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Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality

ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS THE CONGREGATION OF THE PASSION OF JESUS – WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT WANTS TO DO

“Accounts” sent to friends for the purpose
of making the Congregation known

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The “1768 Account” was printed in 1958 in the critical edition of texts of the Passionist Rules and Constitutions prepared by Fabiano Giorgini, C.P. (*Regulae et Constitutiones C.P. Editio critica textuum curante Fabiano Giorgini, Romae 1958, pp. 171-173*).

A large section of the “1747 Account” was printed in: F. Giorgini, “L’educazione dei chierici nella Congregazione della Passione,” *Gioventu Passionista*, S. Gabriele 1958, vol. II, pp. 70-72.

Cum permissu:
Paul M. Boyle, C.P., Sup. Gen.

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INTRODUCTION

St. Paul of the Cross wrote various *accounts* (“Notizie”) to make the Congregation known in its reality and to present an objective picture of it, especially to those who could influence young people in their vocational orientation. After the first approval of the Rule in 1741, he sent various *accounts* in the form of a letter to old acquaintances, for example, to Canon Paul Polycarp Cerruti of Alexandria (1), and to a bishop (2). Other letters indicate the qualities looked for in postulants and were written both to such friends and, like that more detailed one of August 20, 1752 (3), to his Religious. These letters can also be considered “accounts” of the Congregation because they give a picture of what it wants to be and to do, inside and outside.

The longest and best written *accounts* are those of 1747 and 1768. These summarize the substance of the 1746 Rule and present the life and purpose of the Congregation. They emphasize the evangelical foundation which demands and sustains the unity of the contemplative-apostolic life of the Passionist - “mindful” of the Passion of Jesus which he relives in himself through prayer and a cherished penance, but also totally committed to help his brother and sisters who are “unmindful”; “forgetful” of the Passion of Jesus and consequently live either a tepid or evil existence.

In reading these *accounts*, pay particular attention to the following points:

1. *God is the Unique Origin of the Congregation.* With unequivocal clarity and in many ways, St. Paul attributes the foundation of the Congregation solely to the mercy of God Who has compassion on a world immersed in sin. That is because it has forgotten God’s love as manifested in such an utterly real way in the Passion of His Son, Jesus. Through this new Congregation God also wants to help this world recover the “memory,” the “remembrance” of the Passion of Jesus, “whose very loving attraction even the hardest heart cannot resist” (4). Since God is the author of the Congregation, it can hope to develop and work fruitfully in the Church.

2: *The sole reason why the Congregation was born in the Church was to promote the life-giving memory of the Passion of Jesus in the people of God.*

At the beginning and throughout the two accounts, St. Paul expresses plainly and insistently this reason for existence which justifies the approbation of the Pope and the desire to have good members. He reminds us that we make a specific vow to instill “a continuous remembrance of the Crucified” (5) in human minds and hearts by every means, and that this specific apostolic effort qualifies the Congregation and guarantees not only “wonderful conversions of sinners” but also the introduction of so many people, even though of little education, to Christian perfection (6).

3. *The life of the Passionist Religious is similar to the life of the Apostles.* Therefore, these are genuine evangelical workers, apostolic ministers who take inspiration for their life from the teachings Jesus gave to the disciples and apostles before sending them out on mission (7). From this awareness of continuing the life of the apostles, the Passionist is moved to follow Christ in poverty and in solitude. He is moved to “go out from” and return to solitude at the feet of Jesus Crucified, “our true Good,” in order to understand the love of God better, He is moved to let himself be penetrated by it and to become better able to take to heart the encounter of the people with Christ, committing himself to use every means suggested by a “well-ordered charity” (8) and remembering that a certain kind of demon is cast out only by prayer and fasting (9).

4. *The Religious, united by deep fraternal charity, live in joy and peace.* St. Paul emphasizes the discretion of the Passionist life even though it appears and is austere, a discretion which enables both the weak and the strong to live and to love the penitential life of the Congregation with joy and constancy. “This way of life seems so gentle to the members of this poor Congregation that the Superiors must be very vigilant” to temper their fervor (10). Indeed they will say that everything has been removed which might impede a perfect fraternal charity... it seems to be a paradise on earth because of the peace, the harmony, the tranquillity, the union, very much like that in which the early Christians lived, whose fervor we intend to see renewed in this infant Congregation” (11).

