can be shared with the laity.” They are therefore invited to participate more intensely in the Institute’s own spirituality and mission. It can be said that, in the wake of historical experiences such as that of the different secular or Third Orders, a new chapter began, full of hope, in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.”<sup>119</sup>

We hope that this is so with our Religious Family’s Third Order.

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**118** SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, n. 54.

**119** *Ibidem*. In paragraphs 55-56 the holy Pope gives various precisions on the participation and cooperation of lay people in the charism and in the apostolate of religious institutes.

THE SOCIAL KINGDOM OF CHRIST  
– FORMATION OF LAY LEADERS

*Author: Fr. Daniel Cima, IVE*

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**I**n this conference I would simply like remind you of things which the majority of you already know, but due to their importance, I believe that it is always good to be often reminded of them. I have divided this conversation into four points and a conclusion:

1. Christ wants to reign, not only in single hearts, but also in all society.
2. Right, need, and obligation of faithful laity to do apostolate for Christ's Kingdom.
3. Awareness of the urgency of this situation and form lay leaders to make Jesus' social empire possible.
4. Means of formation.
5. Conclusion.

\* \* \* \*

***1. Christ wants to reign, not only in single hearts, but also in all society.<sup>1</sup>***

In Jesus' long-awaited moment, when He would pass from this world to the Father (Jn 13: 1), He left us precious gifts and teachings: He gave us Himself in the Eucharist (with His true body and blood), He left us the priesthood, the commandment of love, etc. Among the treasures which Christ left us there is that conversation that he had with the then Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate, in the praetorium of Judah. The Gospel of Saint John records:

*"...So Pilate went back into the praetorium and summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"*

*Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?"*

*Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?"*

*Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants [would] be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here."*

*So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. 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."*

*Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"*

*When he had said this, he again went out to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in him..." (Jn 18: 33-38).*

It's impossible to be clearer! *"I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world."*

All those who deny Christ's divinity, all those who diminish it or fail to understand the Incarnation, necessarily deny Christ His kingship; and it's quite logical that this is so: if Jesus is not God, or if God is not truly incarnate, or has not truly assumed all that is authentically human, how could Christ claim a universal empire? It would certainly be a little presumptuous.

If, however, we believe and confess that *"the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"* (Jn 1: 14), and by incarnating He has assumed

<sup>1</sup> Optimally expressed by Pope Pius XI, in the Encyclical Letter *Quas primas*, on the kingship of Christ.

everything insofar as it is authentically human, then things radically change. His reign is not only possible, but it is fitting and urgent (we must commit ourselves “*Instaurare omnia in Christo*”, that is, to renew all things in Christ, as is reiterated by the motto of Saint Pius X).

Many, while accepting the need of Christ’s Kingdom, confine it merely to the private and individual sphere, to hearts, but not to the social sphere. It seems that in our day this lie – ultimately derived from a misunderstanding of the mystery of the Son of God’s Incarnation – has become widespread and imposed, almost like an undeniable dogma. As early as 1925, Pius XI in the Encyclical Letter *Quas Primas* (promulgated December 11, 1925), refuted this prevailing secular tendency which had already tried to push faith and the kingdom of Christ into the private order; for this end the Pope instituted the Solemnity of Christ the King. The Holy Father remembered that His kingdom, being principally a spiritual kingdom, is also a universal and social kingdom:

“...It would be a grave error, on the other hand, to say that Christ has no authority whatever in civil affairs, since, by virtue of the absolute empire over all creatures committed to him by the Father, all things are in his power... Thus the empire of our Redeemer embraces all men... His empire includes not only Catholic nations... but also all those who are outside the Christian faith; so that truly the whole of mankind is subject to the power of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Nor is there any difference in this matter between the individual and the family or the State; for all men, whether collectively or individually, are under the dominion of Christ. In him is the salvation of the individual, in him is the salvation of society.<sup>3</sup> “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4: 12)

Jesus wants to reign in the hearts of all men, both individually and also in society, that is, the realm of His reign is twofold, personal and social.

In order to avoid false dialectics and false antagonism, which are fruits of the ideological view of reality, we want to warn you of only one thing: we aren’t talking here of *triumphalism* or *restorationism* (as some who like to victimize their efforts for the Kingship of Christ in all reality),

2 Pius XI, Encyclical letter *Quas Primas* n. 15

3 This last reality is also recorded in the IVE Directory of the Third Order, n. 248 (from here on it will be cited as DTOL).

or some that want to restore *Medieval Christianity* that does not exist anymore (even with all its limitations and defects, maybe was not that bad...). We are talking about recognizing the lordship of Christ over society. It is His by right and this is our Salvation, so we must commit all our strengths, talents and intelligence that God has given us, so this right may be recognized and established everywhere.

From the very fact that the Word of God became man, without ceasing to be God, we should learn to be in the world, “without being of the world.” We should go to the world to convert the world not to be converted into it. We should go toward man and his culture not to be converted into them, but to cure and elevate them by the power of the Gospel, to do as Christ did: “eliminate what is diabolic, assume what is human and communicate what is divine.”

Christ became like us yet without sin,<sup>4</sup> Therefore, sin, error, and all its derivatives are not assumable. Before baptizing, exorcism is necessary; without conversion, reconciliation is impossible and without renouncing evil, redemption does not exist. Unity cannot exist at the cost of truth. There is no holiness without cleansing the soul: «Holiness means cleanliness.»<sup>5</sup>

## ***2. Right, need, and obligation of faithful laity to do apostolate for Christ's Kingdom.***

Christ wants to reign always and everywhere in all men's hearts, but He is not like most of the earthy kings who use violence, threats, oppression, half-truths, flattering promises, compromises, etc. He doesn't want to impose Himself. He wants to conquer hearts and the entire human society by attraction, by means of courageous men and women, persons united to Him by Baptism, by an active spiritual and sacramental life, and also by coherency of life. These are people who dare to present the fascinating and irresistible Person of Christ and His Divine Doctrine to all, so as to win everyone for Him. This is not only a right, but also a duty of all faithful. And so the Second Vatican Council reminds us:

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Hb 4: 15.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Fr. Carlos Miguel Buena, “*El Arte del Padre*”; IVE Press, New York (2015), *Epilogue*. Here after, it will be cited only as *El Arte del Padre*.



*The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head; incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself.*

*...On all Christians therefore is laid the preeminent responsibility of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all men throughout the world... may also be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10), to build up the whole body in charity (cf. Eph. 4:16)*

*...From the acceptance of these charisms, including those which are more elementary, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of men and the building up of the Church. (Apostolicam Actuositatem 3)*

Therefore, if Christ's social dominion depends on our work and commitment we may more fully understand the severe urgency of this right — it is an obligation for all the baptized. Today where the tremendous and devastating secularization process takes place, we must, now more than ever, work for His universal Sovereignty. Let us make St. Luis Orione's words our own: "*Whoever does not want to be an apostle leave the Congregation: today, whoever is not an apostle of Jesus Christ and the Church is an apostate.*"<sup>6</sup> Try to think how actual these words were in that time- 1935- these are words that put the nail in the coffin!

This apostolic action should not be done just in whatever kind of way, nor under whichever kind of spirit. This action should be ordered, concrete and within a determined spirit.

The concern of Catholics, whether they be priests or laity, should be the experience and testimony of the integral content of evangelization. God will ask us for an account: "*Much will be required of the person entrusted with much.*"<sup>7</sup> The temporal dimension should be sought secondarily, because God should be sought for primarily: "*...seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*" (Mt 6: 33)

Modern man is unhappy and will remain so because he does not seek God first. He does not leave sin, which takes him far from his last end, because he does not let Christ govern him. For he seeks first all the added things and not God.

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<sup>6</sup> SAINT LOUIS ORIONE, *Letter of August 2, 1935.*

<sup>7</sup> Lk 12: 48.

By doing so, he gets neither the things which are added nor God. For this reason he will never get the solution to all his problems. Lacking food, a roof or peace will not be solved until man seeks for God, because only Christ can solve all problems, even man's temporal problems<sup>8</sup>.

The commitment of all the faithful is directed to make Christ effectively reign. The battle is not easy, so specific formation is needed.

### ***3. Awareness of the urgency of this situation and form lay leaders to make Jesus' social empire possible.***

We have just said that the formation of the faithful does not have the same importance, validity and urgency since we are forming persons and not robots, formation has a priority within it. Some elements are essential and others are subordinate. Formation has to be like this.

#### **a. Essential and primary element of formation**

This element includes diverse dimensions upon which formation should be based.

- ***Supernatural Dimension.*** First of all we must remember that for the Church and for all Catholics, whether priests or laity, the first and essential element is the *“specifically religious” or supernatural dimension*. That is vertical, theological, or eternal, which consists in our relationship with God, with Christ, with the Church. This dimension is carried out in the preaching of the Gospel, the infusion of grace by the worthy reception of the sacraments, seeking our last end, embracing the cross, working for eternity, love of God above all. In summary: sanctity according to Jesus' teachings: “seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.” (Mt 6: 33)<sup>10</sup> In considering this, the first thing to be sought for in a good Christian's formation should be his union with God, that is searching for sanctity in his own state of life.
- ***Human Formation:*** in order to make sanctity possible a good human formation is needed so that nature will not be an obstacle nor a support to grace (as a mere external condition),

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. *El Arte del Padre*, Fr. 649.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. PABLO VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi* 32

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. *El Arte del Padre*, Fr. 612.

rather nature enters into the very essence of Christian identity and remains perfected by grace. The human formation of our nature is the “foundation of all formation. Misunderstanding the relationship between nature and grace is the root of many evils. Grace does not destroy nature, but rather heals it, raises it, perfects it, dignifies it, and ennobles it.”<sup>11</sup> The intelligence and the will (the soul’s potencies) should be formed in order to strongly root and coherently live the Christian principles. He who does not live as he thinks, end thinking as he lives.

- ***Forming the Intelligence.*** It’s necessary to form our own intelligence. We want tertiaries who know how to think, with clear and firm ideas, men and women of principle, who always search for truth, goodness, and beauty, who possess intelligence and know how to defend themselves without letting themselves be deceived or permitting the smallest seed of error to be added.<sup>12</sup> This will not be achieved without being familiar with the Holy Scriptures, without a vast knowledge of the Catholic doctrine, which is summarized in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and without a special knowledge of the Social Doctrine of the Church, etc. It is really important to form one’s own conscience purely without falsity or justification.<sup>13</sup>
- ***Forming the will.*** In the world where everything goes against the Gospel values, we must go against the current. This is why we need to form our will. So that we may always and in everything search for and choose the greatest good through a constant practice of all virtues and the dominion of our passions. Only in this way may we be able to fulfill our mission of being the light and salt of the world. Forming our will means possessing a desire that with firmness follows the good presented by the intellect without being influenced by the passions.<sup>14</sup>
- ***Formation in discipline.*** One aspect of human and spiritual formation should be to acquire a disciplined life. Here the target is none other than getting the “style” of Jesus Christ: this style is the attitude that He, as Son, has with the Father. We must act as his disciples. Discipline is the fundamental attitude of the disciple.

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11 Cfr. DTOI, n. 493.

12 Cfr. DTOI, n. 496.

13 Cfr. DTOI, n. 505.

14 Cfr. DTOI, n. 507-513.

Discipline is the submission to the rules of life in order that truth may become incarnate in the life of the disciples. We want to form people who are docile to the great discipline of the Church contained in the Code of Canon Law and in all other ecclesiastical laws. And we want to form people who are docile to the particular discipline of our Institute, evoking the teaching: “apprehendite disciplinam:” serve the Lord with fear; exult with trembling; lest he become angry and you perish along the way<sup>15</sup>.

- ***Formation for the apostolate.*** Jesus Christ assumed an integral human nature, carrying out human actions and operations, so that He might be a man like us, of the lineage of Adam, who would pay the penalty for sin and redeem men. The hypostatic union made it possible for the person of the Word to suffer in his human nature for the salvation of the human race. And we want to prolong the Incarnation in every reality. We then have to worry about the good of souls. We must foster in ourselves the thirst for souls (which was in the Incarnate Word). We must try to communicate to others the treasure of good we have received: Jesus. We must therefore exercise ourselves and prepare ourselves adequately for the different types of apostolate, knowing that in order to carry out great apostolic works it is necessary to prepare oneself for suffering. The apostolate is a cross, because the Supreme Apostle obtained redemption through pain and suffering, and no servant is greater than his master. We must let ourselves be burnt so that we are able to burn, as a fire that lights other fires (Saint Alberto Hurtado). For this reason we must be ready to suffer misunderstandings, berating, insults, ingratitude, to be ridiculed, in order to be like the apostles, the spectacle of the world. It is essential to learn to work as a team, as a body, where each member occupies his place, without envy, without any aspirations other than to serve the promulgation of Christ’s Kingdom. Everyone must put his gifts and talents at the service of others.

