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Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality

EVANGELICAL POVERTY IN THE PASSIONIST COMMUNITY

Fabiano Giorgini

Rome 1989
Passionist Generalate
Pizza SS. Giovanni e Paolo, 13

Cum permissu:
Jose Agustin Orbezo, C.P. Sup. Gen.

This paper was delivered during the Course on Passionist History and Spirituality at Sts. John and Paul, Rome, July 1978.

Editor, English language series:
Bonaventure Moccia, C.P.

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Notes

1. The New Testament and poverty in religious life

1.1 Significant New Testament Passages

The New Testament passages which were profoundly significant and had a decisive influence on the understanding and practice of poverty in religious life were the following:

- the colloquy between Jesus and the wealthy young man (Mt. 19:19-22);
- Jesus' instruction to the twelve and the seventy-two when he sent them, two by two, to preach to the villages (Mt. 10:5-24; Lk. 9:2-7; 10:1-20);
- the description of the community formed by the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32);
- Peter's question: "Behold, we have left everything and followed you, what are we to have?" and the response of Jesus (Mt. 19:27-29).

These biblical passages duly reflected upon were decisive in giving direction to the life of the anchorites and especially of monks until about the twelfth century. The following of Jesus was looked upon as a response to the call to leave all things for Him and to live together, in a fraternal union of love and sharing of goods, with others similarly called. This was referred to as the "apostolic life." In practice it was considered to be the continuation of the life of the apostles and the community established by them. This primitive experience remained in the Church as a reality pointing to the omnipresence of God. It was the set purpose of the monks to keep this truth alive for the benefit of the entire Church. Evangelical poverty thus understood meant that the monk:

- renounced the possession and use of all things;
- depended on the Superior of the monastery for the use of whatever was held in common;
- placed the fruits of his labor, gifts received, his time and sense of fraternity at the disposal of the community.

In his Rule St. Benedict (ch. 33), after enjoining that one not take or use anything without the permission of the Abbot, added: "Let all things be held in common, as it is written (Acts 4,32), and let no one think or speak of anything as his personally."

To live poverty in this way was referred to as "apostolic profession," which meant to live in full communion of material and spiritual goods: to eat what was common to all, to sleep under the same roof, to work and pray together, to give fraternal correction, to share the singular hope of participating in the life and glory of Jesus. This is what was meant by "one heart and one soul."

Understanding evangelical poverty in this way, the individual did not personally possess or dispose of anything on his own, rather it was the community that possessed, in common, all things necessary for the sustenance of its members, for the welcoming of guests, for the poor and for purposes of evangelization. The monks imitated the Apostles: "They alone are true monks when they live by their own labor, as did our fathers and the apostles," wrote St. Benedict (1).

1.2 The understanding of poverty in relationship to itinerant preaching

In the twelfth century, in a new socio-religious environment, the biblical passages referred to took on a wider meaning, giving rise to an attitude which demanded not only renunciation on the part of individuals, but also on the part of the community. The evolution took place slowly, fostered by many differing circumstances, especially by the reforms of the clergy enacted by the Popes, particularly that of Gregory VII and Urban II. Such reform freed them from the restrictions of the feudal system and the pressures of relatives and assured them conditions which would be more suitable to their living as celibates for the kingdom of God, in fraternal love, in prayer and commitment to their priestly ministry. Urban II termed this lifestyle: “the apostolic life”.

Furthermore, the reform gave rise to many other movements in the Church, not always subject to the hierarchy, which proposed an evangelical life based on authentic poverty. This in opposition to the society of the time and the glaring manifestations of wealth on the part of bishops, clergy and monks. The “itinerant preachers” were particularly aware of this movement toward authentic poverty. They went about the countryside teaching those who were only too often deprived of any catechetical instruction and promoting a renewal of the Christian way of life. If they were Catholic, they exercised this ministry by mandate of the local bishop; without such mandate, if they were not Catholic. They were content with the room and board offered them, traveled by foot, and dressed as the poor did. Itinerant preaching became more necessary in the presence of heresy, such as that of the Albigensians.

The “itinerant” preachers meditated profoundly on the community of life among the early Christians under the guidance of the apostles, as evidenced in Acts: “the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great respect” (Acts 4,33). Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, their reflections gave rise to the conviction that to imitate the life of the apostles, other than rigorous community poverty, itinerant preaching was also a necessity. One of the many itinerant preachers of that age, St. Peter Damian, wrote: “Is it not true to say that only those are suitable for the apostolate who possess no earthly riches and that, possessing nothing of their own, they possess everything in common? Only those who possess nothing are worthy of the office of preaching. They are independent soldiers, freed from every obstacle, they battle for the Lord against every vice and all demons, armed with their virtue and the sword of the Holy Spirit” (2).

Itinerant preaching, based on authentic poverty, gradually became one of the essential reasons for the “apostolic life,” or for living according to the “apostolic rule.” In the XIII century the terms “apostolic,” “apostolic life,” “apostolic man,” “to live according to the apostolic rule,” meant “to practice poverty and to go forth to preach, carrying neither gold nor silver, in the example of the Divine Master; to present oneself in all humility, to travel on foot, carrying neither silver nor gold; in brief to imitate the life of the apostles in every way” (3). This new understanding of evangelical poverty is better expressed in St. Dionysius, who writes, “the religious are to travel by foot, in evangelical poverty, and thus give authentic witness to the word of the Gospel” (4).

There developed, then, a new practice in observing evangelical poverty in religious life; a poverty united to preaching as a condition to render that preaching more- fruitful. Those who embraced this way of life desired:

- to proclaim the Word, especially to the poor;
- to fulfill their apostolic ministry gratuitously, since they, too, gratuitously received all: their vocation, the mandate to preach and the means necessary for their sustenance;
- not to possess anything, either individually or in common, and to live on free-will offerings depending on God for everything, since the laborer is worthy of his sustenance;
- to live a life of penance by accepting the risk of living on free-will offerings, of constantly traveling, which meant they must always start anew without ever settling down and enjoying the fruits of stable and satisfactory human and spiritual relationships;
- to live a life of fraternal communion both in the monastery and while out preaching, a communion reinforced by a unique faith and hope, entirely dependent upon God.

These principles are fundamental to the understanding of the “apostolic life, or to the “living according to the apostolic rule” which prevailed in the XIII century. They gave life to the mendicant orders of the time and slowly were transmitted to other institutes established immediately before and after the Council of Trent.

The purpose of these latter institutes was to engage in itinerant preaching to the benefit of the entire Church, especially in the most needy locales (e.g. Dominicans, Franciscans, the Pious Workers, Lazzarists, Redemptorists, the Passionists, etc.)

2. St. Paul of the Cross, the “apostolic life” and poverty

2.1 “Apostolic” poverty centered on the memory of the Passion of Jesus

The spirituality of the apostolic life gave rise to those movements and more fervent religious institutes which animated Italy in the XVII and XVIII centuries, such as the Franciscan reform of the retreat of St. Bonaventure in which St. Leonard of Port Maurice lived, the Congregation of Pious Workers of whom Mons. Cavalieri was a member, the Congregation of Evangelical Worker Priests of Genoa, etc. This was the climate in which St. Paul lived. He was imbued with its basic principles, further developing the mystic aspect of the “apostolic life” and centering it on the memory of the Passion of Jesus which he termed “the most stupendous work of God’s love.”

To place poverty in relationship to living and promoting the memory of the Passion of Jesus is to add to the already exacting demands of that poverty proper to the “apostolic life,” a profoundly mystical import which Paul expresses as “detachment from all things”, “poor in spirit, naked and despoiled of everything” (5). The ultimate motive for this poverty lies not only on the level of expression, but on the lived experience of everyday life in imitation of Jesus. “In every action let them be solely committed to manifesting poverty in deed and in spirit, in true imitation of Jesus Christ. To achieve this, it would be beneficial for them to have ever before their eyes the example of the life of our Saviour who, for us, deigned to be born in poverty, to live in poverty and to die naked upon the cross” (6). But, together with the will to be conformed to Jesus, who was born in poverty and in poverty died, stripped on the cross, there was also the desire to continue the life of the apostles, “whose lifestyle was the norm for the Constitutions, which strive to form a man wholly for God, wholly apostolic, a man of prayer, detached from the

world, from all things material and from self, so that he might be truly called a disciple of Jesus Christ and be enabled to beget many children for heaven” (7).