5. *The Passionist Religious help the Church by a specific mission.* The continuation of the life of the apostles by a contemplative-apostolic way of life firmly centered on the *memory* of the Passion of Jesus is the effective contribution which Passionists offer the Church. The awareness and certainty of contributing something qualitatively effective in the Church permeates these *accounts* like the other letters of St. Paul of the Cross. Hence the courage to face the toils and uncertainties of the development of the Institute, and of the apostolic work in that social and religious climate. “The Religious, totally detached from temporal things, with hearts full of God’s love, can undertake great things for the glory of God and for the defense of Holy Church, even at the cost of their own lives” (12).

6. *The Religious also prepare themselves by education for their apostolic commitment.* A serious preparation is made before priestly ordination in appropriate retreats and is also continued in a modified way for the rest of their lives. The awareness of “such a noble ministry” as the apostolic itinerant preaching and seeking the most opportune ways to proclaim the wisdom of the cross demands this study which together with prayer and penitential poverty form the *apostolic worker*.

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The two *accounts* which we are publishing here, even though they do not have St. Paul’s signature on the copies contained in the Archives, reveal the Founder nonetheless in their content and language. Compared with the other accounts sent by the Founder, like the letters to different persons indicated above, they show similar expressions and thoughts. Moreover, the concepts of solitude, poverty, memory of the Passion of Jesus and its efficacy in preaching, love for the Congregation and hope for its development in and effective contribution to the Church, reveal the same St. Paul who wrote the same things in other letters. Therefore there can be no doubt about the author of these *accounts*. The dates of their composition can be affirmed with a sure probability of certainty. The first account appears to have been written between the end of 1746 and during 1747. It quotes the 1746 letter of Pontifical Approval; however, it does not give any indication of the great difficulties experienced by the Congregation during the struggle with the Mendicant Orders from 1748 onward.

The second account, in the copy kept in the General Archives, is dated 1768, which seems probable. In fact, the document was drawn up during the pontificate of Clement XIII (1758-1769); it speaks of “about twelve retreats”. Now in 1769 eleven retreats were already opened and another one near Tarquinia was being completed and would open in March of 1769.
Fabiano Giorgini, C.P.

NOTES

1. *Letters II*, 271-277.
2. *Letters II*, 269, 271.
3. *Letters IV*, 233-237. Other indications may be found in the letters to Randone, Garagni, etc.
4. Account of 1768, n. 2. See in Volume IV of the *Letters*, the analytical index, the word: "Congregazione dei passionisti".
5. Account of 1768, n. 3.
6. Account of 1747; 1768. See also in Volume IV of the *Letters*, the analytical Index, the word: "Passione".
7. Cfr. Matthew 10, 5ff; Luke 9, 2ff; Mark 6, 7ff. Cfr. also *Letters III*, 417-429 where Paul reaffirms this evangelical awareness of continuing the life of the apostles, and that by living it "in such a way the Church will always have flourishing and holy workers; otherwise nothing will be achieved."
8. *Letters IV*, 250.
9. Account of 1747, n. 15-18; Account of 1768, n. 8, 18.
10. Account of 1747, n. 20. Paul wrote to Appiani: "our life is very penitential, it is however very gentle and temperate" (*Letters I*, 398). To Father Fulgentius he wrote: "...When then they see that holy discretion, charity, that distinction made in feasts, especially solemnities, the spirit is also relieved... it is necessary to help our poor humanity in the best way we can." (*Letters II*, 120).
11. Account of 1747, n. 14. The reference to the first community of Jerusalem is clear (Acts 2, 32-47). This biblical passage, together with the reference to the life of the apostles, proves that St. Paul is following the spirituality of the "apostolic life" lived by the spiritual institutes and movement from the 13th century onwards. Cfr. Vicaire, H.M., O.P., *L'Imitazione degli apostoli*, Roma 1964. In 1748, Paul thanked God in seeing the Religious and the novices animated by "genuine, intimate charity among themselves, the clearest sign of being true disciples of our Crucified Love: Thanks be to God... It is a thing for which to praise our God very much, seeing these beloved sons so exact in observance in the midst of so many trials and inconveniences of holy poverty" (*Letters II*, 132). Up until the last circular Letter of May 20, 1775, Paul will recall the vital importance of this aspect of Passionist life: "So that before everything else holy charity may flourish in the Congregation... In order to maintain ever more and to increase the harmony and fraternal charity among us..." (*Letters IV*, 290-291).
12. Account of 1768, n. 5. Cfr. *Letters III*, 417-420. *IV*, 250-253. In 1749 Paul told Cardinal Guadagni of Rome that the method of the mission may be adapted; however, the Passion of Christ may not be left out because of the vow which we all make, since this is the principal fruit of the Mission." (*Letters II*, 841). See *Letters IV*, Analytical Index, the word: "Passione di Cristo".

