

## **Authentic CPPS Community Life:**

### Discussion in the Units

This document is provided to enhance our dialogue on Community Life. All are asked to read and reflect on it prior to the discussion. We are also providing questions that will be used in our discussion, so that you can have time to prepare your responses.

### From our Normative Texts

#### Community Life

- C6. Whereas all the people of God are made one in the Blood of the New Covenant, our Congregation gives living testimony of this special unity through its community life according to the spirit of St. Gaspar.
- C7. Members live in the residence to which they are assigned. The basis of this community life is the bond of charity among the members who form a family in Christ. This living union is given expression by mutual assistance, both spiritual and material, the pursuit of common goals and also by living together, as long as the needs of the apostolate do not demand otherwise.
- C8. The bond of charity unites the varied gifts of the members for the service of the Congregation and the Church, so that the differences in culture, gifts, age, and office become advantageous for all the members. Thus they mutually and willingly share their natural and supernatural talents.
- C9. In order to foster this mutual aid to one another, the members give special place to the conferences and meetings of the community and to the daily gatherings for such matters as meals, recreation and ordinary conversations. Thus the members mutually inform one another in both the theological and pastoral fields, rendering more effective the mission of our Congregation. Moreover, in these community meetings, especially on the local level, the members gain a knowledge of the affairs of the Congregation, and Directors gain an insight into the thinking and talents of the members and are better able to direct the community.
- C10 The bond of charity is fostered among the members by the sharing of communications which deepen the sense of community-consciousness and identity and help the individual members realize that they form an international and multicultural family as a worldwide Congregation.

Members have a right to information regarding their affairs, whether individually or collectively. The exercise of this right, however, presupposes that communications are true and as complete as justice and charity allow.

- C11 The bond of charity extends in a special way to the sick and aged of the Congregation who in their trials have a special fellowship with the suffering Christ and implore God's grace for the other members. With equal love our dead are remembered in the prayers of all. With their labors they have prepared the harvest the Congregation is now reaping.
- C12 The Congregation also gives witness to the bond of charity by welcoming guests, especially priests and religious, into its houses. Nevertheless, there is recognized the need of each member for privacy for his interior recollection, prayer, and study.

- C13 The members are to strive to develop their spiritual life, uniting themselves intimately with God, in order to increase their apostolic zeal. Therefore they attach great importance to those means necessary to foster this life, particularly the reading of Sacred Scripture, mental prayer, days of recollection and retreats, as well as frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- C14 Prayer in common is an excellent means of fostering union with Christ and the bond of charity among the members. The concelebration of the Eucharist, the recitation in common of some part of the Liturgy of the Hours and the proper prayers of the Congregation are recognized as effective signs of community life.
- C15 Community life is to be deeply nourished by the spirit of the Gospel, manifested above all in the counsels which the Lord gave to his disciples.
- C16 Imitation of the poor Christ frees the members from every undue attachment to material goods, enriching them for the Kingdom of God and fostering the giving of themselves to the apostolate.  
The members may acquire, retain, administer and alienate their own temporal goods. However, they give to the Congregation the income from their ministry. The Congregation in turn provides them with the necessities of life and takes care of them especially in time of sickness and old age. With a sense of responsibility and generosity each member expresses his love for the Congregation and for the poor.
- C17 Just as the individual members give witness of poverty, so does the Congregation as a whole, being careful to avoid whatsoever may offend those we serve.  
The Provinces of the Congregation share their resources with one another, those which are better endowed assisting those which suffer need.  
The acquiring, possessing, administering and alienating of temporal goods by the Congregation is governed by canon 741.
- C18 Because of our love of Christ, our members undertake to observe perfect continence in celibacy, which is a form of life of proved worth in the Church. It makes them free for God and for service to their neighbor as they await their resurrection in Christ. In community life, characterized by mutual understanding and fellowship, this charism finds protection and development.
- C19 In imitation of Christ who shed his blood, the members are obedient to the Father's will, primarily as manifested in the Gospel. This implies a sacrifice of the will of the member in order to cooperate in community life and in service to the people of God. This obedience finds a practical expression in our observance of the Constitution and of our norms and regulations, as well as in our obedience to the lawfully constituted authority in our Congregation and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff as highest superior (canon 590 §2).
- C20 Dialogue among all the members, as it helps them to develop their personalities, must lead them to a realization of that unity which the Lord wished for his disciples. Such unity is a sign of the presence of his Kingdom in their midst. Community life is an important source of their apostolic strength.

## From Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter for the Year of Consecrated Life

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- ➔ All our Institutes are heirs to a history rich in charisms. At their origins we see the hand of God who, in his Spirit, calls certain individuals to follow Christ more closely, to translate the Gospel into a particular way of life, to read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith and to respond creatively to the needs of the Church. This initial experience then matured and developed, engaging new members in new geographic and cultural contexts, and giving rise to new ways of exercising the charism, new initiatives and expressions of apostolic charity. Like the seed which becomes a tree, each Institute grew and stretched out its branches.

Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging. More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities. In this way we come to see how the charism has been lived over the years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it encountered and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted.