Understood and lived in this way, poverty disposes one for mystical union with God, “the one true Good,” the possession of whom should be the desire of each religious. It also makes it possible to share mystically in the poverty of the dying Jesus in order to achieve the glory of the resurrection (8). Such poverty will confer the capacity to labor for the people for it will be “free from any breath of avarice or any suspicious self-seeking. People will see that Passionist religious are not looking to them as a source of income which, in any case, they could not possess, but are interested only in their eternal salvation” (9).

For this reason Paul wrote: “One of the strongest and most firm pillars of this Congregation is its poverty, lived in imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ” and, in a more expressive phrase, “Poverty must be the standard of this least Congregation” (10), for it is the most significant way of living the memory of the Passion of Jesus and of making ourselves available for the good of the brethren, who labor selflessly in “hardship and suffering, taking on the suffering of others in imitation of Jesus Christ of Whom it was said, ‘he took our infirmities upon himself and he bore our sorrows’” (11).

2.2 Poverty according to the apostolic rule

As has already been mentioned (12), in order to understand the practice and motivation for Passionist poverty, it is necessary to keep in mind the instructions of Jesus to the twelve when he sent them on mission and when he taught them. Before entering the Congregation, the postulant should settle his affairs, sell whatever might be left over after he has fulfilled his obligations and distribute it to the poor. The brethren of the Congregation should dress in a black tunic of coarse cloth, made of common wool, and a poor mantle; they should go barefoot and only when they travel are they permitted “because of the rough roads and heavily wooded areas” to use sandals and, as protection against bad weather “a poor hat.” Similarly, because of sickness or “to avoid bad weather” which can cause malaria, when traveling they may, in exceptional cases, use a horse. To obey the command of Jesus to his disciples: “Take nothing on your journey, neither satchel nor money,” Paul ordered that money received from benefactors be given immediately to a “sindaco” or a lay administrator. Money should not be kept in the retreat nor carried when one is traveling. The only exception to the latter was when one traveled to “unknown towns or cities”; in that case the Superior was to give “some funds in order to avoid any distractions or wandering about which would occur if the quest became a necessity. This latter being against the practice of our institute” (13).

It is interesting to note that Paul, though quite firm on the principle of poverty, did not lose sight of the fact that poverty was just a means by which one might be better united to God, the “Supreme Good” and, therefore, if begging and the insecurity of an unfamiliar place be disturbing or distracting to the interior spirit of recollection, the principle of not handling money should be set aside and funds may be used to a limited extent.

The same well-balanced principle directs the use of food when one is traveling; namely, to “follow the counsel of Jesus which directs to eat what they set before you” and, to avoid being troublesome to one’s host, the “apostolic rule” is observed; invoking the peace of God on the host family and eating whatever they offer “in all temperance, modesty and recollection” (14).

2.3 To live on free-will offerings

The command of Jesus to his disciples that they be not concerned over the necessities of life, but rather, only for the kingdom of God and, following His example, that during their ministry they live on free-will offerings (15), constitutes the norm of conduct of each religious both while in the retreat and when they are out. No one may use any free-will offerings “without the express consent and permission of the Superior” (16). The Congregation does not consider itself the owner of any free-will offering it might receive or of any of the houses it occupies; “this least Congregation professes not to possess anything but, in profound reverence and humility, it prays that Holy Mother Church possess all, even the free-will offerings received from benefactors” (17). This expression, striking in its total simplicity and literal understanding of the gospel, echoes the attitude of St. Francis. It is found in the early text of 1720, approved by Bishop Cavalieri, but, since he considered the Congregation to be of diocesan right, he gives ownership over to the ordinary of the place.

For Paul, to live on alms, meant to partake, without complaint, of any food the community offers and to accept it in gratitude. It meant to ask for anything one might need “in all modesty and humility, on one’s knees, as an alms, this as true imitators and humble ones of Jesus Christ.” The Superior himself, should he have need of eating or drinking anything between meals, should seek the permission of the vicar or of the senior member of the community” (18). The imitation of Jesus, the desire and practice of humility and poverty, are the real motives for asking permission for everything, as was done in the early days of the Congregation. Such practice did not mean that it was understood that the members of the community had no right to use what was necessary or that there was no appreciation for the value of the individual or that it was not evident that the Superior was only the administrator and not a patron who, at his own discretion, granted what his subject might need. But it did help the religious to remember the perfection of the Divine Person of Jesus, that they imitate him by practicing the virtues evident in his life. The Rule of 1746 states that the religious, with the permission of the Superior, may keep writing paper and some necessary books in his cell, however it stressed that, “It would add to their perfection and merit if, each time they were in need of anything, they would ask it of the Superior in all modesty and humility, on their knees, as an alms, thus becoming true imitators and little ones of Jesus Christ” (19).

Affective and effective interior detachment from all things, which would guarantee security, ought to increase and develop continually. At the beginning Paul thought a further witness to poverty would be to give the poor anything which was not strictly necessary for the maintenance of the religious. In speaking of the Congregation, he used to say, “Their detachment should be such that, every three months, the Superior together with the sindaco, should take an audit and whatever is left over from the absolute, simple and poor maintenance of the house and the church should not be set aside under any title or pretext of future need, but should be given to the poor” (20). The poor should also be given any free-will offering, even if it be money, which a religious might have received without the special permission of the Superior. Thus they will avoid that avarice which seeks to justify actions contrary to so fundamental a principle of religious life and mystical union with Jesus Crucified. “And if it should happen (God forbid!) that any of the brethren receive an alms without express permission, other than the penance given for such transgression of poverty in so grave a matter, let not the alms be used for the house or the Congregation, but given to the poor, even if it be money. For I am convinced that the spirit and fervor of the Congregation will be maintained so long as it is enclosed within the most secure

confines of poverty; if poverty goes, the Congregation will lose its fervor and the regular observance will be totally destroyed” (21).

The motivation for living poverty on the community level, possessing nothing, without security even for the needs of the next day, was total confidence in God the Father, Who provides for the birds of the air and has thought for the lilies of the field; Who, in his Son, promises to look over those who labor for his kingdom. “The laborer is worthy of his hire.” “Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice and the rest will be given you in abundance” (Mt. 6:33; 10:10). If the religious are faithful in living the Rule, God’s will for them, they will be provided with whatever is necessary.

In 1741 Paul, probably at the suggestion of the commission for the revision of the Rule, placed in the Rule the possibility of going on the quest, but he did so renewing his faith in God that this would never be necessary: “...we live on what has been generously provided through the charity of benefactors and, if we should lack food because of the isolation of the retreat, it would be permissible to go on the quest out of sheer necessity. Let us hope that, through the mercy of God, this will not happen” (22). With great fervor, he reiterated this hope when writing to his former confessor, Polycarp Cerruti: “The vow of poverty does make provision for going on the quest when food is lacking, but only to provide for the needs of the day. But this has never been necessary and I hope it never will be, for God who generously provides for us and fills us with every blessing will always provide for his least poor ones, so that the distractions of the quest not interfere with their lives” (23).

2:4 The beatitude of evangelical poverty faithfully practiced

The faithful observance of personal and community poverty will assuredly lead one into that beatitude of poverty promised by Jesus: “Blessed is he who voluntarily despoils himself of all things, for the Lord will transform him into His Most Divine Love,” promised Paul in the Rule. And again, reflecting in all simplicity on his own mystical experience, accessible to all who are called to be Passionists, he affirms: “How blessed is that soul, faithful in its love for holy poverty and detachment from all things, for God will transform it into His Most Divine Love” (24).