ACCOUNT OF 1747

GOD RAISES UP A NEW CONGREGATION TO RE-AWAKEN THE “MEMORY” OF THE PASSION OF JESUS.

1. Our great Father of Mercies has been pleased to raise up a new Order or Institute in His Holy Church at this pitiable and distressing time when we now see openly at work every kind of iniquity, with harm also to our holy faith which is keenly affected in many parts of Christianity. The world is sliding into a profound forgetfulness of the most bitter sufferings endured by Jesus Christ, our true Good, out of love, while the memory of His Most Holy Passion is practically extinct in the faithful.
2. For that reason this new Congregation aims to root out both disorders and endeavors to remove vice, to foster virtue, and to set souls again on the way of perfection to heaven, by promoting devotion to the Passion which is the most efficacious means for obtaining every good.

THE CONGREGATION TAKES ITS INSPIRATION FROM THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLES.

3. This Congregation is made up of the Discalced Clerics under the title and invocation of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ. Their life is like that of the Apostles; even more, it is totally conformed to these and the apostles' conduct is the norm for the Constitutions which endeavor to form a man totally God-centered, totally apostolic; a man of prayer, detached from the world, from things, from himself so that he may in all truth be called a disciple of Jesus Christ and may beget many sons for heaven who will redound to his glory and honor.

THE PASSIONISTS OFFER THEMSELVES TO GOD BY SIMPLE VOWS.

4. In fact, in order to become more and more united with God, in their profession made after one year's novitiate, the Discalced Clerics offer themselves to God by the three customary simple – not solemn – vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. To these they add a fourth vow to promote the memory of the most Holy Passion of Jesus Christ in the hearts of the faithful; this vow is expressed in the Rule in a way and form so as to remove all scruple and ambiguity.

THEY SANCTIFY THEMSELVES IN THE SOLITUDE OF THE “RETREATS” FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NEIGHBOR.

5. In order that the members of this poor Congregation might not have any obstacle which would delay their attainment of perfection and that they might be separated from the world and have every opportunity to sanctify themselves for the benefit of the neighbor, the Rule determines that the houses be founded not in places already inhabited but rather outside the cities or villages at a distance of two or three miles. For this reason they are called *Retreats*; only one may be built for each diocese, or even two if the diocese is very large and extensive.

POVERTY IN IMITATION OF JESUS IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST SUPPORTS OF THE CONGREGATION.

6. Poverty should be and is so exactly observed that the Retreats may not possess anything like stable income or anything similar. In fact, it is not lawful for them to accept pious perpetual legacies, which bring with them some possession of goods, but they are content to live on alms, which are spontaneously offered by the piety of the faithful. Only at harvest time may the “Syndics” who are elected by the Congregation in the surrounding towns, quest for wine and grain and these agents must give everything to the Head Syndic, who is in the place or city nearest the Retreat – to help that Retreat in its necessities.
7. So great must be their detachment from things that the Superior is bound to go over the accounts with the Syndic every three months; whatever remains over the real, poor and simple

maintenance of the House and Church may not on any account be kept under title or pretext of any upcoming need, but he must distribute all of it and give it to the poor.

8. Poverty stands out in the house and the cells should be similar to those of the Capuchin Fathers. Poverty must be conspicuous in the habits, which consist of a poor black tunic, a poor mantle, a poor hat and a poor berettino. Poverty should be expressed in the furniture of the small rooms where they may keep only a Crucifix, a paper image of the Blessed Mother, a small table, a straw chair, and a narrow bed about a hand's palm from the floor.

9. In short, one of the strongest and most effective helps of this Congregation is the poverty in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the Religious, free of every affection for earthly things, might put all their thoughts on God, whose possession is their only desire. This does not present great difficulties to them, considering the common exercises which are held within the Retreats, since the Religious are always occupied in things which in no way dissipate them but rather keep the spirit deeply recollected.

SILENCE IS THE SOUL OF A WELL-ORDERED COMMUNITY.