**b. Secondary and complementary element of the formation of faithful laity**

In their formation, the laity should take into account that what specifically characterizes them is their secular nature. The lay people, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging

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<sup>15</sup> Cfr. Ps 2: 11.

in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God; so they may work for the sanctification of the world ‘as leaven, from within.’<sup>16</sup>

The scope of the temporal order, which includes the lay faithful’s secular affairs, is vast and so there is so much work to do. Namely, the good things of life and family prosperity and culture; economic matters and politics; business world, the arts and professions; fields of science, of technology, ecology, social communication; life issues, professional ethics, solidarity, peace, institutions, political community; international relations and their evolution and progress; the promotion of justice, human rights, education and freedom, especially religious freedom.<sup>17</sup>

While operating in the temporal order, a need emerges from the integral content of evangelization - although always subordinate to the eternal as the ultimate end – which is the duty of the Catholic to fight so that Christ reigns in the economy, in politics, in the social, in the culture, that is, in all human realities. And so, the principle of the Incarnation formed by Saint Irenaeus is still valid in the pastoral order: “*That which He has not assumed He has not healed.*”<sup>18</sup> The faithful, however, cannot assume temporal realities without criticism, but has to make a careful discernment. After exorcising certain temporal realities, the Church takes up what is assumable and baptizes it, because what it not taken by Christ, is not redeemed becomes a new idol replete with all the old malicious cunning.<sup>19</sup>

The Christian therefore has to deal with these realities of the temporal sphere, not as all others do but with a supernatural look, trying to order everything according to Christ. The faithful must deal with earthly realities so that they can carry Jesus everywhere: in homes, barracks, hospitals, unions, universities, schools, factories, neighborhoods, clubs, municipalities, radio stations, to universities, schools, nations, television, internet, cinema, various associations, etc. In these temporal matters it is up to the laity to act directly: the lay person “member of the Church, faithful to Christ, undertakes to build the Kingdom in its temporary dimension... (there) he finds his specific field of action ... his fundamental mission... his insertion in the temporary realities and in his family responsibilities...” Bishops, priests and religious, should treat the temporal order only indirectly, as counselors and spiritual directors,

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. LG 31b; 35b.d; 38; AA, 4a.e.g; 7e.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. DTOI, nn. 338-339.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in the final document of the Conference of Puebla, n. 400.

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. *El Arte del Padre*, Fr. 652.

they should not fall into the temptation of becoming political leaders, social leaders or officers of a temporary power.

In this regard it is therefore unacceptable to completely exclude the faithful from taking care of these realities in the way done by social progressivists, both in its Marxist and liberal variant. We must always avoid Christians with “identity crises,” that is, with sterile responses and with ideologies foreign to the Gospel, ideologies that always have persuasion - even if not explicitly formulated - of the insufficiency of the Gospel of Christ to resolve human problems at their background (and so try to fill the “alleged void” with ideologies, which have always proved deadly).

#### *4. Means for the formation*

The means to educate must be adequate with the person who has to be formed, that is, with his age, sex, status, condition, ability, circumstances, etc. We must use the most suitable means to be able to grow in age and grace before God, as the Incarnate Word. And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

So for children and young people it is necessary to strive so that they grow in an authentically Christian climate, where there is joy, healthy fun, high ideals, where they learn to engage and take responsibility progressively, experiencing the satisfaction of having done one’s duty and always carried out with generosity towards God and neighbor, which is out of love for God. By the grace of God, we try to give human and spiritual formation in the best way that we can in the various rich realities where our Religious Family is present and where our missionaries work. For example, we always try to have festive oratories, with groups for children and young people of different ages, with prayer groups, with multiple activities that make a Christian environment possible.

In the case of adults, they must strive to set a good example for the younger ones and therefore they must try to have a solid, balanced and free personality, something that will never be achieved without real and serious growth in the spiritual life: especially with the frequency of the Sacraments, making the Eucharist the center of one’s life, with the life of prayer, with the periodic practice of retreats and spiritual exercises, with the help of spiritual direction, etc.

But even a proportional intellectual formation is needed to be able to “*always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.*”<sup>20</sup> And to be able to influence appropriately in society it is necessary to be seriously and well formed in the specific professional and work duties. In everything we seek to be an example for the edification of all and never to be a cause of scandal: “*Avoid giving offense, whether to Jews or Greeks or the church of God.*”<sup>21</sup>

Adults also need to continue their education. Their life does not lose its meaning, nor does it become empty, on the contrary, it acquires greater richness because years are added to enrich their experience. This is why they must be a clear testimony of patience, wisdom, charity, joy, hope and value. You must be aware, not taking it too seriously, that many will care about how your life will turn out and in that moment you must be an example, like Elder Eleazar - of whom the Bible speaks in the book of the Maccabaeus - who preferred a honorable death rather than setting a bad example for young people. Adults, with their testimony of perseverance in the faith, act as lighthouses for the youth, so that they might not lose the right path and will not get lost.

### ***Conclusion***

I think the great temptation has been and will always be to accommodate ourselves to the things of the earth and not to be responsible for our Christian obligations in this historical moment and in the cultural context where God, with His perfect providence, has placed us. When the Catholic works seriously for the concrete application of the Social Doctrine of the Church, he works for the Christian civilization and by working for it he works for the extension of the social dominion of Christ the King.

The laity in every temporal matter must be guided by the Christian conscience, since no human activity, not even in the temporal order, can be taken away from the empire of God. Thus the Christian must order his whole life, private and public, according to God, being faithful to his baptismal commitment.

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Pt 3: 15.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Cor 10: 32.

This is the social royalty of Christ of which Pope Pius XI in *Quas Primas* and the courageous and energetic Saint John Paul the Great, at the beginning of his pontificate (October 22, 1978) talked about. John Paul II urged all the faithful to keep in mind: “*Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of States, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development. Do not be afraid. Christ knows “what is in man.” He alone knows it.*”

And as the Pontiff himself reiterated in Santo Domingo when, after exhorting to work to create a more human world, he added: “*Don’t settle for a more human world. Make a world more explicitly divine.*”

And this work must be animated by a true supernatural spirit:

1. Spirit of gratitude: We must constantly give thanks to God for all the benefits received and, in a particular way, for having been called by Christ the King to stay at the forefront in the struggle to bear witness to Him everywhere, to He who is man’s only Liberator. It is an undeserved grace of God to be able to be in this place of combat.

2. Spirit of fortitude: Christian life is a battle (cf. Eph 6: 10). We fight against the evil one, therefore, we must always ask for virtue, the gift and the spirit of fortitude. Those who decide to undertake this work will have an important and very insidious enemy: Christian progressivism, both liberal and Marxist. The spirit of fortitude is identified with holiness, since “the saints ... (they are) the teeth of the Church that tear men away from errors.” (Saint Augustine)

3. Spirit of Faith: the greatest task “*to restore all things in Christ*” (Eph 1: 10) can only be accomplished “*through faith for faith*” (Rm 1: 17), by having the unshakable certainty given by faith. “*On this way leading from Christ to man, on this way on which Christ unites himself with each man, nobody can halt the Church.*”<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, we should keep in mind that whomever Satan doesn’t make evil, he makes stupid, taking him far from the idea of fighting to establish the Kingdom and the principal current of life, communion and participation in the Catholic Church. He leaves man alone in a comfortable position which is a dark path without exit, leaving him outside the spirit of combat.

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22 SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* 13.



We must defend the Catholic Faith and put it into action: “*Today we only preserve what we defend.*”<sup>23</sup>

With all our heart and soul we join Jesus Christ, our Lord, “*King of kings and Lord of lords,*”<sup>24</sup> because as St. Thomas Aquinas says: “*He is the entire good of the Church, nor is He together with others anything greater than He is by Himself,*”<sup>25</sup> ready to give our lives so that He may reign, because He is the only one that has “the words of eternal life.”<sup>26</sup>

May Our Blessed Mother, Queen of Apostles, form those great leaders and apostles who are so needed in our world and times in her maternal heart. Amen.

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23 CARD. ALBINO LUCIANI, *Illustrissimi*, Madrid 1978, Fr. 93.

24 Rev 19: 16.

25 SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae, Suppl., Q 95, a. 3, ad 4.*

26 Jn 6: 68.

*English*

THE SECULAR THIRD ORDER OF  
THE INCARNATE WORD

**Author:** *Sister Mary Mother of Faith, SSVM.*

**Original language:** *english*

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Sometimes we don't see miracles, not because God hides them, but because they're just too big and we're just too close to see around them. Sometimes we forget how supernatural life has become because the super-natural has just become second nature. That was most certainly the case for the small hill town of Nazareth during Our Lord's early years. I think that it can also be said of the life of our small Religious Family, especially in its birthplace: San Rafael, Mendoza, Argentina. I will let one of our Argentinian sisters tell the story:

*"It was 1985,<sup>1</sup> we had 11 suitcases, 3 kids (ages 2, 5 and 8), 2 dogs and my still very young parents. We had just bought a small farm right behind the 'Finca' (the IVE Seminary in Argentina). That's how we first met the Congregation. Sometimes we would see the seminarians hitch-hiking, and, of course, Dad would always stop.*

*My parents put me in Catholic school that year. It was the same year that Argentina began to debate Legalized Divorce. My parents weren't living a life of grace at the time and hadn't been to Church in a while, but thankfully, they were in favor of the family and the welfare of the children. They started to go to the first "Catholic Cultural conferences" offered by our Priests at the local Catholic school. There, the Fathers would share the Church's teaching on divorce, the family etc. And well, the faith, well explained, Catholic Doctrine, well explained, began to draw my parents, little by little, back to the Church.*

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1 The IVE was founded on March 25, 1984.

*We finally went to visit the seminarians at the Finca. Two things really impressed my parents; one was the coherence between what they professed and how they lived, especially their poverty. The other was how ‘naturally’ they offered God something that was in fact very supernatural. I remember they would always comment on how well Father Buela would explain things, how he made spiritual things easy to understand. Plus, there was so much joy, such a spirit of family.*

*But, in the beginning, things didn’t have a rule yet, nothing was written down! It’s not like my parents knew how to prepare to enter the third order, how to become ‘official members.’ It was just something you understood, an impression, a sentiment. Even then Father Buela would say that all the parents of our religious belonged to the Third Order. My parents always considered themselves members of the Third Order, even if they never read a formula off a piece of paper.”*

*“But, in the beginning, things didn’t have a rule yet, nothing was written down! [...] It was just something you understood, an impression, a sentiment.”*

There are many other stories. Families who left comfortable jobs in the city, a secure future, their reputation before friends and co-workers, to move to San Rafael. They wanted to raise their kids with these poor seminarians and blue sisters who, though perhaps in dirty cassocks or faded veils, weren’t too young to read St. Thomas Aquinas and weren’t too old to play with poor street children. These families were our first Third Order members, their children are, right now, missionaries to the farthest ends of the earth. Sometimes the miracles are just too big and we are just too close to comprehend them.

But this wasn’t a onetime deal. In each new mission, across all 5 continents, perfect strangers, of different cultures, languages and traditions keep finding in these missionary priests and sisters a family, not of blood, but of the Spirit, a religious family.

Like Sister’s family in San Rafael, they see the need of the missionaries and are moved to help. They provide food, transportation, a patient smile, a meal with family, advice, plumbing, electrical work, lessons in every language imaginable. What do they ask for in exchange? *“Teach us how to pray.”* (Lk 11:1) They ask for formation and spiritual guidance.

All of this leads us to say: *“There is great cause for rejoicing here.”* (1Pt 6), an extraordinary reason for hope. Argentinians, Peruvians, Americans, Russians, Chinese, Filipinos, Palestinians, Egyptians, Papuans, Brazilians, Africans, Spanish, French, Germans, Dutch, Tajik, or Ukrainians:

We are born of the same spirit. “*And what is born of the Spirit is Spirit.*”<sup>2</sup> The innate enthusiasm and almost con-natural capacity to adopt our spirituality and style of evangelization is a clear sign and constant reminder that *the work is His*. God Himself has prepared the laborers and planted the field. In every country, these “Our” laity are the founding members of the Secular Third Order of the Incarnate Word.

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### ***What is the Secular Third Order of the Religious Family of the Incarnate Word?***

The Roman Code of Canon Law states that “*associations whose members share in the spirit of some religious institute while in secular life, lead an apostolic life, and strive for Christian perfection under the higher direction of the same institute are called third orders.*”<sup>3</sup>

The Secular Third Order of the Religious Family of the Incarnate Word “*is an association of the Christian faithful, whose members, while living in the world, desire to share in the spirit of our religious family so as to find a sure and efficacious path to their own Christian perfection in all the areas of their lay vocation and, by means of the apostolate, work for the sanctification of all peoples under the higher direction of the Institute of the Incarnate Word and the Institute Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará.*”<sup>4</sup>

### ***Third Order members “desire to share in the Spirit of our Religious Family.”***

We do not want our Religious Family to be guided by any spirit other than the Holy Spirit, that through, with, in, and for Mary, He may reproduce in us the true Spirit of Christ.<sup>5</sup> Our spirit is a **Marian** spirit, “*Behold your Mother*” (Jn 9:25); a **missionary** spirit “*Go out to all nations*” (Mt 28:19). It is the spirit of **charity**, for “*I have come to bring fire upon earth*” (Lk 12:49).