In context of this promised beatitude, this real transformation into the love of God, one can understand Paul’s exhortation to the religious, “Holy poverty would not be truly poverty if there were not inconveniences associated with it; let none of the brethren of this Congregation look for any such convenience, for we are followers of Jesus Christ who had no place to lay His Most Holy Head and who died naked upon the hard wood of the Cross” (25). It is in light of his consciousness of the demands of the poverty of the Cross that we can understand the Founder’s teaching in his work on the “morte mistica.” The religious should be content to be “tried and to suffer the inconveniences of holy poverty”; in his food and dress let him be satisfied with the worst, “dying to every desire and satisfaction of the palate.” The same spirit of poverty should bring him to accept all humiliation and contempt as a form of poverty effecting his personal reputation and good name (26).

From what has been said, and reflecting upon the teachings of St. Paul, we may draw the following conclusions:

- a) poverty, “according to the apostolic rule,” must be lived and observed as a necessary means that the Passionist be transformed into the holy love of God, receive the spirit of

contemplation and live the “memory” of the Passion of Jesus; clearly expressing in his personal life and in the life of the community his likeness to the poor Christ, Who was deprived of every honor, dying naked on the cross, rejected by the people;

- b) poverty thus observed brings with it interior beatitude, the fruit of interior freedom, of union in love with Jesus the God-man who is the “Supreme Good”;
- c) poverty effectively observed is the indispensable condition that the preaching proper to the Congregation be fruitful.

3. The practice of poverty in relation to the means of sustenance

The life of the founder, the biographies of the first religious, the history of the foundation of the first houses and the willing, generous collaboration of the religious called to be pioneers, in much suffering and privation, all point to an effective understanding of evangelical poverty lived out of love for Jesus, identifying with his sorrows. The circular letters of the major Superiors, the decrees of General Chapters, the very revisions of the Rule also indicate the difficulties involved in being faithful to the mystique of poverty as Paul had sensed and foreseen when he was inspired to found the institute. The problem was adverted to by Paul himself when he personally had to deal with it in order to provide the necessary sustenance for a Congregation in full development. We will now further study his attitude and practice regarding property and a fixed income which were needed for the continuation and maintenance of the houses, as well as the use of free-will offerings received through the quest:

3.1 Permanent property and fixed income

Paul, as has already been said, held that ownership of property and a fixed income were essentially contrary to that “apostolic poverty” which the Congregation was to manifest. That this was his firm conviction is most clear whenever he refers to it: “We are not to possess anything either individually or in common, but we are to live in rigorous poverty on the free-will offerings of the faithful”; “We live in poverty without any income whatever”; “Our Congregation is founded on perpetual poverty, not owning anything now or ever, neither in common nor in private, nor under title of the sacristy” (27). The commission of cardinals which examined the text of the Rule in 1745-46 wished to introduce into the text provision for a fixed income for the houses of formation. Paul explained the reasons why Passionists should live in absolute poverty with such conviction and clarity that he succeeded in preventing any change being made. He himself reminded the religious of the reasons he gave in these words: “I have often been told that the sons of the Passion of Jesus Christ ought to be stripped of all created things and ought not own anything. Our Congregation must be detached from all things in order to be truly poor in spirit and naked and despoiled of everything; the religious of this Congregation are called to perfection and holiness.” He also reminded them that his fear of the proposal of the commission arose from the conviction that if ownership of property were allowed, “it would be the same as destroying the foundations and tearing down the walls which support the Congregation” (28). He reaffirmed his conviction in information given about the Congregation: “The other impediment (to perfection) is attachment to temporal goods which, at times, and ordinarily such is the case, occupies the human heart, preventing it from flying to the Supreme Good. Holy poverty as practiced and taught by Jesus Christ prevents this from happening. To achieve this, our Congregation is protected by the impenetrable wall and secure defense of Holy Poverty; it may not possess anything, not even by title of the sacristy, excepting

a piece of enclosed land. Thus each religious, freed from temporal concerns, totally detached and dead to self, will become well-disposed to receive the gift of divine grace and so, with hearts filled with the love of God, they will be enabled to undertake great works for His glory” (29).

Under Clement XIV, the wish to revise the rule by permitting the Congregation to receive bequests of permanent property, later to be sold, and the revenue used for the needs of the Congregation, was rejected by Paul (30). Up until the time of the revision of the Rule in 1746, as we have noted, the Congregation did not even desire to possess the free-will offerings it received nor the houses it occupied. From that date on, however, the houses and the land which surrounded the houses became the property of the Congregation; the land being necessary for the maintenance of solitude and the undisturbed use of the religious as well as for a vegetable garden and for supplying firewood. The Bull of approval of 1769 clearly contained this stipulation and it was inserted into the text of the Rule of 1775, together with the norm that the fruit from the garden is never to be sold and, should it be more than sufficient for the needs of the community, the surplus should be given to benefactors and to the poor (31).

It was the firm wish of Paul never to accept permanent property or anything else by way of inheritance, even under condition that it could be sold immediately to the benefit of the Congregation.

On March 3, 1769, before the episcopal curia of Viterbo, Paul refused an inheritance which the rector of St. Eutizio had injudiciously accepted under such condition. His reason: “Living under vow of strict poverty which our Congregation professes, we cannot accept any inheritance under any title. We may accept the commission of Masses requested by will if they be fixed in number, but never in perpetuity” (32).

The theological and spiritual motivations have already been mentioned; let it suffice here to sum them up in the following way:

- in imitation of the humble and poor Jesus, the Omnipotent rendered weak and poor, who lived on alms during his ministry and died naked on the cross;
- the union of charity with God, esteemed and loved as the Supreme Good, demands detachment from all material things which are not to be loved in themselves but, with gratitude to God, are to be used only as means;
- to be able to proclaim the Word of the Cross with all efficacy and in total freedom, for the fact that the Congregation possesses nothing will serve to remove any doubts concerning the purposes of Passionist ministry;
- in an age when governments were at odds with the Church concerning ecclesiastical privileges, namely, the property of religious orders, it was prudent not to place any obstacles to the further development of the new Congregation, as would have happened were the Congregation to own property.

This fundamental aspect of poverty remained clear in the history and practice of the Congregation, even though in the XIX Century it began to accept property which could be immediately sold for the benefit of the Congregation (33). Permission and dispensations were also given to sell fruit grown on the property or, in special cases, to cultivate the orchards more extensively, for example, during the Second World War (34). A radical change came about in

1968 when the extraordinary General Chapter permitted that “if, in the judgment of the provincial chapter, permanent property and fixed income were necessary for the maintenance of the religious and the development of our apostolates, a Province may decide in their favor” (35).

This decision was not entirely unforeseen. The General Chapter of 1958 (36) entrusted the General Curia with the task of nominating a commission to study the practice of poverty in the Congregation in relation to the sources and means of sustenance which had an influence on its material development, its education programs and its apostolates. On March 7, 1964, the commission made a presentation of a study which had examined various aspects of the practice of poverty and listed some conclusions. Prior to arriving at these conclusions, the commission had carefully studied the reports of the Provinces as well as analogous studies undertaken by other religious institutes. It had concluded that the practice of poverty in the Congregation up to that time had a negative influence on the houses of formation since, lacking the necessary funds, no Province could establish a central house of studies. Often, too, this condition delayed the creation of new foundations or the renovation of old, run-down houses or the building of new retreat houses.

The commission proposed the creation of a provincial account to be funded by both ordinary and extraordinary income which would be used solely for new foundations, specified apostolates, the renovation of older houses and for formation. In this way, the complaints of the Provinces would be offset, namely that the then prevailing practice of poverty allowed for the ordinary running and maintenance of the houses and apostolates, but made no provision for new foundations or other extraordinary expenses.