10. Silence which is the soul of a well-ordered community and which creates recollection, is so greatly loved by these, that is, the Religious, that between morning and evening after the meals, there is no more than one hour and a half of recreation. During this time they are careful to talk about useful and holy things. All speaking is forbidden in church, in Choir, in the cells, dormitory and refectory. If it is necessary to speak there, they may do so only in a low and subdued voice in the places of work.

COMMUNITY PRAYER AND ANIMATION.

11. Between night and day there are about three hours of mental prayer, psalmody in choir, and Matins is recited at midnight. The discipline is taken three times a week. On Thursdays and all feasts there is a conference which helps greatly to maintain and foster fervor. Such conferences are given every day in the novitiate.

REVISION OF LIFE AND ACTS OF PENANCE.

12. Chapter is held every Friday of the year. Each one, kneeling before the Superior, accuses himself of his imperfections and asks not only for a penance for some infidelity committed, but also humbly seeks a remedy for his faults.

13. In the refectory the Religious even try to vie with one another in penance and mortifications: Some kneel in the middle of the refectory with a cross on their shoulders, others with a crown of thorns on their heads. Some have ropes around their necks, others have their hands bound like malefactors. Some lay down at the door so that all who must pass through there, walk over them and trample them; others go around the refectory kissing the feet of one or other Religious, and sometimes of all the Religious. Some publicly ask for pardon, imploring the help of the prayers of the brethren with such living and deep sentiments of self-knowledge and knowledge of their misery that they bring tears to the eyes.

THE PEACE, HARMONY AND FERVOR OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS IS RELIVED AGAIN.

14. Therefore all are moved by such beautiful examples that each one vies with the other to grow more and more perfect, to humble oneself ever more and to be subject to the other, removing everything which might impede a perfect fraternal charity which the Religious do by practicing love. While everyone wills what all are willing and everyone wills what each one wants, it seems to be a paradise on earth because of the peace, the harmony, the tranquillity, the union very much

like that in which the early Christians lived – whose fervor we intend to see renewed in this infant Congregation.

A GENTLE AND DISCREET PENANCE IS UNITED TO POVERTY.

15. In order that the Religious may be disposed for fervent prayer, from which all those goods, and still greater ones not mentioned here derive, they should, in conformity with the Holy Rule, join penance to poverty. But it is a gentle, lovable, discreet penance which both the strong and the weak can endure.

16. Let the food be the Lenten fare, with perpetual fast during the whole year except on Sundays, Solemnities of the Blessed Mother, of all the Apostles and Evangelists, and on both Feasts of the Chair of St. Peter.

17. But so that such an uninterrupted fast may not appear too rigorous for weak human nature, it is therefore determined and defined in the Constitutions that three times a week, namely, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, a hot meal be given in the evening. In Retreats which are far from the sea or lakes, the Father General may grant the use of eggs and dairy products, without dispensation however from the fast.

18. The table is seasoned with holy temperance by the Religious in a way that the members may not be harmed in spirit and may suffer no bodily harm. If they are outside the Retreat in the homes of benefactors, they may eat whatever is placed before them.

19. Their bed is a poor and narrow mattress, with a straw pillow. Their habit is a black tunic reaching to the ankles; the cloth of the habit is poor like that of other Regulars, since they are neither Friars nor Monks. They shall go barefooted in the Retreat, although, according to the determination of the Rule they may wear sandals when they go on a journey. They sleep with their habit on so as to be always ready for the praise of God, especially at night.

20. This way of life seems so gentle to the members of this poor Congregation that the Superiors must be very vigilant to temper the fervor of those who would wish to suffer more, to embrace greater penances, and to throw themselves into many rigors out of the great disdain they conceive against themselves and out of love for God.

THE RELIGIOUS ARE ENABLED TO REMEMBER THE PASSION OF JESUS AND TO HELP THE NEIGHBOR BY PRAYER, POVERTY AND PENANCE.

21. Thus, by these means, the poor Religious accustom themselves for battle in order then to go out into the field to combat the common enemies so as to uproot vice and instill a tender remembrance of the most bitter Passion of Jesus Christ, our true Good, in the souls of the faithful.

22. This is the primary end of this growing Congregation: *to qualify oneself by prayer, penance, fasting, tears and mourning so as to help the neighbor, to sanctify souls and to convert sinners.*

THE WORKERS SACRIFICE THEMSELVES FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NEIGHBOR.