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2 John 3:6

3 Code of Canon Law, Can. 303 [http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib2-cann208-329\\_en.html#TITLE\\_V](http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib2-cann208-329_en.html#TITLE_V), Referenced: June 29, 2019.

4 Directory of Third Order, 4. (Personal translation) Referencing: Code of Canon Law, can. 303.

5 IVE Constitutions, 17. Roman 8:9.

It is a spirit of **family**, “*that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you*” (Jn 17:21). It is the spirit of a **prince** for “*I have no longer called you slaves...I have called you friends*” (Jn 15:15). Ours is a spirit of **sacrifice**, “*for there is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends*” (Jn 15:13). It is a spirit of **faith in God’s providence**, for “*Your Father knows what you need before you ask him,*” (Mt 6:8), faith in the **Eucharist**, for “*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him,*” (Jn 6:56), faith in the **Church**, for “*the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it*” (Mt 16:18), and in the person of **Peter** for “*upon this Rock I will build my Church*” (ibid.), faith in the redemptive and transformative power of the **Cross**, “*For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it*” (Mt 16:25), and faith in the **Resurrection** of Christ “*for where I am going you also may be*” (Jn 14:4). And because our spirit is all of these things it is most palpably a spirit of **joy**: “*Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven*” (Mt 5:12).

We share in this common spirit which is and should be visible and evident in all of our activities and in each of its members.

**In this spirit Third Order members desire: “to find a sure and efficacious path to their own Christian perfection.”<sup>6</sup>**

Our Religious Family is composed of three branches: The IVE (priests and male religious), the SSVM (female religious) and the Secular Third Order (lay faithful). Each branch of the Religious Family, faithful to its particular vocation, inspires the members of the other branches to strive for the holiness proper to their state of life.

We religious count on you, the laity, for your personal skills, knowledge and collaboration in the mission, and we are constantly edified by your witness to Christ. In the family and in the community, in your daily personal sacrifices for the good of others, many of you teach us by example the love of both Father and Mother, which, when rooted in Christ, *loves its own to the end.* (cf. Jn 13:1)

The laity also benefit immensely from the example of their brothers and sisters in religious life. The Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* teaches that “*Those many who enter the religious state, tending toward holiness by*

<sup>6</sup> Directory of Third Order, 4. (Personal translation) Referencing: Code of Canon Law, can. 303.

*a narrower path, [i.e. through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience] stimulate their brethren by their example.”<sup>7</sup> The religious profession of the evangelical counsels “appears as a sign which can and ought to attract all the members of the Church to an effective and prompt fulfillment of the duties of their Christian vocation.”<sup>8</sup> Immersed in the things of the Lord, the consecrated person “reminds us that ‘here we have no lasting city’ (Heb 13:14), for ‘our commonwealth is in heaven’ (Phil 3:20). The one thing necessary is to seek God’s ‘Kingdom and his righteousness’ (Mt 6:33), with unceasing prayer for the Lord’s coming.”<sup>9</sup>*

Third order members also benefit from the Order’s rule. The Rule, or way of life traced out in a Religious Institute’s Constitutions, is a “sure and efficacious path to Christian perfection.” St. John Paul the Great explained that “when the Church approves a form of consecrated life or an Institute, she confirms that in its spiritual and apostolic charism are found all the objective requisites for achieving personal and communal perfection according to the Gospel.”<sup>10</sup> This means that all who bind themselves by some level of stable commitment to a religious rule approved by the Church can hope with certainty to obtain the perfection of charity: in a word, to become saints.

None of this would be possible without the spiritual care and guidance of the priests and religious of the Institute of the Incarnate Word. As fathers of our religious family and head of our household, they have “the qualified and preferential task of seeing that all the members of our Religious Family – the Sisters Servants of the Lord and the Third Order – are formed in the genuine spirit of our Religious Family.” Through the sacrament of their priesthood and their fidelity to the charism, Christ sanctifies the entire Religious Family.

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7 Lumen Gentium, 13.

8 Lumen Gentium, 44.

9 Vita Consecrata, 26.

10 Vita Consecrata, 93.

**Living the Charism of the Incarnate Word, Third Order members find a path to their own Christian perfection “in all the areas of their lay vocation.”<sup>11</sup>**

Within the lay state there exist a number of different vocations or calls from God, each one indicating a particular path to holiness. Humanity’s path to holiness was definitively revealed when Jesus Christ, the Word of God, wedded our lowly human nature to His Divine Person. Every vocation finds its ultimate foundation and meaning from that indissoluble union of the humanity and divinity of Christ.

The vocation to the sacrament of marriage is an outward sign to the world of Christ’s union with His Mystical Body, the Church. Christ elevated the marriage covenant to the dignity of a sacrament by transforming the indissoluble bond of a baptized man and woman into an efficacious source of grace. In the home, “*husbands and wives find their proper vocation in being witnesses of the faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children. The Christian family loudly proclaims both the present virtues of the Kingdom of God and the hope of a blessed life to come. Thus, by its example and its witness it accuses the world of sin and enlightens those who seek the truth.*”<sup>12</sup>

Other members of the lay faithful are called to enter into a similar union, not in a covenant of love established with another human person, but with God Himself. These laity consecrate themselves to God by means of vows or other promises. These men and women seek to follow and imitate Christ more perfectly in a life of consecrated chastity. Their desire is to please Him, and only Him, in all things. They achieve the perfection of charity through a life of total service in hopeful expectation of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven.

What both of these vocations have in common, and this is the essential characteristic of the lay vocation, is their *secular* nature.

*“What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature... [T]he laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family*

<sup>11</sup> Directory of Third Order, 4. (Personal translation) Referencing: Code of Canon Law, can. 303.

<sup>12</sup> Lumen Gentium, 35.



*and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.”<sup>13</sup>*

## MEMBERSHIP IN THE IVE THIRD ORDER

### The Brotherhood of the Incarnate Word

Our Third Order welcomes and embraces into its spiritual treasury these secular vocations in all their apostolic fruitfulness and diversity. The 3-Tier structure of the IVE Third Order corresponds to the members’ particular vocation and the level of commitment they wish to undertake within the Religious Family.

The broadest form of association with the IVE Third Order is known as the “Confraternity” or “Brotherhood” of the Incarnate Word. All of those Catholic lay faithful or priests who, as friends, benefactors, or family members desire to have some share in the spirit of Our Religious Family, form part of this tier of the Third Order. United by the bonds of charity and prayer these members seek to give witness to the Incarnate Word **individually**, in the environment of day to day life: in the family, at work, at school, in the parish and in all the other areas of society within their reach.

*“The laity, dedicated to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and wonderfully prepared so that [...] all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, **if carried out in the Spirit**, and even the hardships of life, **if patiently borne**—all these become “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” [...] The laity consecrate the world itself to God.”<sup>14</sup>*

This is the first duty and primary apostolate of the Third Order member, for there is no area of our individual daily life that cannot be sanctified and consecrated to God. That being said, if all Third Order members are aware of their inalienable duty of “*consecrating the world to God*” and “*making Him know by a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity*”

<sup>13</sup> Lumen Gentium, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Lumen Gentium, 34.

they also know that this is impossible unless they remain in union with Him. *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:5)

This union is sought in 4 principle ways:

1. **The exact fulfillment of their duties of state**, by seeking to be faithful in their obligations to God, their family, their local society, and country, cost what it may.
2. **Authentic witness of Christian Life.** The faithful fulfillment of our duties in a spirit of faith, hope and charity makes Christ present to the world. *“The laity fulfill this mission of the Church in the world especially by conforming their lives to their faith so that they become the light of the world as well as by practicing honesty in all their dealings so that they attract all to the love of the true and the good and finally to the Church and to Christ. They fulfill their mission also by fraternal charity which presses them to share in the living conditions, labors, sorrows, and aspirations of their brethren with the result that the hearts of all about them are quietly prepared for the workings of saving grace.”*<sup>15</sup>
3. **Apostolate of Prayer.** In any of its forms, prayer is the primary source of all apostolic action. For Third Order Members our life of prayer should include frequent and attentive participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Eucharistic devotion, devotion to Christ’s Passion, and all expressions of True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, praying the rosary daily, if possible.<sup>16</sup>
4. **Collaboration in the works of our Religious.** The laity of the Religious Family should stand out for their willingness to spiritually and materially accompany our missionaries in the great work of evangelization. In this way, they seek union with God by active participation in His works.

<sup>15</sup> Apostolicam Actuositatem, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Third Order Directory, 401-404.

### **Lay associations**

Above and beyond the commitment to become ambassadors of Christ in their daily life, some lay faithful discern a call to a deeper apostolic commitment in our Religious Family. The second degree of the Third Order is made up of apostolic lay movements. Here, our Religious Family welcomes all of those enthusiastic faithful who long to fulfill the command of Christ to “go out to the whole world and preach the Gospel.” These lay associations are inspired by some **particular aspect** of evangelization (such as education, politics, catechesis, devotion to the Sacred Heart, the works of mercy etc.) and wish to take on a greater and more focused apostolic commitment. With the help of the IVE, members compose their own guidelines, that define their purpose, apostolic commitments, formation plan etc. All of these lay movements are united in the common desire for sanctity, for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, an ardent love for Jesus and Mary, fidelity to the Church, especially the person of the Holy Father, and a deep love for the Religious Family who has become their spiritual family within the body of Christ. All of these lay movements count on the regular guidance of the religious of the Incarnate Word.

### **Consecrated Laity**

Still other laity seek an even greater share in the charism of the Incarnate Word. First degree members of the Third Order freely bind themselves to a more perfect imitation of Jesus Christ by means of consecrated chastity along with other private vows or promises. By these vows, consecrated Third Order members open themselves to a greater and more intimate participation in the spirituality and charism of our Religious Family. Fortified by the great grace of their special consecration, they enjoy those rights and duties proper to their call. This includes an intense life of prayer, reading and meditating upon the Sacred Scriptures, participation in the Holy Mass, frequent confession, spiritual direction, regular Spiritual Exercises, etc. Thus, these members contribute greatly to the supernatural fecundity of the Religious Family.

\* \* \* \*

The Third order is “an essential and constitutive part of the Religious Family of the Incarnate Word.” This means that it is “part of the innermost nature”<sup>17</sup> of our Religious Family. Just as blood, bones, and lungs are essential to the human body, or pages make up a book, the Secular Third order is an essential and constitutive part of the Religious Family of the Incarnate Word. God, in calling men to the priesthood of the Incarnate Word and women to consecrated religious life in the Servants of the Lord, has also designated a portion of faithful to live out their lay vocation in this Religious Family. And this family is incomplete without them.

Fidelity to our specific end demands that we work together with our third order members, and in general, with all friends of good will who are earnestly committed to the urgent task of evangelizing the culture. The evangelization of culture is impossible if the laity do not work to transform with the power of the gospel those areas of human life that are properly theirs.

Currently, the Catholic baptized laity form roughly 99.9% of the members of the Church.<sup>18</sup> There are about 1.3 billion laity and only 1.6 million clergy and religious. Of course, the spiritual impact of the Church cannot be reduced to numbers; the power of Christ is mysteriously at work in the souls of all men. However, 1.3 billion laity means at least 1.3 billion neighbors, co-workers, spouses, children, parents, 1.3 billion people paying their bills, standing in the line at the grocery store, holding the door at the DMV, educating their children, praying outside abortion clinics, saying ‘yes’ to life and ‘no’ the culture of death in all its forms. What would the world look like if even just half of 1.3 billion Catholics sought to be “*led by the spirit of the Gospel*” to “*work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven; making Christ known to others, by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.*”<sup>19</sup>

Your lay vocation allows you to reach all of these temporal realities, people, places, circumstances, that are for the most part inaccessible to

17 Constitutive: Adj, “being a part of the innermost nature of a person or thing.” Meriam Webster Thesaurus. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/constitutive>. June 29, 2019.

18 In 2017 the Georgetown Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reported 1.313 billion Catholic in the World, of which, only 1.162 million belong to the clergy or religious life: less than 0.1%. <https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/> Visited: June 30, 2019.

19 Lumen Gentium, 31.

us religious. The laity must learn to move with the freedom proper to the children of God. No critics, no couch potatoes, no throwing in the towel and saying “Nope, no way I’m touching that!” When we Catholic don’t get involved guess who does: the enemy!<sup>20</sup> The world is in desperate need of the true authentic vibrant testimony proper to the Catholic laity. We depend on you to carry out the work of evangelization of culture.

\* \* \* \*

To conclude, I would like to offer you a text by Fr. Gustavo Nieto, IVE that expresses most eloquently the importance of our work as a Religious Family to fulfill what God has entrusted to us.