The commission created during the Chapter of 1964, having examined the work of the former commission named by the General Curia as well as other documentation furnished by the provinces, recommended that the Chapter introduce no innovations regarding the practice of poverty, especially in regard to fixed income, for the state of the Provinces, with the exception of some, did not justify such change. Further recommendation was made that there be greater vigilance over local and particular administrations on the part of the provincials so that unnecessary expenditures be avoided and that there be overall consideration of the other communities of the Province. It also urged better use of the faculty in the updated Rule of 1959 which allowed the Superior General to give permission for the development or cultivation of the property owned by the houses. The statutes approved by the 1964 Chapter allowed our seminaries and apostolic schools to have a fixed income (37).

In the responses from the Provinces in preparation for the special Chapter of 1968, we find a notable contrast to those made in preparation for the Chapter of 1964. Almost all agreed that there were sufficient funds for the daily needs of the communities, however, some Provinces pointed out the lack of funds for extraordinary expenditures such as the maintenance and renovation of the houses and for specialized formation. Furthermore, it was noted by almost all that the usual avenues of income were closing off due, especially, to the scarcity of Brothers in the Congregation. The Provinces underlined the need in our day that the Congregation be an outstanding witness to poverty, not allowing itself to be conditioned by economic factors in its apostolate, and that it seek the means for its sustenance by the assiduous labors of its members.

It should be noted that the phrase, “the primary source of its sustenance should be the assiduous labors of the members” of the Congregation, was somewhat ambiguous in every talk given before, during and after the special Chapter. In fact, the idea of living on free-will offerings was

based on the saying in the Gospel, “the laborer is worthy of his keep”; but the apostolic laborer must also fulfill his ministry in all competence and diligence, as had already been noted. For his industrious and diligent work alone, which included an intense contemplative life, penance, study, life in community, preaching and other apostolic works in accord with the charism of the Congregation, only for these should the religious receive from the faithful what was necessary for his sustenance. However, he should deny himself the right to demand in justice any remuneration for his labors, he should abandon himself to the providence of his Heavenly Father who works through the sensitivity and goodwill of the people. Even the Bull “Supremi Apostolatus” granted the faculty to receive alms and to go on the quest, so that the religious “never cease working night and day to provide spiritual nourishment for others” (Par. 9). Therefore, the assumption that living on alms was to live as a burden to others did not correspond to the reality of the situation (38).

The reasons alleged for seeking permission for stable income should be carefully examined to ascertain whether or not they correspond to reality; were such reasons based on the spiritual-theological reasoning of the Founder or were they influenced by the socio-economic boom of the industrialized nations? A critical discernment should also be made of the decision to have left such an important matter entirely up to the responsibility of each Province.

After much discussion, acknowledging the difficulty of legislating for an international group, since economic conditions varied so much, it was decided to leave each Province free to develop its own financial resources, and to do so in such way that it was in conformity with the religious, economic and social conditions of each geographic area: “The Chapter agrees that it is permitted to have a stable and permanent income in those places in which, according to the judgment of the Provincial Chapter, it is indispensable for the sustenance of our religious and the development of our apostolates” (39). Thus, after two centuries, did the living and practice of evangelical poverty in the Congregation, come to an end.

3.2 Free-will offerings and the quest

From the early days of the Institute, other than free-will offerings, Mass intentions were also accepted (40). Food offerings, such as grain, oil and wine, were solicited by pastors for the need of the Passionist community in much the same way as was done for other families in need (41). Among the offerings which the Passionist community could accept, the Bull “Supremi Apostolatus” (Par. 10) lists any money which might be received either by will or by donation or by way of the yearly donations which public authorities sometimes granted for pious works. There was a stipulated condition, however, namely, that the Congregation had no legal claim to these offerings nor to the execution of a will which might have been made in its favor. These, then, were offerings spontaneously given to which the Congregation had no strict right.

The first change in this matter took place during the lifetime of the Founder. Up until 1750 he was not only opposed to the daily quest made from door to door, as was the custom among the mendicant orders, but he also disapproved of the quest made during given seasons. For him, the quest gave rise to occasions of distractions and was foreign to the entire concept underlying the foundation of the Congregation (42). In the Rule of 1741, as we have seen, there was granted the possibility of going on the quest for that which was “of pure necessity,” in those instances in which the basic necessities for the maintenance of solitude was lacking. As the Congregation grew this extraordinary faculty was more and more accepted. After 1750, it became the normal way in which the needs of the retreat were met.

The quest was made by “oblates” or the non-clerical brethren. In 1752, during the canonical visitation at St. Eutizio, Paul had decreed that “the lay Brothers or Tertiaries were to wear a presentable Holy Sign , one that was clean and not ragged in any way.” Furthermore, he instructed the Superiors to give them a letter of introduction. This was to be presented to benefactors in whose homes they were to stay. The letter should ask that those on the quest be treated with the same charity as would be shown to Paul himself” (43).

In the first so-called “provincial chapter” of 1755, with the Founder himself as president, Paul ruled that this new practice be adopted generally throughout the Congregation (44). After the chapter, Paul sent a circular letter to the religious confirming the decrees of the chapter and granting faculties for the quest. However, he also warned them, “It is our desire and again we order that those quests not in conformity with the Institute be stopped. Those which are common or general should be undertaken according to the Rule, the exact observance of which, more than anything else, will provide for us” (45).

Development in this matter of the quest grew rapidly and involved the Founder himself. Between 1748-58 he found himself facing the reality of an expanding Congregation. New retreats were being established and the number of religious increased from 45 to 91. Almost every retreat was either unfinished or had to undergo renovation, for, at the time of their establishment many of them could not even provide the bare necessities or had been originally poorly built. By process of discernment Paul remained quite firm in not accepting fixed income neither for the houses of formation nor for the maintenance of other houses. He did not want the religious to go on the quest from house to house unless they were forced to “ out of necessity,” as the Rule of 1769 stipulated. It was also his wish that the quest be limited both in what was asked for and in the amount of time spent on the quest itself. In this way the religious would not be distracted by moving about and the people would not lose their esteem for the Congregation, for, in its beginnings no quest of any kind had been permitted.

In 1769 the following simple, evangelical phrase was removed from the Rule, “hoping through God’s mercy that it should never come about” that we have recourse to the quest; thus the Congregation will live in true poverty. It was normal, however, to quest during the time of harvest. In 1775 the Rule assumed that the quest was the ordinary way to provide what was necessary for the economic sustenance of the Congregation. Even the strict prohibition of seeking alms from door to door was attenuated: “Ordinarily, the brethren should not go from house to house to beg alms” (46).

This latter phrase became the norm for the Congregation. Fr. Bernard Silvestrelli will later write: “For the quest has become indispensable because of the poverty to which the Rule binds us.” And he further explains that the practice is not unduly burdensome to the faithful but rather a just, liberal and spontaneous compensation for the “spiritual benefits and good works done for them” (47). In the long history of the Congregation the quest had been qualified in its form and in those things which were asked for (48). It was also regarded as an occasion to exercise ministry, urging those on the quest not only to give good example but also to help the people meditate on Jesus Crucified.

Particular mention should be made of the transition from gratuitous apostolic service, without any stipend at all, to the receiving of a non-stipulated stipend. Personally, Paul never desired to receive compensation for his ministry, neither did he allow his religious to receive anything for

the parish missions and spiritual exercises they preached or other apostolic services rendered. The spirituality of the “apostolic life” seemed to him inconsistent with the instructions Jesus gave to his disciples and would prove to be an obstacle; it would have weakened faith in the providence of God Who had said, “the laborer is worthy of his keep” (49).

St. Paul’s successor in the governing of the Congregation, Fr. John Baptist Gorresio, placed this norm in the Regulations of 1778: “Let them preserve with all diligence that spirit of detachment which should be proper to every son of our poor Congregation and let them witness to it on every occasion” (50). This norm remained unchanged in the Regulations up until 1915. However, the General Chapter of 1908 had agreed to grant permission that they be able “to receive, over and above expenses and under the title of alms, that which the pastors or others spontaneously offered them, never, however, by way of any contract whatever” (51).