23. Therefore in conformity with the Rule, let the Religious omit no means and work with diligence for the good of the people by missions, retreats, exercises, catechetical instructions, meditations, sermons, confessions and by every kind of apostolic ministry for the laity, ecclesiastics and nuns, always promoting in whatever work the devotion to the most bitter sufferings of Jesus, by which wonderful conversions of sinners and even of heretics are seen.

24. When their “campaigns” are finished, the evangelical workers should withdraw into their solitary houses, in order to regain their energy, acquire a greater spirit and rest at the feet of Jesus Crucified.

25. In order that the Retreats might be still more beneficial to the places, regions, villages and surrounding cities, the Religious are always ready to hear confessions in their churches, especially the general confessions of those who come to clear their consciences. The Religious are also ready on feast days, if they go into the neighboring towns, and at times in still other places to preach, to give some meditation and to assist in confessions.

26. But so that no stone will be unturned in favor of the neighbor, there should be a good number of poor but comfortable rooms in the same retreats, which are to be used for no other purpose than to give spiritual exercises to ecclesiastics and laymen who want to withdraw for some days to taste the sweetness of an esteemed and beloved solitude at the feet of the Crucified.

27. In short, the workers sacrifice themselves in everything for the good of souls, without concern for their own weariness and sufferings, taking on themselves the infirmities of others like Jesus Christ of Whom it is said: "It was our infirmities that He bore, our sufferings that He endured."

THE SIGN OF THE CONGREGATION.

28. For an adequate account, it remains only to add that the sign of the Congregation of the Discalced Clerics is a heart, half a palm in length with a proportionate circumference, black in its base, with a white strip around it and a white cross above the same heart. Within the heart these words are written in white letters; "Jesu Christi Passio." Under this there are three nails, likewise white. This sign is worn on the left side of the breast, on the tunic and also on the mantle.

THE CHURCH HAS APPROVED THE CONGREGATION.

29. Our Holiness, Pope Benedict XIV happily reigning, seeing that this Work of the Lord is increasing more and more, both in the number of houses and of members who are always gathering there, and knowing that such an Institute can bring much help and profit to souls particularly in these calamitous times, after having appointed a Congregation of Eminent Cardinals to examine the Rule and Constitutions, deigned to approve the said Congregation by the Apostolic Brief sent on April 21, 1746.

MAY GOD GRANT FERVOR TO THE ZEALOUS APOSTOLIC MINISTERS WHO HAVE ASSEMBLED AND ARE SENT OUT.

30. Now for the complete establishment of the same Congregation, nothing else remains than to beg God continually that He might deign in His mercy to bless and propagate this great Work more and more, to conserve and increase the spirit of the Members of the Congregation and finally to send her zealous Workers and Apostolic Ministers in order to cultivate the beloved vineyard of the Lord for His glory, for the good of the Congregation and the benefit of the people.

ACCOUNT OF 1768

EFFICACY OF THE "MEMORY" OF THE PASSION OF JESUS.

1. The most efficacious means for the conversion of sinners and for the sanctification of souls is the frequent remembrance of the Passion of Jesus Christ, from the forgetfulness of which proceed deplorable evils and disorders.

CHARISMATIC ORIGIN OF THE CONGREGATION.

2. Therefore our most merciful God in His infinite Goodness granted strong and gentle inspirations to establish this poor Congregation in Holy Church. Its purpose is to form zealous workers filled with the Spirit, that they might be fit instruments used by the Almighty Hand of God to sow virtue and root out vice in the people with the most potent weapon of the aforementioned Passion, whose very loving attraction even the hardest heart cannot resist.

THE PERFECTION OF THE RELIGIOUS AND THE CONVERSION AND SANCTIFICATION OF THE NEIGHBOR THROUGH THE “MEMORY” OF THE PASSION OF JESUS.

3. To accomplish this end, after the year of probation the Religious add to the three customary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, the fourth vow to promote a tender devotion to the most sorrowful Passion of the Redeemer. Since the principal ends of our Congregation are two – one that regards the perfection of the members of the Institute and the other that concerns the conversion and sanctification of the neighbor by instilling in their hearts a continual remembrance of the Crucified – the Holy Rule proposes efficacious means to attain both ends intended.

SOLITUDE HELPS TO ACQUIRE TRUE WISDOM.