“We must always keep in mind that Christ has called us individually, but in order to form a family, the Religious Family of the Incarnate Word. [The Institute of the Incarnate Word], the Sisters Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará, and the many members of the Third Order throughout the world, make up in the Church **a particular spiritual Family with the same spirituality and the same mission**, in order to help each other mutually in fulfilling each member’s personal vocation.<sup>21</sup> This is how God envisioned us and this is our identity. Therefore, our following of Christ is lived out in fraternity. That is to say, in the spirit of a corps.<sup>22</sup>

Being part of a Religious Family implies, among other things, that we must always act as a family and always show ourselves as a family.

Put simply, because our vocation as religious of the Incarnate Word implies living as a family: *“To love one’s vocation is to love [...] one’s institute, and to experience the community as one’s own family. To love in accordance with one’s vocation is to love in the manner of one who, in every human relationship, wishes to be a clear sign of the love of God, not invading and not possessing, but loving and desiring the good of the other with God’s own benevolence.”*<sup>23</sup> [...]

20 cf. Fr. Carlos Buela, “The Secular Third Order,” video conference.

21 Cf. Constitutions, 92.

22 Cf. Directory of Fraternal Life, 25.

23 Cf. Directory of Fraternal Life, 45; op. cit. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Fraternal Life in Community. “Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor,” 37.

Therefore, to act as a Religious Family is simply the constant and faithful work of each of its members [...] in such a way that all who see us will recognize us through this characteristic and particular style of the Incarnate Word. To act as a family also requires unity in criteria, and so good communication is imperative, since this inspires in everyone a sense of shared responsibility.<sup>24</sup> [...]

All of this leads to generous and disinterested service in the mission, inspired by communion in the same charism. This is shown, among other things, in fighting together in the missionary endeavor, in giving priority to the works of the Religious Family, in sacrificing oneself where one is so that the Institute can achieve works of greater magnitude, in showing oneself to be close and ready to help, in always being available to lend a hand, etc. In a word, it is to live in the more and in the above of the folly of the Cross.<sup>25</sup>

And if all of this must be the ordinary course of our behavior, this becomes particularly meaningful when we consider the crucial moment through which our Religious Family is passing.

What is important is to work on a common project, giving priority to the works of the Family and to the apostolates that are proper to our Institutes, developing them with great energy and generous magnanimity, striving together for those apostolates of greater insertion in the evangelization. *Experience attests to this and it is clearly seen in numerous apostolic undertakings that when all members work together – the masculine and feminine branches and the Third Order – great strength is given to our Religious Family*, and an incisiveness that it might not otherwise have, and which, besides greatly supporting and strengthening the life and mission of our whole Family, becomes a wealth of blessings which unites us even more strongly.

God was pleased to grant us the great grace and privilege to associate [the Institute of the Incarnate Word] with the Sisters Servants of the Lord and with the members of the Third Order by ties that are inextricable[...] Therefore, it is our duty to show ourselves as a Religious Family, and proud of it with a holy pride, to bear witness before the world to what we are.

<sup>24</sup> Directory of Consecrated Life, 388; op. cit. Cf. Vita Consecrata, 45.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Directory of Consecrated Life, 398.

God could have sent [the Fathers alone] to the mission, just like He did with so many other masculine congregations. But for the greater manifestation of His magnificence and according to His unfathomable benevolence, he has given us precious bulwarks in the second and third orders to help us in our sanctification and in the sublime task of evangelization.

[...] Certainly, in the apostolate that we carry out together as a Religious Family – being limited men and women – we will naturally encounter difficulties and disagreements. But faced with this, we must have a lot of patience, charity, and magnanimity, and always strive to practice the wise counsel of Saint John of the Cross: “where there is no love, put love, and you will draw out love.”<sup>26</sup>

Let me also say it this way, purely and simply: Our Religious Family is a treasure! and a great gift from heaven, with which God has wanted to enrich His Church. We must make it fruitful and thus share with the whole world the immense wealth that we enjoy: our wonderful charism. Let us realize that the world needs our testimony as a Religious Family.

Let us truly realize the importance of our Religious Family’s role in the Church’s mission. We ought to be the “good news” that loudly proclaims that the world cannot be transformed without the spirit of the beatitudes.<sup>27</sup> How many benefits will follow from it! How many vocations! How many souls will be challenged by the testimony of true sacrificial love for the family, which the modern world so needs!”<sup>28</sup>

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26 SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS, *Collected Works*, The Letters, To Madre María de la Encarnación, OCD, (July 6th, 1591).

27 Cf. *Constitutions*, 1; *op. cit. Lumen Gentium*, 31.

28 Father Gustavo Nieto, Circular Letter 32/2019. “*God placed him at the head of his family*” Rome. March 1, 2019.

*English*



## LIFE AND THE FAMILY: CONCRETE AND URGENT POINTS REGARDING EVANGELIZATION OF CULTURE

*Authors: Dr. Eduardo and Clara Maggiora, IVE Third Order Members.*

*Original language: spanish*

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### **1. Javier's presentation**

My name is Francisco Javier María Maggiora, I am the youngest of 15 siblings. I'm 12 years old and my parents, Eduardo and Clara, adopted me when I was 2. As you can see, I was born with a malformation in my limbs that does not allow me to do many things in my everyday life and that is why my family helps me in almost all my needs.

My disability is a great challenge for me. I attended elementary school in a school that is one block away from my house and this year, I started homeschooling for high school, which means I study from my house.

The effort that I have to make to live can be a great encouragement for many people.

I am very grateful to God because I was adopted. I have a family that, with love, helps me in my daily life. Being in a Catholic family, I have met God and I am able to joyfully live with my disability. Besides it is also very fun to have many siblings.

## 2. Presentation of the family

We are Eduardo and María Clara and as you may have heard in the presentation, we come from Bella Vista, Buenos Aires, Argentina, to tell you about our experience as parents in a large Catholic family with biological and adoptive [children].

We are 56 and 54 years old, and we have fifteen children, of which, two are biological, the oldest two, and thirteen adoptive, one of them, number eleven, is already in Heaven. As the priest who celebrated the mass on the day of her entrance into Heaven told us “she rests eternally in God”. María Victoria died when she was 2 years and 10 months of age, and after only 8 months of being part of our family. She was born with 5 months of gestation due to the fact that her biological mother attempted an abortion, and as a consequence of her premature birth, she suffered severe paralysis that made it very difficult for her to walk and talk. In spite of that, during the time that she was with us, she had learned how to say “dad” and three days before going into a coma she said “mom”. She died 18 years ago, due to meningitis caused by the contamination of the brain valve that was placed at birth. Because she came into our family, she was able to receive the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Because of the Catholic adoption, she died surrounded by a family and entered Heaven.

As we told you, our first two daughters are biological, the eldest, who is now 31, is, M. María de la Ascensión de Jesús, she is a religious sister in the female branch of the Religious Family of the Incarnate Word, and currently a missionary in Ecuador. After her comes, María Agustina, who is 30, is married and just had her fourth child, last month.

Besides this religious daughter, we have two other daughters in the female branch of the Institute, Sr. María Vera Luce, who is 23, currently in Egypt, and Juanita, who is 17, in her last year of high school at the Aspirancy “Beata Laura Vicuña” in San Rafael, Mendoza, Argentina.

Of our 13 adopted children, 7 have a sensory, mental or motor disabilities, Eduardo who is 26 years old, María Isabel, 24, María del Carmen, 22, María Victoria who would be 20, Alfonso who is 20, Camila who is also 20, and Javier who is 12. The other 6 are biological brothers and sisters, of the same mother: María who is 26, Andrés, 25, Sr. María Vera Luce, 23, María Belén, 22, María del Pilar who is 20 and Juana who is 17. The two oldest of this group of siblings came to our home because the state did not find candidates to be their adoptive parents since

they suffered from a new, not well known, illness, and that 20 years ago produced uncertainty regarding their future life. Because of our decision to maintain the bond between them, the rest of their siblings became our children. Currently they all have overcome the health problem with which they were born. Two daughters of this group of 6 siblings, having arrived to adulthood, abandoned the family home despite our efforts over many years of trying by all possible means to establish a bond through a communion of values, that they never wanted to accept. Those were moments of great sadness, concern and anguish for all, but the family, united and with the help of God, managed to overcome those very difficult times.

In addition we have 5 other children that await for us in Heaven; for at the time of the arrival of our first adopted children, we had two natural miscarriages and three ectopic pregnancies.

As you can see, for the 32 years that we have been married, plus 5 years of courtship, our family was, practically, born next to the Institute of the Incarnate Word. We accepted Father Andrés Bonello's invitation to give this testimony, in spite of our limitations, for a debt of gratitude to the Institute and, especially, to its founder, Father Buena, for what they meant and mean as support and security for our marriage and family.

Taking the words of Saint John Paul II in the SSVM Directory of Evangelization of Culture, we can say that today, the greatest challenges in which large sectors of the human family are most at risk, is the defense of human life in all its stages from conception to natural death and the promotion of the family based on marriage. These challenges require a special attention and an extraordinary commitment. This is the scope of the laity who have as their own vocation to seek the Kingdom of God, taking care of temporal realities, ordering them according to God and informing them with the Spirit of the Gospel.

This is why we are convinced that the defense of all human life is an essential and unavoidable part of the evangelization of culture.

### **3. Courtship**

In our youth, several years ago, when we were engaged, we met the Institute through a great friend, Diego Ibarra, father of many missionaries of the Institute, who invited us to do the Spiritual Exercises according to the method of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, with Father Carlos Buena. It was the year 1984.

Although we lived as practicing Catholics and we had thought of forming a Catholic family, the experience of the Spiritual Exercises, produced a conversion in our souls that led us to reconsider our life and aim to live the Gospel in a radical way, both in the personal and in our future married and family life.

This produced a change in the way we lived our courtship as we started to live it as a preparation to our ideal for married life.

After our Spiritual Exercises we understood that the Catholic courtship should be a true preparation for marriage. During those years we had to achieve a great capacity for dialogue, a deep friendship, and most importantly, we learned to maintain a communion in faith. A communion which we already had but it grew in order to live a solid personal life and supernatural marriage. That is what makes it possible to overcome the difficulties, sacrifices, sufferings and also to take pleasure in the joys and successes that are experienced throughout family life.

Years later, we understood the importance of permanently seeking a solid spiritual formation and really getting to know each other during the courtship. This allowed us to make the decision of receiving our last 13 children as children of our soul, in a natural way and without hesitation, understanding that it was God's will. They came to our family between the months of August of 1993 and June of 2009, with the disabilities and inconveniences that we already mentioned.

For this reason as parents we must prepare our children, from a young age, in the knowledge of themselves so that they can fulfill the vocation to which God calls them. If it is to married life, when the time comes and they meet the person God has chosen to share their life, they know how and are able to live a holy Catholic courtship.

That love of the Catholic couple is spiritual and free. It seeks the good of the beloved, it is generous to the point of forgetting oneself, it seeks in the other a best friend. It is selective and therefore faithful, and finally, it is completed with the Sacrament of Marriage. ([translated from the Spanish] Fr. Miguel A. Fuentes "Los hizo varón y mujer").

#### 4. Marriage

We received the sacrament of marriage on November 7, 1986, the feast of Mary Mediatrix of All Graces, with the vocation of having a large family, inspired by slightly older friends who were already forming their own families. Seeing the daily life of large families had a contagious effect on us. After 11 months of marriage, our first daughter, María de la Ascension de Jesús, was born. After a little over than a year later, our second daughter was born, María Agustina, mother of our four grandchildren. At that moment God decided to give us our first family cross.

María Clara was partially sterilized do to a malpractice, after the c-section by which our second daughter was born. As a consequence there were low probabilities for her to get pregnant. For this to happen the only viable option was for her to undergo fertilization techniques, which we discarded. This resignation was not easy, since we were offered the possibility of being able to continue having biological children, but with the intervention of man's hands.

During the courtship, in the preparation for the future marriage, the formation received by good readings, the already mentioned Spiritual Exercises and the good examples of other marriages helped us to understand the love that would unite us through the sacrament. This love had to fulfill certain characteristics: to be total, that is, a love in body and soul, unitive, uniting our differences and complementing us in a physical union, the conjugal act: "they will be one flesh," (Genesis 2:24) in an affective union, each maintaining his psychology but affectively accompanying the other, and in a spiritual union. This act should also be fruitful, helping us to mature as spouses and in the procreation of children. (Fr. Miguel A. Fuentes "He made them male and female")

Without yet having the medical certainty that we would not be able to have more biological children, and moved by the thirst to fulfill this conjugal purpose, we began the procedures to adopt a child, with certain naturalness since our vocation to be adoptive parents was prior to the impossibility of having biological children. During our 5-year engagement, we had talked about the possibility of adoption. We wanted to form a family open to life on the path that God intended. With time, we understood how God prepares our soul to fulfill the vocation he chose for us, facing the crosses that this entails.

Thus we begin the new and unknown path of adoption.