During the first half of the last century they began to receive free-will offerings for the ministries of spiritual exercises to the people and, eventually, for some parish missions. In the General Chapter of 1839, Dominic Barberi presented the capitulars with a reminder “relative to the need of preserving intact the holy practice left us by our Venerable Founder of not accepting anything, even though the offer might be made, for the missions preached and, in all our holy ministries, to avoid any shadow of avarice or any other such thing” (52). Dominic firmly held fast in his fidelity to the desire of the Founder, even when he was in England. There, he allowed for recompense for one’s traveling expenses: however, he enjoined “other offerings, absolutely not!; rather ask the donor to give his offering to the poor of the town or to some poor pastor. For retreats given, one may accept something for the house, but one should never accept anything for preaching a mission. Let them assiduously avoid asking for anything” (53). During the mission they could accept “any small, modest offering of food which was given for the missionaries. If such a gift was overly delicate or very rich or superfluous, it would be better to send all or part of it to a hospital or to those townspeople who were ill.” However, he also acknowledged that in the Provinces outside of Italy “always recognizing the universal practice, the acceptance of money for missions preached could be tolerated” (54).

Gradually the acceptance of offerings for retreats preached to the people, to religious institutes and to the clergy was not only officially recognized as not contrary to the practice of poverty proper to the Congregation, but was also extended to the preaching of missions. The reasons underlying such development were: the new economic conditions generally, the drastic changes in public transportation and the growth of the Congregation with the consequent expenditures involved. Of influence also was the change in the financial condition of the clergy, confraternities and pious foundations after the confiscation of properties under Napoleon and the new laws effecting ecclesiastical benefices enacted after the unification of Italy. The same situation prevailed in France during the last century and at the beginning of the present one. Furthermore, the situation of the Church both in America and in Australia, where benefices did not exist, left the support of the Church up to the offerings of the faithful. Thus it became the norm to receive compensation for apostolic services rendered.

Particularly because of its rapid growth since the middle of the last century, the Congregation had to have recourse to this means of providing funds. Many new and larger houses were built, resulting in heavy, burdensome debts (55). Fr. Peter Paul Moreschini, the Vicar General, presented a report to the General Chapter of 1908 in which he confirmed the existence of heavy debts in many retreats, with little hope of liquidation. As a result, he suggested that no new foundations be accepted for at least eight or ten years and asked that the Holy See be approached

in order to seek permission to develop the properties attached to our houses. In this connection, the Chapter also legislated the faculty to accept, over and above reimbursement for expenses incurred, offerings made during parish missions (56). Thus even this aspect of the practice of evangelical poverty, so precious to the Founder, gave way to the pressures of the socio-economic conditions of that period. As a sign of recognizing the will of St. Paul of the Cross, the commitment not to make a contract in accepting apostolic ministries was preserved, and this done in such way that the offerings and contributions received remained, in a certain sense, spontaneous. (57).

The special Chapter of 1968-70 solved the problem by accepting the current idea of compensation for work performed: "The primary financial resource of the Congregation is the assiduous labor of the religious in accord with their state and capacity. Let them gratefully receive the help of benefactors whether it be in the form of money or goods or loans" (58).

4. Position of the Special Chapter of 1968-70 concerning the practice of poverty

4.1 The socio-economic evolution at the time of the Founder

The economic structure of the XVIII Century was based on the possession of land and houses, revenues gained from the working of the land and the ownership of cattle, sheep, etc. There were also many craftsmen, some of them even organized. However, hardly any industry existed. Economic

security was assured by the use of natural resources; money counted for little. The economy in general, on both the national and family levels, tended to be a self-sufficient one. Social security as we know it today was non-existent; though a weak attempt was made to help farmers and craftsmen who had been victims of some calamity of nature. Examples of some helpful associations were the Monti of Piety and Pious Works. The sick were cared for at home and rarely in a hospital, for these were very primitive. One ordinarily traveled by foot, those financially well off depended on horses or horse and carriage for their transportation.

In the last century many notable changes took place both in commerce and industry, thus creating a new mentality and a new social structure. Both industry and the bureaucracy of the new States saw an ever-increasing number of people dependent on them for employment. There was also a notable increase in commerce, that industrial products be marketed and money be placed in circulation. While all this served for the betterment of one's way of life, it also created the need and potential for better education, health care and more efficient means of transportation. Economic security was no longer dependent on the land but rather on one's salary and steady employment. Everyone's life was effected by his working hours, by the new means of transportation and communication. Time took on a financial value due to one's working schedule and the use of one's day of rest. The establishment of social security effected the individual's entire life and substituted for that security which once was based on the large family. Travel and continual contact with those outside of the family circle broadened one's mind and one's vision of the world, even at the risk of weakening family bonds.

As for religion, society became increasingly more critical of God, the Church and religious institutes in general. The latter found themselves forced to justify their very existence as well as the services they rendered, even though their services were a benefit to society at large. Religious life was thus effected both in regard to vocations and the practice of poverty. Increasing attention was also given to the practice of poverty as a sharing of one's goods with the poor. Stress was

placed not so much on the imitation of Jesus Who died naked upon the cross, as on the ability to share everything one possessed with others.

All of these elements, though briefly mentioned, should be further examined in depth, that a prudent evaluation be made of our present situation in relation to the understanding and practice of poverty according to the mind of the Founder.

4.2 The theological-spiritual position of the Special Chapter

The general introduction to all the documents, as well as the special introduction to the report (VIII) on the economic situation, indicate the theological-spiritual basis which guided the capitulars.

The biblical texts of the O.T. most frequently quoted were those which spoke of the “anawin,” that is, those who placed all their hope in God alone (n.8) (59). The N.T. texts cited were the claim of Jesus that he was sent “to bring good news to the poor” (n.9); the appeal of Jesus to become poor in order to “receive the king and establish his kingdom (n.10); the invitation Jesus extended to the rich young man, to leave all; and, finally, the example of the Christian community at Jerusalem: “The Son of God became poor not only as a man, but because he chose to live among men in poverty as one freed from the bonds of riches and all material things which, humanly speaking, are thought to give power” (n. 11)

To be faithful to the spirit of the Founder today means to be poor in fact and in spirit, for it’s only in this way that, individually and as community, we can become “for the world a living existential sign of the transitory and fleeting nature of all created things. Thus we become true followers of the Jesus who was born in poverty, lived in poverty and, abandoned by the Father, died in poverty upon the cross (nn. 12-14).

It was pointed out that evangelical poverty is not merely identified with the economy even though ours is “a life lived in frugality and interest in the poor” but further requires that there be “a readiness to place all we possess – time, energy, talents and resources – at the service of others. This implies real openness to the needs of the world and an availability, in total self-denial, to our neighbor” (n. 15).

It is also to be noted how the teaching of the Founder on poverty as lived in imitation of the poor Jesus and as a means of attaining a deeper union with God, the Supreme Good, was changed to mean a sharing of our possessions with others.

In pointing out how a “practical and effective adaptation” regarding poverty be put into practice, it seems to overlook the apostolic efficacy poverty should have in helping the individual decide how to live poverty in his daily life. The norms were to be so broad as “to grant to each the possibility of making a responsible decision concerning poverty, according to his ability and the grace of God. In this way there will be a gradual growth in the capacity of each to arrive at a more perfect commitment to the evangelical ideal” (n.20).

With regard to the means of livelihood, as we have already seen, it was granted to each provincial chapter to decide, if it was thought necessary, whether or not a Province would own property and have a fixed income “for the support of the religious and the development of the apostolate “ (n. 30).

In the second session of the Special Chapter (1970) all of the above-mentioned principles were more completely reflected upon and expressed in such way as to make presentation of a syntheses of the theology of evangelical poverty relative to the thought of the Founder. Serious consideration was given to the Scripture passage in Corinthians (2 Cor. 8,9) which speaks of Jesus, who was rich but became poor for our sake, thus inspiring us to opt for him. The religious were also urged to submit to Divine Providence as the source of their security, without worrying about what tomorrow would bring and, should it happen, to be willing to accept the insecurity which comes from the lack of even the barest essentials.