4. As regards the first end: one of the impediments which delays perfection in the Religious is contact with the world and familiar dealings with lay people. This takes away interior recollection and brings disdain and discredit on the apostolic workers. To prevent this problem which can easily arise in a religious Community, the Rule ordains that the houses be founded in solitude: They are called Retreats in which the Religious effectively separated from the world and stripped of its principles, are enabled to receive heavenly lights for acquiring true wisdom. The Religious assigned to apostolic ministries, after having toiled for the salvation of souls can in those solitary Houses, regain that fervor which is sometimes diminished by the external works of charity.

THE CONGREGATION CARRIES INTO EFFECT THE POVERTY TAUGHT AND PRACTICED BY JESUS.

5. The other impediment is attachment to temporal goods which sometimes and even ordinarily can fill the human heart and prevent it from soaring to the Supreme Good. This impediment is removed by the holy poverty taught and practiced by Jesus Christ. In order to attain this, our Congregation has poverty as its impregnable wall and sure defense. By reason of this poverty, it may not possess anything – not even under the title of sacristy, except for a garden which serves also as an enclosure. Thus, the Religious, totally freed from temporal things, effectively detached from earth and dead to themselves, are better disposed to receive the impressions of divine grace so that afterwards, in due time, and with hearts full of God’s love they may undertake great things for the glory of God and for the defense of Holy Church even at the cost of their own lives, sparing neither privation nor any labor.

6. Wherefore, poverty must shine forth everywhere in the Congregation. Poverty in the Retreat where the rooms are small – only about eleven or twelve palms. Poverty in clothing which is ordinarily black wool, coarse and penitential. Poverty in meals so that there is enough but

nothing superfluous, – ordinary foods and not the delicate kind; everything done however with holy charity and discretion.

7. Although our Religious cannot go begging everyday from door to door, nevertheless they do not suffer from this. Indeed the provision of these things is very easy, as experience teaches that along with a little begging at the time of the harvesting of grain, oil and grapes in the villages of the diocese, there is in addition the stipends of the manual Masses and the charity of the faithful who spontaneously offer sufficient help and support. To embrace holy Poverty in this way is very beneficial for the salvation of souls, because one of the necessary requirements sought in apostolic workers, if they are not to sweat in vain, is to keep far from every shadow of greed and every suspicion of self-interest. Thus they show the People that the Religious of the Passion are not looking for their money, which they may not possess, but only for their eternal salvation.

TO BE MEN OF PRAYER AND RECOLLECTION.

8. After removing these two obstacles which could impede perfection, the Holy Rule bids us to embrace that most efficacious means which Jesus Christ proposes, namely, that they live in *prayer and fasting* (Mark 9, 28) in order to overcome the common enemies. To profit from holy prayer, even more to be men of prayer and recollection with which an evangelical minister must be well provided if, while preaching to others, he does not suffer loss in his own soul, this exercise should never be omitted, neither within the Retreat where ordinarily three hours is given to it, nor outside during journeys and on Missions when they are obliged to spend at least one hour at the feet of the Crucified (1).

SPIRITUAL ANIMATION OF THE COMMUNITY.

9. The Religious should make a particular effort to recall the Presence of God so that they may remain in interior solitude as much as possible. Every Thursday and on all Feasts the superior gives a practical examen either on the virtues or on the Holy Rule to facilitate the acquisition of those virtues and the exact observance of the Rule. Every Religious should frequently have a private conference with the Spiritual Father to provide for his own spiritual needs and to renew his fervor of spirit.

SILENCE, LITURGY AND RETURN TO SOLITUDE OF THE APOSTOLIC WORKER.

10. Silence is continual, except for the time of recreation. In order that the soul might apply herself totally to God with loving attention, the Divine Office is chanted in a penitential tone during the day and Matins is recited at midnight.

11. Returning to the Retreat after their apostolic ministries, the workers withdraw into more strict solitude in order to renew their spirit in holy spiritual exercises according to the admonition given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles: “Rest a little” (Mark 6, 31). All these things help in a wonderful way to prevent dissipation, to acquire the holy love of God and to maintain holy union with the Supreme Good.

“THEY APPLY THEMSELVES TO INTERIOR MORTIFICATION”; ACTS OF PENANCE.