## 5.- The Catholic family

The ideal of the family comes from God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that “the Christian family is a communion of persons, a reflection and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. Its procreative and educational activity is a reflection of God’s creative work” (CCC 2205). “The family is the community in which, from infancy, moral values can be learned, one begins to honor God and to use freedom well. Family life is initiation into life in society.” (CCC 2207)

The Directory of the Third Order of the Institute, in number 95, tells us that the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph must be the mirror in which all Christian families are looked. Each family bond must imitate the Holy Family, imitate the virtues of its members, with their own peculiarities, and relive their examples so that each home may re-establish that of Nazareth. Like the sacred home, we must make Christ the center of every human family. Only in this way will our homes be fully joyful and find true happiness, for they imitate the happiest marriage in the world.

The sacramental life, especially the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, wins for our families the holiness to which God calls us. The Mass attended as a family, as far as possible, with everyone present, on Sundays and Church feasts and important family dates, strengthens family life.

It is also through family prayer that we can come closer to the Holy Family and thus do good and be able to save ourselves: “Without Me you can do nothing.” (Jn 15:5)

Jesus tells us: “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Mt, 18: 19-20)

The content of that prayer is the very life of the family. The family prays it in its happiness but also in the midst of its pain.

As we told you before, Maria Clara, after the birth of our second daughter, is partially sterile. Then, as happens in these situations, they do studies, analysis, etc.

We decided to go as a family to the National Shrine of the Virgin of Luján that is 40 kilometers from our home before one of the studies which would define the possibilities that we had to continue being parents

cooperating with God in the miracle which is bringing a new child to the world. Or this would give us the occasion of anguish that is the possibility of not being able to give more life and not being able to continue the vocation that we had to form a large family. There, together with our two young daughters and in front of our Mother of Luján, Patroness of our Argentine Nation and of the Institute of the Incarnate Word, we prayed for the miracle of the solution of this problem that impeded us from having children or the resignation before what God ordered which, as we found out later, was not going to be the way of natural paternity. We asked Him to be able to accept God's will in the visible and daily signs, which was what marked the future adoptions of our children.

Living attentive to these signs allowed us to understand what God's will was in each adoption situation presented to us. In this way our large family was formed.

God's will is our sanctification. In the first letter to the Thessalonians (4:3) St. Paul calls us Christians and therefore the family, to holiness. That is why he who gives up his life for the sanctification of his spouse and his children has not lost his life, even though at times the results seem to indicate that he has. On the contrary, he has earned it because: "he has stored them up in Heaven." (Mt 6: 20)

That first movement, where God impelled our souls to go and ask his Mother for comfort and help in the time of a family need, helped us to understand that the strength and support of our family would only be found in union with Christ and his Mother, through prayer.

When we received the sad news of the scarce possibilities of continuing to have children, we began a novena to the Child Jesus of Prague which we prayed as a family, and it became permanent, lasted several years, and included several intentions that even today our older daughters remember, among which was the most important one that was "to have many little brothers." Evidently this prayer bore many fruits. It was a family prayer that God answered by giving us children and brothers and sisters to our children.

There were many occasions in family life that served to make prayer something natural and necessary for the family. It is comforting as parents to see that, in the face of some need or thanking God for a favor, a family member turns to prayer.

This showed us that we, the parents, are the main educators in prayer in teaching our children to pray, but also giving them an example in prayer.

In this way prayer becomes something that belongs to the family and produces fruits of peace, it becomes part of the daily activities of a family: blessing of the table, daily rosary, Eucharistic Adoration and Holy Mass.

It was abandonment to God's will sustained through prayer that transformed our love, which had remained sterile, into a fruitful love.

We understood that love thus understood is a divine command: Procreate and multiply. Fill the earth. (Gen 1: 28)

All love of the spouses must bear fruit; for the love that does not give it is a dead love.

The question is whether this fruit must necessarily be the life of the children.

The answer is, yes. Human life is the fruit of conjugal love. The Catechism says: "The child does not come from outside to be added to the mutual love of the spouses; it springs from the very heart of this reciprocal gift." (CCC. 2366)

Saint John Paul II says that fecundity is the fruit and sign of conjugal love. (Familiaris Consortio, 28)

Fecundity is the most sacred thing that man and woman have; it is that in which they bear a resemblance to God's creative power.

We, the parents, set the conditions for a conception to take place through the conjugal act, but each act does not necessarily lead to a new life. This mystery is an essential framework for every birth because it reminds us that we cannot plan for a child because it depends on us and on God who will create and infuse the soul.

This mystery reminds us that the child is a gift, a gift from God.

The Church, who is Pro-Life, teaches that every act of marriage must be open to the transmission of life. (CCC 2366)

This purpose and openness to life were translated, in our case, into the adoptions of our children, which, therefore, have a supernatural basis and consequences.

Psalm 26 says, "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." God never abandons us. Even less will He abandon a helpless child, a soul created by Him, a soul that has to fulfill God's plan



for it from all eternity. But the soul of a child needs parents, and that is where the adoptive parents appear, as God's collaborators for the care and formation of the child.

In this way the adoptive parent fulfills the procreative and educational mission of the biological parents which is a reflection of God's creative work and that is his mission. (CCC 2205)

This collaboration with God, this mission, has the purpose of educating the son for the salvation of his soul and in this way we understood that as adoptive parents we were fulfilling the purpose that the Church asks of us to form an "evangelizing and missionary Christian family." (CCC 2205)

Being adoptive parents required us to focus on a dimension of parenthood that is often overlooked.

This is the purely spiritual dimension of paternity, where only two souls meet. In the case of adoption, it is the only thing that unites parents and children, while in biological parenting it should be the main thing and sometimes it is not.

As the Church teaches us, special mention should be made of those who, by common agreement and well considered, accept with magnanimity a more numerous offspring in order to educate them with dignity. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50)

It is true that parents must respond responsibly, but responsibility does not mean few children, it may mean many. God does not let himself be outdone in generosity. It is true that parents of large families will not be able to store money, but if they form a truly Catholic family, striving to live the Christian virtues imitating Our Lord, they will lack nothing.

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? (*Mt 6: 26*) And isn't the family worth more, where the man created by God grows physically and spiritually?

It happened in our family that when we had 7 children we were told of a children's counselor who had found 3 sisters of 4, 2 and 1 years of age, who were sisters of two of our adopted children. I received the call when Maria Clara had just begun her Spiritual Exercises. When she came out she received the news. God had already prepared her soul for the decision she had to make because the priest during one of the sermons told the retreatants that God, in the spiritual life, asks us to take leaps.

He accompanies us in these leaps with His grace, and that what seems to us to be a leap into the void is not actually because God always sustains us. Obviously we accepted the challenge that God offered us, in spite of some contrary comments against our decision, as it also happened to us with other adoptions.

From one day to the next, we had 10 children. God took care, as always, that we would not lack anything. And by our decision, God blessed us with a daughter who is a religious, Vera Luce, the eldest of the three new sisters who had arrived and who is present here. Vera Luce thanked us on the day she made her first vows and told us, “if you hadn’t adopted me, I probably wouldn’t have discovered my vocation.” The last of this group of six sisters, who arrived some time later, being a baby of one and a half months, is also here, Juanita, who is in her last year in the Aspirancy of Argentina, as we have already told you. Another blessing from God.

Can we stop fulfilling the purpose of marriage for fear of lack of money and say to our soul “Rest, eat, drink, feast?” Should we not have the holy fear of hearing: “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you?” (Lk 12: 13-21)

God gives us a certain time to have children. We do not have to speculate, because the time that passes does not return.

The act of the parents of giving life to a child is not exhausted at the time of birth. In every moment of our life we give them life. Since we are father and mother, we must continue with this work 24 hours a day, every day that we have left of life. It is a renunciation of ourselves in order to fulfill God’s will.

While we are parenting, we must be vigilant to prevent our social life and personal interests from interrupting the time when our children need us. Giving our lives for our children consists of resigning our interests to take care of theirs. When children grow up and become independent and have their own lives, parents can once again have the time we thought we had lost. Anyway, at this stage, and with a different responsibility, but also giving our time, we can accompany our children in the upbringing of our grandchildren. And if God blesses us with a disabled child, we will have the opportunity to share the cross of Christ that our child carries for the rest of our lives.

And how did our adoptive family become numerous?

Just as we were determined to have the biological children God sent us; in that same way we lived adoption, without conditions. Our first adopted children had physical disabilities or illnesses. This made our family become a concrete option of a home for a child that, because of his health or age, was less likely to be adopted. This is how we began to receive calls from family courts and adoption agencies asking if we wanted to adopt these children or if we knew of a Catholic marriage that “belonged to our parish” and wanted to adopt a child, as a judge once asked us. Many of these calls ended up in our adoptions, which is the case of Javier, who is present here.

The integration of our adopted children with their two older sisters, our two biological daughters was immediate. The religious formation that they received from a very young age was fundamental for this to occur. As well as understanding that man’s happiness is found in doing God’s will.

St. Thomas tells us that “virtue is not reached by one who follows his passions.” That is why we must virtuously form the will and affectivity of our children. As parents we are obliged to know them deeply so as to be able to guide them in the acquisition of the necessary virtues, according to each one’s temperament.

To achieve this, a conducive family environment is essential. In our case, as usually happens in large families, the formation of our family helped a lot for the growth in the virtues of some of our children who knew how to take advantage of that environment. Life within the large family, guided by the teachings of the Church, is fertile ground where generosity and austerity grow naturally in a particular way, contrary to the individualism and consumerism that is more and more prevalent and which the world offers us. We could see this in hundreds of daily situations that happened in our family. We remember a very special situation: we had 7 children who all slept together in the same bedroom. With great effort we were able to enlarge the house and make two more bedrooms, which allowed the two older daughters who were several years apart from the rest and were attending primary school, to have their own bedroom; it was the largest and they arranged very carefully. Only 15 days after they had inaugurated it, we got a call from a Minor Advisor’s Office to let us know that the three sisters we spoke about earlier had appeared. As we told you, we adopted them and then, the new big room of our two older daughters became a room shared by the 6 younger daughters

and the two older daughters went on to occupy the smallest room of the house with complete naturalness and without any protest. They must have suffered, but they accepted it, because it was something natural, normal, within the family. Today they are 31 and 30 years old and they always remember this anecdote, which now makes them laugh.

The fact that these virtues occur in the family does not mean that all its members accept or live them. Here is a particular cross for us parents with the attitudes of some of our children who do not accept this way of life.

The world is not suited for large families. This causes discomfort and forces a constant struggle, especially of the parents, to be able to solve the problems of the functioning of the family in daily life. Often the imagination of the parents helps to solve these problems. These family discomforts make austerity a form of family life.

The fact that the large family is made up of many members means that there are also many needs. Most of the time, this moves family members to be attentive to the needs of the other members.

In our case, the needs are even greater since several of our children have a disability and need even more help from their siblings.

Another topic to which we would like to dedicate a few words on is that of the family as former of vocations to the priestly and religious life. Obviously the parents' example of marriage will help children who are called by God to marriage to discover their vocation, but we cannot neglect the vocation of those children whom God calls to the consecrated life. We must present this vocation with the naturalness that comes from being close to young people who have consecrated themselves or who are preparing for it. We are sure that our frequent visits to San Rafael, Mendoza, which is 1,000 kilometers from our home in Bella Vista, and the frequent participation of our children from an early age in the activities that the Institute proposes for young people or for the family, has been the seed of vocation for some of our children. The effort of these family trips, in those times with many little ones, bore fruit.

Once the vocation has been decided by our children, we must not hinder it with purely human reasoning. It happened to us that when María de la Ascensión de Jesus, at the age of 14, asked us to enter the Aspirancy, as we know happens many times, it seemed to us that she was still young and also a very good example for the rest of her siblings as an older sister.

We told her that she had to wait a few years, and that she could not yet enter. A few months after this decision, our daughter Maria Victoria died, who at that time was the youngest of our children, and we had the same thought: God takes the children when He wants. Why not give Him a daughter when He asks for her?

After giving that child to God and especially if it is a little one, we must accompany him materially and affectively for the rest of our lives.

Our religious children give up their lives for Christ by choosing discomfort and sacrifice. That decision often comes from our teachings throughout childhood, so that “accompany them” is only possible by being consistent with our teachings, living away from the world and the comfort it offers us. Living like them, “choosing discomfort and sacrifice” is a great support to their perseverance.

We can say, “But God didn’t ask so much of me.” God always asks us for a little more, we have to be attentive to Him and ready to give Him whatever He asks of us.

We are convinced that the Catholic family, if it decides to live the Gospel in a radical way, must accept the mission that God asks of it, even if it involves many crosses, in the same way that a consecrated person accepts the mission in the place that God disposes, even if it involves many crosses. In other words, it is only a matter of fulfilling God’s will, both for the religious and for Christian marriage.

### **7. Charity in the family**

We said earlier that as a family we must fulfill God’s will for our sanctification. Our families attain holiness if they live Charity. But not in any way, but as heroic charity lived in fullness, imitating the first Christians distinguished themselves from the rest by the love they had for one another.

In order to live this charity, each family must find the path that God marks out for them.

In our case, as we are telling you, it was to form a large family through adoption.

This decision is an act of love for God and neighbor, that is, an act of supernatural charity. Therefore adoption will have its eyes set on heaven and all the good or bad events of family life will find meaning in God, and furthermore the family bond will grow because of God’s grace.