The religious were to remember the early Christian community whose example of fraternal communion and sharing of all goods should be the model for the Passionist community. Their spirit of sharing was to go beyond the immediate members of the community and include “other communities and the needy” with the commitment to use “our material possessions for the relief of the sufferings of others and the promotion of justice and peace among all men.”

The principle of solidarity with the poor, which Paul expressed by asking that we be dependent on the charity of the faithful as does a poor family, was confirmed by the Chapter Document. In that document we are reminded to “willingly” submit ourselves “to the common law of labor.” That which the Founder implicitly had stipulated when he spoke of detachment in order to overcome all forms of selfishness and envy so that each one place his possessions at the disposition of others, is explicitly contained in the Chapter Document which, in terms of current theology, states that the unjust distribution of wealth, contrary to the Divine Law, has become “one of the principle sources of division and hatred and suffering.” Reconciled by Christ Crucified, the Passionist witnesses to poverty in the use of possessions, and desires to contribute to the well-being and peace of his brethren.

The spiritual-theological synthesis of the Document issued in the second session is in sufficient agreement with the thought of the Founder. What is missing, or is not sufficiently stressed, however, is the mystic dimension, that is, for Paul poverty is above all the means by which one attains union with the Supreme Good: “O blessed is that soul who faithfully observes holy poverty in love and in detachment from all created things, for God will transform it into His Most Holy Love” (60). Note should be taken of the ambiguity, or better, lack of legislation concerning various aspects of the practice of poverty on the personal, community and Congregational levels. Some of the principles stated in the first session had been eliminated, for they had raised doubts concerning any effective assistance to the individual in the practice of poverty. They rather presented a danger to the community, since they affirmed that it could be “left up to the individual, according to his strength and the grace given him, to make a responsible decision in the matter of poverty. In this way there will be a gradual growth in the capacity of each to arrive at an always more perfect commitment to the Gospel ideal.” However, though not having offered other positive suggestions, the principles set forth in the first session did influence the practical living of the religious. Numbers 196-207 refer to administration and ownership, but give no sufficient directions on the practice of personal poverty.

5. The poor come to the assistance of the poor

We would not fully understand the spirit and practice of poverty willed by the Founder for the Passionist Congregation, if we overlook his openness to the poor and his desire to share what he possessed with them. It was his wish that we be one with the poor, in the humility of

powerlessness, in the lack of freedom over the disposition of goods, in the difficulty of not being in control over expenditures which must be made or over one's working conditions. He also intended that we share with the poor whatever God had placed at the disposal of the Congregation.

He reminded the postulant that, before entering the Congregation, he should satisfy all his obligations of justice and charity toward his relatives and others and, if there be anything left over, he give it to the poor. He did not wish him to bring anything to the Congregation (61). Up until 1769 the Rule prescribed that there be a review of accounts every three months and, if there be any surplus, it should be distributed among the poor. The Rule also prescribed that anything left over from the orchards and vegetable garden beyond the needs of the religious should be given to the poor or to benefactors. Anything received by the religious by way of alms, without the consent of the Superior, was also to be distributed among the poor (62).

Bishop Strambi reminds us: "It was the Founder's wish that our retreats give alms to the poor who came asking for help and, further, in Rome two days a week be set aside on which bread and soup be given to the poor. He was solicitous in seeing to it that this practice, according to possibility, never be neglected. On many occasions he would strongly insist: "Whatever is above our needs in the refectory should be distributed at the front door, for it belongs to the poor." In order to help all those in need who came to Sts. John and Paul, he ordered that each time bread was baked for the community, some should also be made for the poor. "And it certainly was wonderful," notes Strambi, "to witness the miracle of holy poverty by which those who owned nothing and lived by begging were able to come to the help of the great numbers of poor people who came to them" (63). This desire to help the poor gave rise to the custom whereby the religious would set aside a portion of every meal and place it on a clean plate, thus adding to what would be given to those in need (64).

Never to be forgotten, was the commitment to alleviate the suffering of the people during the famine of 1764-67. Paul wrote a circular letter to the religious exhorting them to the practice of a more rigid abstinence and frugality in all things in order to have more set aside which could then be

used to mitigate the misery of the people. Furthermore, he exhorted them to share spiritually in the tribulations of the poor by voluntary penances and by imploring the Divine Mercy. As Strambi recalls, Paul used to say: "We ought to be the first to feel for the misery of our neighbor, to have compassion on him, to make our own the anxieties of our brethren and to give them part of our sustenance, as little as that might be, and thus share more intensely the common calamity which afflicts them. For Paul it seemed to be a good thing for our religious, out of motives of holy charity, to deprive themselves of half the oil permitted them and that the rest be distributed to the poor; he ceaselessly encouraged them to help the poor" (65).

It was also his wish that, when possible, they assist the poor by referring them to those who were able to assist them, either by employing them or allowing them to take what was left over from the harvest. One time, while at the retreat of St. Angelo, with the permission of the local Superior, he gave a woman what was needed for her daughter's trousseau, namely a mattress cover, sheets, a woolen blanket and a small sum of money (66).

This spirit of openness to the poor was most evident among the first generation of Passionists. It was considered to be a part of the authentic practice of evangelical poverty. The biographies of the first Passionists as well as the chronicles of the communities often mention the commitment to share with others which was considered by those thus committed as a blessing from God,

oftentimes, miraculous in nature. The theological-spiritual motivation for this attitude was based on the dignity of man, a dignity given value by the Word Incarnate. Paul often told his religious: "Look at their foreheads (of the poor), for there is imprinted the name of Jesus."

Paul and the early Passionist community lived in a determined theological and sociological era, therefore, they did not make the transition from a "pious-charitable" attitude to the concept of social justice as we know it today. Even if Paul and his religious acknowledged that the goods of this world were at the disposal of all the children of God, they were not aware of the differences in the order of social justice.

It is also to be noted that this gracious attitude of openness to the poor was always put into practice by religious who had to be keenly aware of maintaining a balance between such openness and other values, namely, the safeguarding of the solitude of the retreat, the good name of the community, the clear distinction between the poor and a benefactor or a friend who wished to spend some time in spiritual exercises (67). This overall evaluation of religious life and the values accepted by a religious community, explain some of Paul's attitudes. For example, forbidding the gratuitous acceptance of those who wished to come to make a retreat (67). Also forbidding almsgiving to women who came to the retreats of Sts. Sosio and Ceccano. The townspeople would have been very suspicious of women going to those places of solitude (68).

6. Some Conclusions

While it is true that it was practiced by many religious in its two and a half centuries of existence, the mystical thrust for a poverty which was inspired by the poor Christ, who died naked on the cross, did not last long among the Passionists generally. Its diminishment also lessened confidence in and total abandonment to Divine Providence, for, with the passage of time, those material means which we spoke of when speaking of the means of subsistence, came into use. The diminishment of the mystical thrust for poverty as a way of possessing God, the Supreme Good, came about perhaps because of an unclear idea of what Passionist identity is or because of a lesser commitment to prayer. A further contributing factor could have been the impact of the socio-cultural environment which was not enlightened by a living faith or a deep sense of charity. In Paul of the Cross, the mystical thrust for poverty encouraged the choice of living that poverty on the personal and community levels. Therefore, the way in which the Congregation should enter into a process of discernment, in conformity with the demands of its vocation, is that of prayer. Prayer should shed light on the manner of making memory of a Crucified God.

Joined to this mystical thrust, there should also be a theological-spiritual reflection on the meaning of evangelical poverty in the Church and the world today. We must, however, also keep in mind the social situation in many countries which renders religious communities less secure than in the past and, thereby, reduces them to poverty.