12. Mortification is added to all this in the measure that is profitable for each soul. The poor Religious apply themselves principally to interior mortification by mastering their passions and they practice exterior mortification according to the tenor of the Holy Rule, fulfilling those more mortifying and humbling acts which their own fervor suggests to them. They do not find this difficult. They even willingly express their ordinary defects and failings at the feet of the Superior – whether publicly in the chapter or refectory, or privately in his cell – and, while kneeling, gratefully accept his correction, penance and remedy.

13. They sleep on a quilted straw mattress with a straw pillow. In the cell there is no other furnishing except a poor chair, a small table, a crucifix, some paper pictures and a spiritual book for morning and evening reading.

14. It is forbidden to eat meat in the Retreats. Three days a week are fast-days and the discipline is taken three times a week. They should never speak among themselves about worldly things so as not to dissipate their spirits. They are totally dependent on holy obedience for the least action of everyday life, when these are not actions prescribed by the Holy Rule.

HOW TO TRAVEL: VISITS TO THE SICK AND TO PRISONERS.

15. When travelling, they are to go on foot, unless necessity demands the contrary. They are to observe silence with discretion so as not to lose interior attention to God. From time to time they are to encourage themselves toward holy perfection by pleasant, loving conversation with the Supreme Good.

16. The Religious are forbidden to make social visits. Only those visits are permitted which gratitude, propriety and necessity require. If time permits, they are to visit the sick in the hospitals, to console the poor prisoners in jail and other works of charity. The Holy Rule expressly directs them to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament first as soon as they arrive in the town.

PENANCE IS DISCREET, ADAPTED TO THE WEAK AND TO THE STRONG.

17. Since the members of this least Congregation should cultivate the vineyard of the Lord, it is important that they maintain their health and that they gain and preserve their strength to be able to work constantly for the glory of God. For this reason the Rule prescribes that the aforementioned penitential acts be done with such discretion that all is made mild and gentle so that the strong and weak alike may be able to bear them. During the night seven hours are given to sleep, part of it before and part after Matins. In winter there is an hour of rest after dinner, and an hour and a half in summer. Four times a week eggs and dairy products are served (2).

18. In addition to Sundays and to Feast days which do not fall on Friday, they are exempt from fast three times a week. Everyday the diet is seasoned with holy temperance in a way that the Religious will not be jeopardized in spirit or harmed in body. Everyday there is soup, a main dish, a small plate of vegetables and also fruit when it is in season. On Sundays, Thursdays and Feast days all year long, there are two main dishes served. After dinner and supper there is the prescribed common recreation. Every morning and evening after study there is a solitary walk for a half-hour; each one goes by himself in the vicinity of the Retreat, getting some fresh air to relieve the mind and to acquire greater spirit and energy for holy prayer, pouring forth the affections of his heart toward His Divine Majesty. When they are outside the Retreat, whether on a trip or exercising some apostolic ministry, they are not only exempted from the fast but they may also eat meat and whatever else the charity of others puts before them for refreshment.

19. They expend every effort to assist the sick Religious as regards medicine, mattress for the bed and also food. Meat is to be given not only during the illness but also during convalescence so that they might become strong enough to work.

20. From all this one can see how discreet is the penance which the Discalced Clerics of the Passion of Jesus Christ undertake. It is such that, by the Mercy of God, they continue vigorous, strong and sturdy. The popular idea of our life considers it to be more severe than it really is.

THE RULE APPROVED BY THE POPE IS OBSERVED WITH FERVOR.

21. The Holy Rule was submitted by Pope Benedict XIV to the scrutiny of His Eminence Cardinal Corradini, of blessed memory, and His Eminence Cardinal Rezzonico, who is now the reigning Pontiff. Recognizing the discretion and benefit of these Rules, they worked so that His

Holiness then reigning issued a rescript of approbation. Then, as our Congregation grew, the Supreme Pontiff was asked to issue a Brief. His Holiness was pleased to set up a special Congregation of three Cardinals, Albani, Gentili and Besozzi. Once again the Holy Rule was examined and after long, exact and diligent reflection, this commission kindly gave its consultative vote for the approval of the same. And so on April 21, 1746 the Apostolic Brief was issued, in which the Holy Father ordered that the Rule should be inviolably observed, as indeed the poor Religious do observe them fervently *ad litteram*, and accustom themselves to the battle against Hell. Then they go out into the field to combat vice by instilling a loving remembrance of the most bitter sufferings of Jesus Christ in the hearts of the faithful.

APOSTOLIC COMMITMENT OUTSIDE THE RETREAT.