In addition, adoption is an act of charity that is born from a cross. It is a consequence of that cross that means sterility, and that is why it is a request that God makes to us to an enormous renunciation, to all the children that we could have had.

And that decision to be adoptive parents, taken after assuming the cross, is supernatural, which will help to overcome some problems of difficult solution that may arise in the relationship with the adoptive child.

In order to make the decision to adopt, one must first mourn not being able to have biological children, with resignation to God's will. It is a cross that has to become a table of salvation. As a result of this cross we are making a difficult decision but a decision that, in God's hands, will serve for spiritual growth and will bring joy and happiness to the family.

It is very important that the adoptive parents have accepted the biological impossibility of having children and have been able to glimpse, with supernatural vision, the wonderful thing about adoption. It is very difficult to help the adoptive child to understand his abandonment, if this is not clear to us. The abandonment of their biological parents, for the adoptive child, is clearly a cross, and a great cross, much heavier than that of the adoptive parents.

Anyway, and beyond the weight and magnitude of the crosses, in both cases there is a solution for both parents and child: that they carry together the cross of Christ.

It is true that there may be cases of marriages that make the decision to adopt without being infertile. But God's call is seen most clearly in those who, with a marriage and, therefore, pro-creational vocation, are impeded in their biological paternity by causes that are alien to them.

The adoptive parents are the guarantee of a family for those children whose mothers wish to abort. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta said in Washington in 1994 to the U.S. ruling class: "The child is a gift from God to the family. I ask you please not to kill the children. I want those children: Give them to me!"

If by adopting a child we become God's collaborators by taking charge of a paternity that was abandoned, especially if the abandoned child is disabled, this collaboration is very special.

Because the pain and suffering of an innocent child due to his disability has a degree of affinity with Christ's suffering.

Father Gnochì, in his book "Pedagogy of Innocent Pain," presents his thesis that can be synthesized in the following way: "Children are capable of perceiving, with unparalleled purity, the supreme meaning of their sufferings when they join those of Jesus Christ and when they understand this deep meaning, suffering becomes invaluable to them and channels to the Church and to the whole world a river of superabundant graces." Father Gnochì also says that since children are not capable of discovering this mystery on their own, it is necessary to educate them in the sentiment of pain. It is our mission as parents to teach small children who suffer, the purpose of their sorrows and how to graft them into Christ.

Therefore, the adoption of a child with a disability gives us the privilege of receiving someone whom God has chosen to participate in the innocent suffering of his Son in the Christian economy of expiation of sins for the suffering of the innocent. And by being the adoptive parents of that child chosen by God, we can participate as parents, educating and forming him so that his suffering makes sense.

### **8. The Mother**

The secret for the Catholic and numerous family to be possible is the constant presence of the mother in the home. Mother Teresa says that women are created to love and be loved, and to be the center of the family. If there are serious problems today, it is because the woman has abandoned her place. When the son returns home, his mother is not there to welcome him.

From an early age women listen in the environments where we are, that we must be modern and very independent women, study a career, and therefore, it is a waste that once married we remain locked within 4 walls. The women who decide freely and with the support of their husbands, to give ourselves body and soul to the upbringing and education of our children, are taken as poor women, far from the world, exploited, devalued, that we do not manage, and we only leave home to go to the supermarket. If we stay at home it is to do a routine and mediocre job that anyone can do the same or better than us. What are you going to do with our lives when our children grow up and don't need us?

Many times, the family of the working woman lives on a single salary, since her salary is usually spent on travel expenses, babysitting and other things that would not be necessary if she stayed at home. In many jobs, women spend all day locked in an office doing work that involves no creativity, are routine, leave home at night and also return at night, tired, not wanting to do housework and devote time to their family.

As long as the most widespread idea in the world is to regard work in the home, child upbringing, and education as servile and devalued, many women will continue to choose work outside the home, even if this is to the detriment of their families.

But many others we have chosen as a free and responsible possibility, often with an academic background, to work in the hidden part of the home, where we are not seen or heard, raising and educating our children.

Do we want society to influence our children, or do we want our children to influence the society in which they live for the greater glory of God?

Distancing ourselves from the opinion that the world has of the housewife and mother of a family, we verify in the experience of daily life, that to take care of our house and, especially of our families, the 24 hours of the day, in spite of being many times an overwhelming work, a renunciation to their own life and becoming very stressful, it is worth it, it is a natural stress, that of life.

Just as the birth of children produces a pain full of hope, joy, love and miracle, it is the pain of life that begins, so work at home, even if it hurts and tires, builds a little piece of Heaven on the earth that is the Christian family. (Ideas taken from the book "Small Steps" by Paloma Storch)

"You women always have as your mission the guardianship of the home, the love for the sources of life, the meaning of the cradle. You are present in the mystery of life that begins, you console in the departure from death. Our technique runs the risk of becoming inhuman. Reconcile men and women with life and above all, watch, we beseech you, for the future of our species. Stop the hand of the man who in a moment of madness tried to destroy human civilization. Wives, mothers of the family, first educators of the human race, in the secret of homes. Transmit to your children the traditions of your fathers at the same time that you prepare them for the unfathomable future.



Always remember that a mother belongs, for her children, to that future that she will probably not see.” (Closing of the Second Vatican Council)

### **9. Conclusion**

We can conclude by saying that we, the parents, as leaders of the Catholic family, have the great responsibility and extraordinary mission of evangelizing culture through the defense of all human life from conception to natural death, in our own environment, the family.

We also want to say that our family life was only possible and will continue to be by God’s grace. He is the artisan of our family. Our function is to be attentive to the signs in order to be able to fulfill his will and that through our miseries, errors and mistakes the perfect and powerful hand of God without which nothing is possible becomes visible.

*English*

# Homilies

## LOVE FOR THE CHURCH

*Author: Fr. Diego Pombo, IVE.*

*Original language: italian*

*Rome (Italy) July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019*

**T**his is the theme for this first homily.  
We want nothing else than to love and serve the Church.

Our Constitutions states: «We want to love and serve Jesus Christ – His Body and His Spirit – and to help others love and serve Him. We want to love and serve the physical Body of Christ, the Eucharist, as well as His Mystical Body, the Church». (n. 7).

### **I. WE WANT TO LOVE THE CHURCH:**

#### ***1. Because she is the Mystical Body of Christ.***

St Paul clearly affirms that the Church is a body. «*Christ, says the Apostle, is the Head of the body of the Church*» (Col. I, 18).

If the Church is a body, it is necessary that she be one and undivided, that she has a Head and members: «*in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit*»(1 Cor 12: 13).

«For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another». (Rom. 12: 4-5).

«Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?» (1Cor 6:15).

As we love Christ, His one person in two natures, divine and human, we also love Christ really present in the Eucharist, and we also love Him in His Mystical Body that is the Church.

## **2. Because she is our Mother**

**a.** She gave birth to us: *She gave birth to us in the supernatural life through Baptism. With the sacrament of Baptism we are regenerated as God's children, configured to Christ and incorporated into the Church.*

**b.** She accompanies our growth and our life until the end: *by transmitting the Word of God and administering the Sacraments. The Church accompanies us and assists us as a mother from birth to death.*

Through the waters of Baptism those who are born into this world dead in sin are not only born again and made members of the Church, but are also stamped with a spiritual seal. In this way they become able and fit to receive the other Sacraments. By the chrism of Confirmation, the faithful are given added strength to protect and defend the Church, their Mother, and the faith She has given them. In the Sacrament of Penance a saving medicine is offered for the members of the Church who have fallen into sin, not only to provide for their own health, but to remove all danger of contagion from other members of the Mystical Body, or rather to offer them an incentive and the example to practice virtues. But this is not all. In the Holy Eucharist the faithful are nourished and strengthened at the same divine banquet. By the ineffable bond they are united with each other and with the Divine Head of the whole Body. Lastly, like a devoted mother, the Church is at the bedside of those who are sick unto death. And when it be God's will She may restore health to the mortal body by the holy anointing. Nevertheless She administers spiritual medicine to the wounded soul and sends new citizens to heaven - to be her new advocates - who will enjoy forever the happiness of God. (Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici corporis*).

## **3. Because She is Holy**

She must be loved for She is worthy of our love, because goodness drives us to love Her, and this goodness makes the Church holy.

**She is holy by virtue of her divine origin and institution.** Christ, who instituted the Church, is holy, meriting for her with the sacrifice of the Cross the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the inexhaustible source of the Church's holiness, as He is the beginning and foundation of Her unity.

**She is holy for Her end:** the glory of God and the salvation of men.

**She is a holy for the means employed for this purpose:** They are: Christ's teachings, summarized in the revelation of God's love for us and in the double commandment of charity; the seven sacraments; and worship (the liturgy), especially the Eucharist; the life of prayer.

If She is Holy, She must produce saints. In fact we see that many members of the Church are saints. Many of Her members possess at least *ordinary holiness* that is derived from the state of sanctifying grace in which they live. But the number of those who present the signs of *holiness to a heroic degree* is ever greater. (JP II Aud.gral. 3-7-91)

## II. WE WANT TO DEFEND THE CHURCH

We must not be naive in front of those who try to discredit and defame the Church.

Saint Paul VI said after the Second Vatican Council.

A spirit of corrosive criticism has become fashionable in some sectors of Catholic life: there are, for example, magazines and newspapers that seem to have no other function than to report unpleasant information about facts and people in the ecclesiastical sphere; not rarely present them in a unilateral and perhaps a little altered and dramatized way to make them interesting, and thus accustom their readers not to an objective and serene judgment, but to a negative suspicion, to a systematic distrust, to a uncaring preconceived towards people, institutions, ecclesiastical activities; (..) it is the complacency of the denunciation or the contention that guide certain publicists, sowing restlessness and indocility in the souls of so many good Catholics. (Paul VI, Aud. Gral Wednesday, 18 September 1968).

We must have a vision of faith that goes beyond the earthly face of the Church.

Paul VI said: the time has come to love the Church with a strong and new heart.

The difficulty to overcome is that of our spiritual short-sightedness, which blocks the gaze at the human, historical, visible aspect of the Church, and does not see the mystery of Christ's presence. This short-sightedness re-claims and hides the mystery of Christ's presence and profound intelligence of the Church's mystical reality from profane eye not illuminated by faith. This outward gaze sees the Church composed of imperfect men and temporal and limited institutions. Meanwhile they would like to see all Her spirituality and perfection idealized according to an arbitrarily conceived image. The material reality of the Church, which appears in the context of common experience, seems to deny the beauty and sanctity that it contains for divine charism. But it is precisely at this point that love is proved. If our duty is the love of neighbor, his appearance does not matter. And if love is such, when the appearance is more bleak and painful, we must remember that the Church is also neighbor. Indeed She is our neighbor par excellence, composed as She is by "brothers of faith" (Gal. 6: 10), to which the preference of our eager love is due. So the defects and the sickness of the men of the Church should enflame charity so as to be stronger and more solicitous. This charity belongs to those members of the Church who want to be living, healthy, and patient. This is what good children do, as well as the saints. (Paul VI, Aud. Gral Wednesday, 18 September, 1968).

## THE EXTENT OF THE INCARNATION

*Author: Fr. Emilio Rossi, IVE.*

*Original language: portuguese*

*Rome (Italy) July 31<sup>th</sup> 2019*

*Verbum caro factum est*  
*“And the Word became flesh”*  
*(Jn. 1: 14)*

**T**he Incarnation of the Word in the womb of Mary announces the Eucharist to us. This beautiful sun of the souls, which vivifies and regenerates them, rises in Nazareth and comes at noon in the Eucharist, which will be the summit of God’s love on earth. The grain of divine wheat was sown in the chaste womb of Mary. It will germinate and mature, and it will be grinded to make the Eucharistic bread. In the divine plan, the incarnation with the Eucharist are so united that in words of St. John, it could be translated as follows: The Word became bread: Verbum caro, Verbum panis.

Based on the text of Saint Peter Julian Eymard (SPJEY), in this solemnity of ours I would like to meditate on the Incarnation, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Eucharist, and us.

All the circumstances of the mystery of the incarnation were glorious for Mary; everything is also glorious for us in the Communion, which makes us share in the honor and glory of the Blessed Virgin.

The prologue of the mystery of the incarnation took place between the angel and the Blessed Virgin. The angel announces the mystery and asks for the consent of Mary. We, as members of the Incarnate Word family, meditate intensely on this episode of our salvation.

The angel who calls us to Communion is the priest; it is the Church through her instrument the priest. What a mystery for us! The Church is a Queen and the angels serve her; she is a wife, and therefore not only announces the sacramental Word, but also She takes Him and gives Him to us. As SPJEY wonderfully says: *Mary did not believe what the angel told her, except in view of the prodigy that he announced to her.* As for us, we can believe in the Church, in her word. The Church is our Mother and we are her children, and no one says to a mother, is this really bread? Aren't you giving me a stone instead of bread? The Church speaks, and we believe in her word. The announcement of Communion is therefore glorious for us, just as it was glorious for Mary in the incarnation.