At the same time, however, the quantity of material goods possessed either for education or for the community or for the apostolate, etc., is not at all a sign of the poverty of a religious community. These things serve only to obscure that visible aspect of poverty which is meaningful to the people, an aspect which Paul insisted upon. His insistence was not so much for appearance sake, but rather that the interior reality of poverty which animates the religious be perceptible.

We must also remember that the mentality of the religious reflects that of his contemporaries. Today's mentality prompts him to become as efficient as possible in his work and, therefore, invites him to use those means which would facilitate that work. Perhaps depriving ourselves of such material things would make us more poor and would make our poverty more evident, even to the people. But does not the fact that the apostolates of today require specialization perhaps justify each religious having those material things (books, equipment, traveling) necessary for his work? Such does have repercussions on the lifestyle and poverty of the individual religious and the Congregation. Rahner asks whether we should be speaking of poverty or rather of a rigorous asceticism in relation to consumer goods and pleasures? Would not the spontaneous renunciation of the thousand and one possibilities in the use of consumer goods, in the context of religious poverty and for reasons of a living, authentic relationship with God, restore the clear-cut experience of the past? (69).

Let the admonition of Our Holy Founder be a stimulus to a sincere discernment of our situation in the matter of understanding and practicing poverty:

“If the members of our Congregation preserve the true spirit of poverty, the Congregation will be maintained in all its vigor. Should I be at the point of death, I would recommend three things, namely, that the spirit of prayer, solitude and poverty be maintained. The Congregation would then shine brilliantly before God and in the sight of the world” (70).

NOTES

1. Regola, ch. 48. St. Isidore in ch. 5 of his Rule affirms, "All the apostles were given to manual labor."
2. PL 145, 488, 490.
3. Vicaire H.M., *L'imitazione degli apostoli*, Roma 1964, p. 112.
4. Vicaire H.M., *L'istituzione della mendicita' presso I Frati predicatori*, in *Riv. Ascetica e Mist.*, 47 (1978) 126. Cfr. Giorgini F., *S. Paolo della Croce e il suo carisma di fondazione della Congregazione*, n.5 (saggio storico inedito).
5. Strambi, *Vita*, 450: Paul used to say that, "the sons of the Passion of Jesus Christ must be detached from all created things and our Congregation must be outstanding in this regard, i.e., to be poor in spirit, naked and deprived of all things."
6. *Rules and Constit.*, 54/III/1-11.
7. S. Paolo della Croce, *La Congregazione*, ..notizia '47, n.3.
8. idem n. 9 "...having rid themselves of attachment to earthly things, the religious should concentrate their thoughts on God; they should aspire to possess Him Alone." Paul wrote to his brother Joseph: "By living in poverty, God will grant you in the depths of your soul an inestimable treasure of grace... by willingly accepting a life that is painful and by dying for the love of the Passion and death of your Sovereign Lord, who for love of us chose to live in poverty and then die naked on the cross, you will be most pleasing and dear to God"; *Let.* II, 555. And further "...those whom God predestined to be conformed to His divine Son in glory, he first predestined to be conformed to him in poverty and on the cross"; *Let.* II, 555. In the tract on "Morte Mistica" Paul states that one makes progress by passing from the practice of poverty in material things to that of poverty in things spiritual by accepting contempt, lack of recognition, lack of appreciation and not to be found pleasing - "so that I am formed in the image of the most poor Jesus. To die with you on the cross in total poverty!" However, "to then rise with the triumphant Christ in heaven"; *Let.* V. 13-14; 16-17.
9. S. Paolo della Croce, *La Congregazione*. ..notizia '68 n.7. He also wrote to his brother: "If he who preaches missions asks for an offering, the fruits of his work would vanish and the very concept of the Congregation would be lost," *Let.* II, 551.
10. S. Paolo della Croce, *La Congregazione*. ..notizia '47, n.9; *Reg et Const.*, 42/I/4-6
11. idem *Notizia* '47, n. 27
12. Cfr. Giorgini, F., *S. Paolo della Croce e il suo carisma di fondazione della Congregazione*.
13. See *Reg. et Const.*, 10/I/15-28; 42/I-III 5ss. It was Paul's wish that the religious handle money as little as possible. In 1767, at S. Sosio, he decreed: "We order that when money is to be handled it be done by an oblate or one of the workmen, this for the sake of fittingness and

respect for holy poverty; in the presence of benefactors or, for that matter, in the presence of anyone at all, the religious are not to express an excessive interest in money. If they should have to make any expenditures, let them do so either through an oblate, a workman or benefactor, allowing them to handle the matter.” Can. Visit. 1767, decree n. 2.

As for traveling on foot, it is well to remember that this was considered one of the characteristics of the itinerant preacher. As Vicaire writes, this meant that one traveled in all humility: “it is not solely a question of the poverty of a settled community in which one is deprived of all ownership, but of the poverty of the traveling preacher.” Vicaire, *L’Istituzione della mendicita’ presso I Frati predicatori*, Riv. Asc. e Mist. 47 (1978) 126.

14. Reg. et Const., 64/5/14-70. In the retreats, however, they fasted all year long, excepting on feast days. From 1746 on they fasted on three days of the week and all during Advent and Lent. Abstinence from meat was perpetual.
15. See Mt. 10:9-11; Lk. 8:3. “Some women provided for them out of their own resources.” Paul treasured this manifestation of poverty as well as the humility it engendered by depending on others for every necessity. It is from this practice in the life of Jesus that the original norm of the Congregation is taken, namely that the sindaco (local official) would keep the money and, in a certain sense, the religious would depend on him for its use. Even the custom of begging bread from the brethren during meals was a practice in humility and poverty (See *Consuetudines*, p. 51, lines 4-5). It is important to note the motivation for these practices: in imitation of Jesus, to conquer human respect and to acquire the attitudes of humility and solidarity with the poor.
16. Reg. et Const., 48/I/59-67.
17. idem 54/I/20-30; p.153, n.16: annotation of Mons. Cavalieri. This “declaration” was removed from the Rule of 1746.
18. idem 52/I/60-70; 40/I/5-11. In 1759 at St. Angelo, the religious were reminded that what they needed should be asked for and they should be content with that which is given them; “neither is it permissible for anyone to take anything for himself, a thing which is harmful and opposed to holy poverty and obedience. The poor religious should be content to receive that which is given him in the name of poverty and obedience”; Can. Visit., 1759, decree n. 3. See also Let IV, 239 nn. 2,6,7.
19. idem 52/I-III/54-70. He also recommended to the brothers who were sent outside the retreat to seek alms, “to beg alms in imitation of the humility of Jesus Christ”; Let IV, 29 n.6.
20. S. Paolo della Croce, *La Congregazione...notizia* ‘48, n.7. Reg. et Const. 48/I/41-45. In 1741 he prescribed that an account of the finances be made every three months and that what was surplus be given to the poor.
21. Reg. et Const. p. 162, n. 76 BI Dominic Barberi considered this admonition and disposition to be “prophetic”; “I myself always thought this matter to be prophetic, and it’s my fear that, through our fault, it may come to an end.” These were his words to the capitulars in 1839 asking them not to give permission to accept an offering for preaching parish missions.