22. And this is the second end of our Congregation. In conformity with the Holy Rule, the Religious are bound by the vow of obedience to comply with the desires, requests and commands of the Most Reverend Ordinaries whom they serve at will for the benefit of their dioceses. The Discalced Clerics of the Passion should not omit any means and should use every effort to work for the conversion of souls by missions, catechetical instructions, sermons, meditations, spiritual exercises to priests, nuns and lay people and by every kind of apostolic ministry. However, they are forbidden to assume the work of Lenten preachers.

23. In every work they do, they are bound by the force of vow (understood according to the explanation given in the Rule, so as to remove every scruple and anxiety) to promote devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ, by which we see marvelous conversions of sinners. Every evening after the mission sermon, they give the people a loving meditation on the Passion of Jesus for about half an hour. This meditation, falling like a soft, gentle rain on the terrified heart of the sinner, leads him to His God by loving attraction.

24. Every day after the catechetical instruction, they offer a good method for meditating on the most bitter sufferings of the Redeemer little by little, and suggest now one practice, now another, so as to adapt it to the more uneducated and illiterate people.

25. In hearing confessions and in preaching they propose the Passion to the people and their penitents with the strongest incentives and the easiest methods so that they might not forget so great a good. For experience proves that whoever fully accepts such holy suggestions not only changes his life but also advances far on the way toward evangelical perfection. On retreats, one of the meditations which is given every day must be on the most holy Passion, and the matter is to be arranged in such a way that the whole is meditated on in the given time.

THE RETREAT – A SPIRITUAL CENTER FOR ALL.

26. In order that the Retreats might be yet profitable to the surrounding places, areas and cities, the Religious are not only always ready to hear confessions in their own churches, particularly the general confessions of those who want to settle the plight of their consciences but also on feast days if they go into the neighboring town and sometimes into other places to preach, to give a catechetical instruction or a meditation.

27. But so as to leave no stone unturned in favor of their poor neighbors, a certain number of rooms should be set aside in their Retreats for the exclusive purpose of giving retreats to ecclesiastics who spontaneously request it or who are constrained to it by their Most Reverend Ordinaries and also to those laymen who want to enjoy the delights of a cherished solitude for some days.

READY ALSO FOR MISSIONS AMONG NON-BELIEVERS.

28. To sum up, the apostolic workers sacrifice themselves entirely for the benefit of souls without concern for anything, even though they suffer greatly. By order of the Holy Rule they

must be ready even to undertake missions to the infidels at the least indication of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide.

INTENSE THEOLOGICAL PREPARATION FOR THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY.

29. Since it is the obligation of the Discalced Clerics of the Passion to apply themselves to sacred preaching and to the direction of souls, it is necessary to train the young men and prepare them competently for such an exalted ministry. For this training some Retreats are designated for formal studies, one for philosophy and another for scholastic theology, both dogmatic and moral.

30. Every year the young men who are more capable and more open-minded are selected to be sent to the Houses of Study. In all the other Retreats – there are about twelve of them – there is the study of Moral Theology, Sacred Scripture, the Holy Fathers and other suitable studies, and also composition for sermons and catechisms, etc.

31. In the Retreats of formal study, the Clerics have some exemptions in those things which do not pertain to the substance of the Rule, so that they may have all the time to profit from the sciences or may be able to apply themselves to study. Thus, from after Tierce, which is recited early, until dinnertime, and from after Vespers until Compline, which is recited late, they are engaged in study and class – without prejudice to their recreations and solitary walks.

CONTEMPLATING THE CRUCIFIED, THE RELIGIOUS COMMIT THEMSELVES TO HELP THEIR NEIGHBOR.

32. From all this we know the holy discretion with which the Lord has deigned to inspire the Holy Rule. And likewise we may deduce that the foundation of this Rule consists in holy Poverty, mortification, and solitude in which the Workers, after their apostolic labors, rest at the feet of the Crucified to regain greater energy and fervor as has been said above. And the Religious, totally separated from the world, prepare themselves by prayer, tears, discreet penance and fasting not only for their own perfection but also to help their poor neighbors and prevent their eternal ruin and to encourage them to holy piety and solid devotion.

PRAISE GOD - 1768

(1) Cfr. *Letters* IV, 252, n. 4.

(2) Cfr. *Regulae et Constitutiones C.P. Editio critica textuum curante Fabiano Giorgini*. Romae 1958, p. 163, n. 100.

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