The Incarnation supposes as a condition the virginity of Mary. God wanted nothing less than a virgin mother, and waited four thousand years for this most pure tabernacle to be prepared for him. The Holy Spirit then descends upon Mary and preserves her virginity, fecundating her: and then, the mystery is fulfilled.

As for us, God asks us for purity of heart, that purity that is the life of our soul. Since we don't have virtues worthy of Him, (as Our Lady had in relation to the Incarnation), He wants us to have at least a deep respect and a sincere humility. "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you; but depart from me, for I am a poor sinner. This feeling supply what we lack; With this our God is satisfied; as soon as we have this the rest He will give us when He comes, in the communion, as an incarnation.

We only need to have faith, humility and confidence, and leave the rest to Jesus Christ.

The angel, as proof of his mission, announced to Mary the prodigy of Elizabeth's fecundity: "Everything is possible for God," he added. The soul, sterile as Elizabeth, will also become fertile. For this we must receive the food that communicates to us the fruitfulness. The Eucharist will produce in us more fruits one day, for the glory of God, than we could in an entire life without it, as SPJEY enthusiastically expressed to the adorers of the Blessed Sacrament.

In the midst of all these magnificence that the angel unfolds before her eyes, Mary sees only her littleness, her own nothingness. Here we have our model. Poor creatures, unworthy of God's gaze... But since He deigns to call us and choose us, let's say with Mary: FIAT, let it be done unto me according to thy word.



Something of the mystery that takes place in Mary in the incarnation also happens to us at the moment of Communion. The Eucharist must really be an extension of the incarnation, a spreading the fire of his love, whose focus is on the most holy Trinity. In Mary the Word unites with human nature; through the Eucharist He unites Himself with all men.

Listen to what SPJEY says:

In order to redeem us, it was enough that the Word united itself numerically with a single human being; He only wanted to suffer and atone for sins in his body and soul dying in the name of all among inexpressible tortures. But when this humanity was crushed, resulting in the source of all justification, Jesus Christ made himself a sacrament, which he offers to all, so that all may share in the merits and glory of the body He took in Mary. Do we understand now that the Eucharist is an extension of the Incarnation? And now you only have to receive it.

With the boldness that only saints have, SPJEY goes as far as to say: Oh, marvel! *When receiving communion, we received more than Mary received in the incarnation, for Mary carried in her womb only the sensible body of the Word. And we receive the impassible and celestial body. Mary carried the man of sorrows while we possessed the Son of God crowned with glory. And still we receive Him in a more comforting way; every day. Mary realized that the time of carrying Him in her chaste womb was shortening, and after nine months she had to separate herself from this Divine weight. On the contrary, this fortune is renewed for us every day, and until the end of our life we can receive and carry the sacramental Word.*

Finally, and as a last point of reflection, we can say that: the Holy Spirit, in forming in Mary the most holy humanity of the Word, endowed his august spouse with the most precious gifts: the Word brought her his glory and increased all her virtues to a unprecedented degree. That is what happens to us. Every time, that this extension of incarnation, the communion, the Holy Eucharist comes to us, our Lord with all his graces and all his gifts enriches us unceasingly without ever getting tired; like another Sun, that every day returns with its beautiful splendor. As if it was the only or the last time.

*Verbum caro factum est.* The Word became flesh: that is the glory of Mary. The Word became Eucharistic bread: here is our glory. Our Lord gave himself once to the satisfaction of his love; he returns to us without ceasing to satiate his new and infinite ardor. Little is for His heart the alms of gratitude. He himself makes himself a gift of bread, and the Church distributes it to us. Could God do more? Could He go further? Could he draw us nearer to his mother, not in dignity or in virtue, but in the outpouring of his love? The Blessed Virgin knew how to thank the graces she received from God.

By a grace of God we are in a very close to the mystery of the incarnation and at the same time our founder has taught us a deep love for the Eucharist; Let us love, therefore, as she did, since we have a part in her honor.

## SEE OUR LADY AS JESUS DID AND LOVE HER

*Author: Fr Ricardo Clarey, IVE.*

*Original language: italian*

*Rome (Italy) August 1<sup>st</sup> 2019*

**H**ow can we learn to love Our Lady better? The Gospel tells us that before Jesus said to Saint John - and through him to all of us - *Behold your mother* (Jn. 19:27), the Lord himself did one thing: *he saw his Mother* (Jn 19:26). Today we repeat this action of our Crucified Lord: that is, to look at Our Lady with Jesus' eyes, in order to discover how the Lord looked at his Mother and see what this deep gaze caused in him.

### **1. WHAT DO THE EYES OF JESUS SEE IN MARY?**

#### *a. Her beauty*

The beauty of Our Lady is evident. It is not at all ridiculous to think that God has delicately and perfectly made the most holy body in which the Lamb had to be formed for the sacrifice. A body which had to become the Temple of the Most Holy Trinity, in which there would be no traces of original sin. And this incomparable beauty was certainly observed by His Son, filling Him with admiration and respect. But Jesus' gaze did not stop at this marvelous beauty but penetrated into the His Mother's soul, discovering a much deeper and hidden beauty: the magnificent beauty of grace and of the virtues which embellished Mary's heart. In fact, the angel in the Annunciation had greeted Mary as *full of grace*, as a proper name, a nickname, something exclusive to her.

And this close union with God grew day by day, minute by minute, throughout her life, especially in the redemption's fundamental moments. How dazzling was the beauty of Our Lady's soul in Jesus' eyes!

And also her virtues: **faith**, through which she undoubtedly believed everything that God had revealed; **hope**, by which she trusted she would reach eternal life thanks to mercy and divine power; **charity**, by which she loved God with all her Immaculate Heart and loved her neighbor for God. This love was neither extinguished by the ingratitude that surrounded her, nor by the betrayal and cowardice of those who were closer to her, nor by the constant hatred of enemies. Jesus also saw her humble abasement, shining purity and strong fortitude, along with all her other virtues.

#### *b. Her goodness*

Many people witnessed this exceptional woman's goodness; they saw her kindness, her concern for helping the needy, her industriousness even in the midst of poverty. But Jesus' gaze went further, and He clearly observed the inner goodness of his Mother, that is, her constant disposition to do well, always ready to put into practice what God wanted from her, her simplicity and purity of intention. Jesus saw how Mary always wanted to God's will for her which was manifest in her conscience, without double intentions, hidden interests, or asking for reasons.

#### *c. Her pain*

Another sublime reality that Jesus' eyes discovered in the soul of Our Lady was the suffering that she had to endure so many times. Some pains were certainly visible to those around her: the fear of the flight into Egypt and the insecurity of their status as foreigners, then the death of Joseph, the concern for the Pharisees' intrigues against Jesus, etc. But the Jesus' eyes reached the most intimate and intense pain in the depths of her soul. Jesus saw the Heart of His Mother. He saw her solitude at foot of the cross, precisely she who always had been beside the needy. He saw her sadness before men's sin and before her separation with her Son. Jesus remembered the sad farewell with his Mother after the Last Supper, before going to Gethsemane, and the distressing reencounter in the way of the cross, as He carried the cross. And now, both of them were slowly suffering the long three hours of Calvary...

## 2. WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS PRODUCE IN CHRIST?

Without a doubt, the Redeemer's Heart could not remain indifferent when penetrating with such clarity and lucidity into His Mother's soul which He know so deeply. He could not remain indifferent before such beauty, goodness, such an immense suffering. And therefore, the first reaction, is that of an **ardent love for his Mother**. How could Jesus not love her intensely when she had not reserved anything for herself and had not hidden anything from her Son? Along with this, another reaction in Jesus' Heart was an **enormous joy and consolation**. For He sees that his efforts and pains in the Passion are not in vain in Mary, rather, she takes advantage of every drop of blood that falls from the cross. He sees that He can fully trust her, that she will never disappoint Him, and that she is the only one who understands what is happening. And therefore it is this ardent love and this consolation that causes Him to look inwardly at his Mother, and brings forth an **irresistible desire to reward her** for so much fidelity and so much selfless love. And therefore the Lord wants to repay Mary for her concern for Him and for all men by giving her the title of Queen of Heaven and Administrator of God's Mercy. In this desire to reward her, the Divine Will ensures Mary that she is always more known and loved, as the book of Proverbs says: *Her children rise up and call her blessed* (31.28).

## 3. ALSO IN US

Jesus communicated to us all He heard from the Father (cf. Jn. 15:15) and promised us the Holy Spirit to teach us those things that we could not yet receive. In the same way, He also wants to communicate his penetrating gaze and his profound knowledge of Mary's soul. He wants that we might be able to have the same sentiments that flowed in His Sacred Heart when contemplating the beauty, the goodness, and the suffering that are hidden in the most holy soul of Our Lady. In this way we can learn to love Our Lady as God Himself wants her to be loved.

May the Queen of Heaven, herself, obtain this for our eternal salvation.

*English*

## HOLY MASS IN ST. PETER'S IN THE VATICAN

*To be a lay person of the IVE is to be someone who  
truly loves and serves the Church*

*Author: Fr. Gustavo Nieto, IVE.*

*Original language: spanish*

*Rome (Italy) August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019*

**W**e are gathered here today around the altar raised over the very place which treasures the remains of the Prince of the Apostles, as members of a single Religious Family united in the same love of God and His Church.

A love in which we desire to stand out in order to clearly manifest with the witness of our lives that for us love for the Incarnate Word and for His Church are identified. For the Mystical Body of Christ is Jesus Christ himself “continued, diffused and communicated.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we do not speak of two distinct loves or services rather our love and service of Jesus Christ identifies with our love and service of the Church.

And in the same way that *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*<sup>2</sup> so too we “want to love and serve and help others love and serve Jesus Christ... the physical Body of Christ in the Eucharist, as well as His Mystical Body, the Church.”<sup>3</sup>

However, “Jesus is loved and served on the Cross and crucified with Him, not by any other way.”<sup>4</sup> And we can say the same in respect to the Church as Mystical Body of Christ: The Church is loved and served on the Cross and crucified with Her, not by any other way.

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1 *Directory of Spirituality*, 227.

2 Eph. 5:25.

3 Cf. *Constitutions*, 7.

4 Cf. *Directory of Spirituality*, 143.

This has practical consequences in our lives as we see in the life and teachings of Saint Peter the Apostle himself, in his letters.

Simon, son of Jonah, after his confession of Christ as *the Son of the living God* was scandalized by the cross implied in following Christ. As soon as our Lord said to them that He was going to have to suffer very much and be condemned to death, Peter tried to impede Him, to distance Him from the cross saying: *God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.*<sup>5</sup> To which the Incarnate Word responded calling him *Satan*.<sup>6</sup> For it will always be the devil's concern to distance us from the cross.

Peter was scandalized by the cross. As many Christians are today who abandon the Church with the excuse that "they will never amount to anything with a cross on their shoulders." And many others who keep their faith behind closed doors because of the commitment that friendship with Christ demands.

Nevertheless, Peter learned the lesson and we must also learn it ourselves. For this reason, he warns in his letter: *Resist, firm in your faith*<sup>7</sup>; arm yourselves also with the same disposition that Christ had to suffer.<sup>8</sup> *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*<sup>9</sup> He clearly counsels us to not be ashamed to be Christians and to suffer something for Christ<sup>10</sup>; that is to say, that we should not be ashamed to carry our cross high.

For this reason, the mission of the laity of the Incarnate Word cannot be reduced to a pure and simple example of honesty, competence and fidelity to our duties. All of this is assumed. Rather, "an authentic testimony of Christian life,"<sup>11</sup> a bold and firm testimony of Christ primarily by the radiance of faith, hope, and charity should moreover, stand out in you.<sup>12</sup>

Of you, the Church and the Institute itself expect "a *living and radiant* testimony of Christ living in His Church. They expect that you speak and work *with your example*, by the *effective* practice of the Christian virtues which should characterize you among others, as men and women with their heart always set on Jesus and Mary.

5 Mt. 16:22.

6 Mt. 16:23.

7 1 Pt. 5:9.

8 1 Pt. 4:1.

9 1 Pt. 4:10.

10 1 Pt. 4:16.

11 *Directory of the Third Order, 142.*

12 Cf. *Ibidem*.



They expect that you strive to fulfill your domestic, social and professional activity with *Christian magnanimity*<sup>13</sup>.

To be a lay person of the IVE is to be someone who truly loves and serves the Church, working with intensity for their personal sanctification, fighting to be ‘another Christ.’<sup>14</sup> This translates into following Christ in poverty, without being dismayed under privation nor being arrogant in wealth; imitating Christ’s humility without aspiring to vainglory, but trying in everything to please God before pleasing men, always disposed to leave all things for Christ; and even suffering persecution for the sake of righteousness, always remembering the words of Our Lord: *If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*<sup>15</sup> This will always be the best service that you can offer to the Church. Because –my beloved brothers– words move but examples impel<sup>16</sup>; as Saint Peter himself experienced and died crucified head down in this exact place.