22. Reg. et Const., 44/II/11-18.
23. Let II, 274. Such poverty, without any income and without the daily quest, was used by Paul as a defense against the allegations made by the Mendicant Friars. He used to tell Cerruti "...those blessed servants of God, the Frati, have given us opposition, and yet we have no income nor do we go on the quest"; Let 280. See also the letter to Fr. Struzziere; Zoffoli E., S. Paolo della Croce, I, 870.
24. Reg. et Const., 44/I/5-7; 54/I/1-5.
25. idem 54/I/6-14.
26. Let. V, 12-14; in n. XI, amongst other things, we find these words: "I will strive to imitate the poor Jesus in everything: He, the Lord of heaven, was not ashamed to embrace extreme poverty, to live in dire poverty and abjection, and this out of love for me and as an example for me. I will despise myself, and will rejoice in being despised by others and in being set aside by everyone...I will strive to be most poor, to be deprived of even that which I have and will always seek to impoverish myself in order to become like the most poor Jesus. O to die in poverty on the cross as You did!" As was previously mentioned, the themes "death - poverty," "despised, abject-poverty" were rooted in the development of a spirituality of poverty as part of the apostolic life.
27. Reg. et Const. 42/I-III/5-10; Let. V, 57,58; Let. III, 694; S. Paolo della Croce, La Congregazione, notizia '47, n.6.
28. idem p. XXI; Processi, IV 264; Strambi, Vita, 86.
29. S. Paolo della Croce, La Congregazione...notizia '68, n.5.
30. Strambi, Vita, 451; his biographer adds: "He never wished to accept any legacy of whatever kind, under any pretext whatever"; Let. III, 729-730.
31. The Bull "Supremi Apostolatus" par. 4; Reg. et Const., 43/V/12-18. The General Chapter of 1747 had already prohibited the "sale or marketing" of the garden produce; see Dec. e Rac. decr. n. 4,1.
32. Let IV, 309; Strambi, Vita, 451. To preserve "poverty inviolable" the General Chapter of 1769 issued a decree on this matter; see Decreti e Rac. n. 133. Paul feared that any similar acceptance might "becloud that strict poverty on which the Congregation had been founded and established"; Let. III, 729.
33. Consuetudines, p. 79, lines 41-45. This matter seems to be contrary to the will of the Founder. Those who thought otherwise, based their judgment on the following wording of the Rule: "It is not licit to receive real estate or personal property under title of heredity or under any other title. However, should anything be offered under the title of an alms...it may be accepted"; Reg. et Const.. 49/IV/10-12. Fr. Titus Cerrone in *Expositio historica Juris particularis C.P.*, Torino, 1946, pp. 189-190, says that such a custom was dubious for it dealt with a matter which was dear to the heart of the Founder and of fundamental importance to the spirituality of the Congregation.

34. Decreti e Rac. nn. 226, 562, 712, 731, par. 4; p. 151, n. VI: mindful of the serious debts of many retreats, Fr. Peter Paul Moreschini, the Vicar General, made a proposal to the General Chapter of 1908 to seek temporary permission of the Holy See to cultivate “the grain fields and the grapevines on the land within the walls of their property.” The Chapter approved the proposal. In contradistinction to this, when establishing the retreat at Lucca, St. Angelo, the General ordered that an olive grove on the property be cut down. For the same reason a vineyard, located on land given to the retreat of St. Eutizio, was removed, this in order to enlarge the vegetable garden.
35. Chapter Document, n. 199.
36. Decreti e Rac., decree n. 773. The commission was nominated on Sept. 8, 1958, Acta C.P. XX (1958) 397.
37. Acta C.P., XXIII (1964) 104-105; Reg. et Const. C.P., 1959, nn. 52, 92: Statuta C.P., 1964, n. 95.
38. In this matter, I think nn. 29, 30 VIII of the 1968 Document was very superficial.
39. idem n. 39; These documents of the Special Chapter were sent to all the houses of the Congregation.
40. Reg. et Const. 44/I/20-28; see also the report of the episcopal visitation of 1733 in which the same norm appears, p. 156.
41. Reg. et Const, 46/I/6-59; S. Paolo della Croce, La Congregazione...notizia ‘68, n. 7.
42. Reg. et Const., 48/I/30-36; when traveling in unfamiliar places, the Superior was allowed to give them some money to cover any expenses, thus “they would avoid any distractions and wandering about which would occur if they went on the quest”; Let. II, 274; they should be satisfied with any free-will offerings given them “so that they (the religious) are not distracted by going on the quest.”
43. Canonical Visit, 1752, n. 5.
44. Bolletino C.P. IV (1923) 47: To proceed juxta Regulas when going on the quest, they were instructed to accept only grain, wine, oil, peas, beans, etc. ...thus permanently excluding the acceptance of other alms, such as eggs, cheese, wool, dried fruit and especially any money which was offered that the foregoing might be bought.
45. Let. IV, 252. Bro. Bartolomeo recalls: “He used to tell the Rectors that the religious should be content with little and that they should not be sent out of their solitude so often, for in going out often religious spirit is easily lost; he wished them not to be avaricious for possessions, but to be content with the bare necessities”; Processi, IV, 260.
46. Reg. et Const., 44-45/I-V/9ss.
47. Consuetudines, 232, lines 24-28.

48. Decreti e Rac., p. 216. "Quaestuatio"; p. 226, "Paupertas"; here is evidenced the concern of the General Chapters regarding this matter.
49. Strambi, Vita, 453 - he tells of refusing alms offered him as payment for his apostolate, "even though the retreats of the Congregation were in dire need." S. Paolo della Croce, La Congregazione...notizia 68, n. 7. "That the effects of their intense labors be not in vain, the religious should avoid the least shadow of avarice or any suspicion of self interest."
50. Regolamenti comuni 1778, part II, ch. V, n. 13.
51. Decreti e Rac., n. 561.
52. idem pp. 110-119. Dominic admits, however, that travel expenses should be paid by the one requesting the mission.
53. Dominic, "Memories left to our young missionaries in England," Postulation Archives, Ms. Domenico, VII, 3, f. 10 rv.
54. Consuetudines, p. 200, lines 15-31.
55. See the report of the General Chapter of 1878, Dec. e Rac., pp. 130, 137, decrees 442-443, regarding the administrative financial report and debts which can be incurred and the permissions necessary for such. The trip of Fr. Ignatius Paoli, Provincial, to France and to Spain was made to help pay off the debts of the large houses and the church in London. He took advantage of the occasion to establish hospices in Paris and in Santander in 1878. Likewise, the purpose of the trip of Fr. Martin Byrne and others of the Province of St. Patrick to America, was to collect funds to pay off the debts accumulated in the building of the house and church in Dublin as well as other houses of the Province.
56. Decreti e Rac., n. 562; pp. 147, 151.
57. Statuti comuni of 1964 reads, "Although our religious should always be ready, in accord with the spirit of the Congregation, to exercise the sacred ministry without recompense or reward, nevertheless they may...accept an honorarium offered for the ministry.
58. Chapter Document, n. 197.
59. The numbers in parenthesis refer to report VIII of the Chapter Documents of the 1st session of 1968.
60. The synthesis of the Chapter Document is that of nn. 10-13. Reg. et Const. 52/I/70s.
61. Reg. et Const., 10/I/41-55; in 1769 he wanted to insert into the Rule the following norm: that the novice, when he renounces the use and usufruct of his possessions, does not do so in favor of the Congregation. Reg. et Const., 51/IV/note 2.
62. Reg. et Const., 46/III/43-46; 49/IV-V/5-9; p. 162, n. 76; Decreti e Rac., n. 4, par. 1.
63. Strambi, Vita, 306-307; Processi, IV, 369, 417.

64. Consuetudines, pg. 276, lines 25-31. Paul wrote to Fr. Fulgenzio to make sure that “each religious mortifies himself by setting something aside; if the pittance is very little, then with what has been left aside, practically nothing will remain,” Let. II, 119.
65. Strambi, Vita, 307; Let IV, 277-278; Giammaria Cioni, Annali, n. 479.
66. Strambi, Vita, 311-312.
67. Canonical Visitation in Ceccano 1767, decree n. 13: “The retreatants should give the usual offerings, not that it be used for the religious, but that it might be distributed to the poor.”
68. idem, decree n. 2.
69. Rahner, K., Teologia della poverta’, Roma 1967, p. 70ss; see also Gutierrez Vega, Teologia sistemática de la vida religiosa, Madrid, 1976, pp. 341-359; Gonzalez-Ruiz, Poverta’ evangelica e promozione umana, Assisi, 1967; Regamey R., La pauvreté et l’homme d’aujourd’hui, Paris 1963.
70. Strambi, Vita, 450-451.