It is true that these are not easy times to live and practice our faith. It is not easy for parents to educate their children in a Christian way in a world that seeks to eradicate God. It is not easy for the youth to live chastely in a world that preaches a sexual life without responsibility. It is not easy for professionals who fight for the primacy of Christ in a society when their colleges think that fraud is part of business and greed as the motor of society. Nevertheless, that which is proper to our laity is to bear witness to Christ in all circumstances and situations: testimony that must be free of all fear. Do not be surprised *that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as if something strange were happening to you,*<sup>17</sup> as Peter the Apostle warns in his first letter.

Note that “one of the most interesting observations He made about His Body was that it would be hated by the world, as He was. Anything worldly, the world loves. But what is Divine, the world hates... *but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you.*<sup>18</sup>”<sup>19</sup>

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13 Cf. *Ibidem*.

14 Cf. *Directory of the Third Order*, 8.

15 Mt. 16:24.

16 Cf. *Directory of the Third Order*,

17 1 Pt. 4:12.

18 Jn. 15:19.

19 Cf. VEN. ARCHBISHOP FULTON SHEEN, *The Rock Plunged Into Eternity*, Ch. 3, Radio Message delivered January 15, 1950.

In this, the Prince of the Apostles says, we must rejoice: *But rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you*<sup>20</sup>. Observe that the apostle mentions sufferings, insults... all this is part of the plan.

This is why Saint Peter tells us again today, with all the power of the divine truth that subsists in his word: *Now who is going to harm you if you are enthusiastic for what is good? But even if you should suffer because of righteousness, blessed are you. Do not be afraid or terrified with fear of them, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame **your good conduct in Christ** may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil*<sup>21</sup>

We have been given a new birth for an imperishable inheritance, undefiled, unfading, that is kept for us in heaven.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, with our gaze fixed on Christ we must throw ourselves into the heroic mission of transforming the world for Christ.

\* \* \* \*

**D**ear All: “The law of the Body is the law of the Head: Crucifixion and an Empty Tomb. [...] Now Christianity is suffering an attack. That means that *these are wonderful days in which to be alive*. It is easy to float downstream. Dead bodies float downstream. It takes live bodies to resist the current. [...] The true catholic life is not made of routine acts of piety, but by a crisis which presents us with a great election [...] *For this reason these are wonderful days in which to be alive*. We can make decisions which will resonate in eternity.”<sup>23</sup>

We commend ourselves to Mary Mother of the Church and the prayers of Saint Peter the Apostle, on whose tomb we celebrate the Holy Mass.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Pt. 4:13-14.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Pt. 3:13-17.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. 1 Pt. 1:4.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. VEN. ARCHBISHOP FULTON SHEEN, *Those Mysterious Priests*, Ch. 10.

## CONCLUDING HOLY MASS

*What will be of the Church in the future, depends on  
your free collaboration with the grace of God.*

*Author: Fr. Gustavo Nieto, IVE.*

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*Mt 13:54-58*

**[Introduction]** Arriving to the end of these days of much grace in this first international meeting of the members of the Third Order and friends of the Institute, we want to offer this Holy Mass in thanksgiving to the Incarnate Word who has been pleased to enrich our Religious Family with each one of you. Everyone, you and us, although coming from very diverse countries and cultures, is indissolubly united as “a single Family, united by the same faith, the same ends, the same mission, the same charism, and the same spirit.”<sup>1</sup> It is precisely in this that we find the great responsibility of working synergistically in the beautiful mission of evangelizing the culture, which God has deigned to entrust to us. *We are in this together!*

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to profoundly live out the ‘spirit of family’, spiritual and pastoral unity among us all so that we collaborate together in the great enterprise of evangelization; as I know it already happens in our missions in the world. For this reason, I want to personally thank you very much. Know that the fact that you, and so many others who were not able to come, are part of our Religious Family is a blessing for us and truly an honor.

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<sup>1</sup> *Directory of the Third Order*, 5.

Yet, in addition to this valuable help, a loving and notably faithful adherence to the charism and proper end of our Institute are asked of you.<sup>2</sup> Belonging to the Institute as Tertiaries and friends further implies what we call the non-negotiable elements attached to the charism, which are like emblems that must stand out in the life and works of all those who seek to identify themselves with us, wherever they may be.

By saying non-negotiable, we mean that they are essentially integral to our charism, to our spirituality, to our reason of being. In such a way that if we were to disregard them, we would be renouncing the mission which has been entrusted to us, deforming our identity and, most likely, subjecting ourselves to the *spirit of the world*,<sup>3</sup> betraying the precious friendship to which Christ has called us.

On the other hand, if these elements are developed in their just measure they will continue to be a font of great supernatural fruitfulness for our Religious Family; giving our mission in the Church a strong, penetrating and immeasurable efficacy.

*a.* The first of these “is a **marked Eucharistic devotion**”<sup>4</sup> as you have all already experienced in your respective places. The Eucharist, where Christ is truly and sacramentally present, must always be the center of our spiritual and apostolic life. Each one of you must be an adorer of Christ in the Eucharist as well as a promoter of Eucharistic adoration and of the Holy Mass. Precisely because our work must be directed to bringing souls to Him.

Moreover, our laity must strive to participate ever more perfectly in the Mass, that is: more fully, more actively, more consciously. It must be a pious participation that lifts the soul to God; it must be with all our soul, with all our being.<sup>5</sup>

*b.* Another characteristic element is having a **serious spirituality** (not sentimental), as seen, for example, in the fact that we practice the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.<sup>6</sup>

The Church strongly recommends the practice of these exercises to all Christians so as to order their lives according to the will of God:

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Directory of the Third Order*, 290.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 2:12.

<sup>4</sup> *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. FR. CARLOS BUELA, IVE, *Ars Participandi*, Ch. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 5.

become apostles of the Spiritual Exercises! inviting others to make them, collaborating in these exercises in the manner possible and as your obligations permit and praying for their fruits.

A serious spirituality also manifests itself in that we form ourselves according to the doctrine of the great masters of the spiritual life and not in empty spiritualities, which are attractive only because they are in fashion. For this reason, it is convenient (and very much so!) to take advantage to form yourselves well and to know that there is no better school than the school of the Cross.

c. The third non-negotiable element attached to the charism is a **providential view** of life. This is nothing other than living the axiom of Saint Paul: *all things work for the good for those who love God.*<sup>7</sup> It is knowing how to say with Saint Peter Julian Eymard (and being convinced of it): “God loves me and arranges all my ways according to His Goodness ... it is the same if it is in joy or sorrow, in consolations or desolations, in happy success or failure in a work, in health or illness. Because Divine Providence is the one who directs my boat, my duty is to *entrust myself* to the Divine Pilot who will safely lead me to the port of the heavenly homeland.”<sup>8</sup> With this providential vision we must know how to recognize and accept God’s merciful plans for each one of us and for our beloved family.

d. The two following elements refer to the formation which we desire for you and which should distinguish you from others: The first is “**docility to the living Magisterium** of the Church”<sup>9</sup> of all time. The *Directory of the Third Order* paternally reminds you that you have the “responsibility to confess the Catholic faith, accepting and proclaiming the truth about Christ, about the Church and about man in obedience to the Magisterium of the Church, which authentically interprets it... and giving testimony of a firm and determined communion in filial relationship with the Pope, perpetual and visible center of unity of the universal Church.”<sup>10</sup>

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7 Rm. 8:28.

8 Cf. *Obras Eucharisticas*, IV Series, Spiritual Exercises before the Blessed Sacrament, fourth day.

9 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 5.

10 *Directory of the Third Order*, 70.

e. Another other element is the central importance that **Saint Thomas Aquinas** has in our formation and within this framework, the best Thomists, like Fr. Cornelio Fabro: “For the good of the person is to be in the Truth and to *carry out* the Truth.”<sup>11</sup> May our laity be far from superficiality, vain curiosity, encyclopedism, and vain study which seeks extension and not for depth.<sup>12</sup> You should be men and women who know how to be at par with events, who know how to judge temporal realities according to supernatural truths. It’s easy to float downstream, but only those who are well in the truth and sound doctrine can resist the current.

In this sense, you must aim to form your conscience, pure, without falsehood or justifications. And to be faithful to it, for by it the voice of God is made manifest, always acting with right intention and without duplicity or ambiguity.

f. In regard to the apostolate, there are various emblems which must shine forth in the soul and work of our laity. One of these we call “**biting reality**”: this is nothing other than facing reality with a supernatural view in order to transform it according to the spirit of the Incarnate Word and according to the way of the Incarnation, that is: assuming the cultures which must evangelized.<sup>13</sup> Note that we take on evangelization without diluting faith in what is rational, without making what is sacred, profane, without falling into insubstantial spiritualities. What we seek is that the Gospel form the cultures of man.<sup>14</sup> For this “a renewal of life moved by grace”<sup>15</sup> is necessary. Contrary to others who “cling to the current culture, refusing to pervade it with the Gospel.”<sup>16</sup>

g. Another element regarding apostolate is: **An apostolic and missionary creativity**.<sup>17</sup> Consider this: “[Apostolic] zeal is born of love” ... It is impossible to love God without feeling within oneself the ardent flame of the apostolate. Love of God that remains indifferent before apostolic concerns, is completely false and illusory.<sup>18</sup> Charity is creative, diffusive and

11 *Directory of the Third Order*, 192; *op. cit.* SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Address of John Paul II to the Participants in the International Congress of Moral Theology, April 10, 1986*, 1: *Teachings IX*, 1 (1986), 970.

12 *Directory of the Third Order*, 246.

13 Cf. *Directory of Consecrated Life*, 339.

14 Cf. *Directory of Spirituality*, 29.

15 *Directory of Consecrated Life*, 339.

16 Cf. *Directory of Spirituality*, 29.

17 *Notes from the V General Chapter*, 5.

18 Cf. *Directory of Third Order*, 132.

does not waste any opportunity, nor does it hold back its effort, to do good. That is why I want to personally invite all of you to intensely and creatively engage in the missionary adventure. May no one go back home without the resolution to do something more for the mission.

**h.** Another element that characterizes us is choosing the **outposts** of the mission. For, in imitation of the Incarnate Word, it is our concern to work in the most difficult places (where no one wants to go).<sup>19</sup> That is why it is important to support our missionaries with our prayers, and in the manner possible with material help as well. Some are in places of war, others where the Church is greatly persecuted... it is very important to pray for them as members of the same family.

Moreover: I want to challenge you, especially the youth of the Voces Verbi who are present here today, that “by their voice the very Word of God may speak, may they be the living sound of the Church in the most difficult and remote places”<sup>20</sup> and that they seriously consider to voluntarily and freely commit themselves to following Christ more closely and with greater freedom, in the mission. How much help would an extra pair of hands give in many of our missions!

How many of the 10 homes of mercy of our Institute would benefit from generous youth who would show the true compassion of Christ toward their brother who suffers in body and soul! “The **works of mercy**, above all with the handicapped” are one of the great fields of apostolate where the help of the members of the Third Order has been fundamental and continues to be necessary. That is why I want to publicly express my deepest gratitude to those who selflessly help, assist, and provide for us in this apostolate which is so important to us.

**i.** There is also another element that in a way is present in all that we have said up to now, and that is the spirit of **joy** which must reign in us: Joy is something that has characterized our way of living from the very beginning and perhaps is what has drawn so many of you. In the same way, each of the tertiaries of the IVE must be an instrument that transmits joy to others. In a special way, “parents in the Third Order have the principal concern that their children live and grow in an authentically Christian environment, where joy and sound leisure flourish.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Directory of Spirituality*, 86.

<sup>20</sup> *Directory of Third Order*, 169.

<sup>21</sup> *Directory of Third Order*, 240.

j. Finally, for it could not be in any other way, we are marian. “**Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary** is proper to our charism, not only by the fourth vow, but also by the presence of the Virgin Mary in all our activities, from the moment in which we renew our consecration in every Mass, to the closing of our feasts with a song to Our Lady.”<sup>22</sup> You cannot be of the Incarnate Word and not love Mary. How delighted would Christ be if upon returning to your countries you would prepare to consecrate yourselves to Our Lady, continue to pray the Rosary daily, and if you return as promoters of the Consecration to Jesus through Mary.

[**Conclusion**] Dear all, this is my final message, I ask that you take it with you and share it in your homes as a family, at school and at work with your friends: God has a plan for the Church, but He needs you in order to carry it out. What will be of the Church in the future, depends on your free collaboration with the grace of God. Know that the Incarnate Word counts on you to establish the standard of his cross throughout the whole world. Therefore, as Saint Peter said: *grow in grace and in the knowledge of Our Lord.*<sup>23</sup>

Do not be afraid when love becomes demanding, when love of Christ requires sacrifice. The cross is the tree of life and the singular source of true peace and joy.

May the Mother of the Incarnate Word, and our Mother, model of complete surrender to the Lord and his mission, accompany you, make every cross sweet and in every situation in life grant you that unalterable peace and joy that only God can give. May the Virgin Mary bless and protect you and your families always.

Thank you for everything!

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<sup>22</sup> Notes from the V General chapter, 5.

<sup>23</sup> 2 Pe 3:18.