- ➔ Living the present with passion means becoming “experts in communion”, “witnesses and architects of the ‘plan for unity’ which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design”. In a polarized society, where different cultures experience difficulty in living alongside one another, where the powerless encounter oppression, where inequality abounds, we are called to offer a concrete model of community which, by acknowledging the dignity of each person and sharing our respective gifts, makes it possible to live as brothers and sisters.

So, be men and women of communion! Have the courage to be present in the midst of conflict and tension, as a credible sign of the presence of the Spirit who inspires in human hearts a passion for all to be one (cf. Jn 17:21). Live the mysticism of encounter, which entails “the ability to hear, to listen to other people; the ability to seek together ways and means”. Live in the light of the loving relationship of the three divine Persons the model for all interpersonal relationships.

- ➔ Men and women religious, like all other consecrated persons, have been called, as I mentioned, “experts in communion”. So I am hoping that the “spirituality of communion”, so emphasized by Saint John Paul II, will become a reality and that you will be in the forefront of responding to “the great challenge facing us” in this new millennium: “to make the Church the home and the school of communion.”[5] I am sure that in this Year you will make every effort to make the ideal of fraternity pursued by your founders and foundresses expand everywhere, like concentric circles.

Communion is lived first and foremost within the respective communities of each Institute. To this end, I would ask you to think about my frequent comments about criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy, hostility as ways of acting which have no place in our houses. This being the case, the path of charity open before us is almost infinite, since it entails mutual acceptance and concern, practicing a communion of goods both material and spiritual, fraternal correction and respect for those who are weak ... it is the “mystique of living together” which makes our life “a sacred pilgrimage”. We need to ask ourselves about the way we relate to persons from different cultures, as our communities become increasingly international. How can we enable each member to say freely what he or she thinks, to be accepted with his or her particular gifts, and to become fully co-responsible?

- ➔ In this letter, I wish to speak not only to consecrated persons, but also to the laity, who share with them the same ideals, spirit and mission. Some Religious Institutes have a long tradition in this regard, while the experience of others is more recent. Indeed, around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a “charismatic family”, which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality.

I urge you, as laity, to live this Year for Consecrated Life as a grace which can make you more aware of the gift you yourselves have received. Celebrate it with your entire “family”, so that you can grow and respond together to the promptings of the Spirit in society today. On some occasions when consecrated men and women from different Institutes come together, arrange to be present yourselves so as to give expression to the one gift of God. In this way you will come to know the experiences of other charismatic families and other lay groups, and thus have an opportunity for mutual enrichment and support.

## From the Message of the XX General Assembly

### **Provocative Proposition for Living Our Community Life**

Like the open heart of Christ, our communities are sacred spaces of deep dialogue where we share our joys and sorrows, hopes and dreams in an atmosphere of trust, respect and love.

Our communities are grounded in the covenant relationship with Christ and one another. In this bond of charity we are sensitive to and enriched by our cultural diversity. We give witness through the authenticity of our lives and a simple lifestyle. We are a reconciled community in order to be missionaries of reconciliation.

As Christ, who opened his arms on the Cross, drew all peoples to Himself, we, incorporated members and lay associates, form an open communion where all are welcome.

## Some Quotes on Community Life from St. Gaspar

“Community life demands a certain degree of virtue and mutual compassion (2877).” Gaspar understood the practical issues of living the common life. He knew that even among good people with the very best intentions misunderstandings and problems arise. “You know very well that even among good people reasons for suffering are encountered,” he wrote. “The heart is good, the fear of God is not lacking, but to live in community is to live continuously exercising virtue.”

This is why “the bond of charity” became the distinguishing feature of our community life. Gaspar believed that “charity keeps everything balanced out (2576).” He compared life in community to family life where “there is a diversity in natures, a diversity in temperaments” so disagreements are predictable and why charity is virtue that offers “the great balance” when it is practiced (2666).”

It is “the mantle of charity” the preserves everything (3422).”

One of the weapons most often use to inflict damage on another in community life is our words. “As for hearing words that are hurtful one must say to oneself: ‘Everything is good for gaining Paradise.’ With holy indifference, shrug them off and delight in being able to suffer for the love of God and do some good turn to the other who hurled those biting words at you (1740).”

Gaspar understood “that charity is benign. In charity, let us forgive everyone and go forward (972).” Or, as a member of my province likes to say, “Build a bridge and get over it.”

“In as far as it is given to us, we should supply for the defects of our neighbor and excuse them with charity (2819).”

“The more I advance in age, the more I recognize human weakness and I see that charity must be extended as far as possible whenever possible (1766).”

“Make every effort to be compassionate toward your neighbor and uphold charity, in addition to using that prudence which is proper to your age and state of maturity (2981).”

“In community living, much patience and composure are needed, otherwise the devil will win out. All must be done with a gentle and ingratiating zeal (2428).”

“Let us explain our position, let us pray, and that is how we will make progress. I do recognize, I repeat, that the communication of ideas is very beneficial (1771).” To this end, Gaspar called for a Congressus “each month and even more often...in which they discuss whatever is needed for the sufficient execution of things (2140).”

“Do as much good as your strength permits. The very thought of leaving the Society is senseless. Whether healthy or infirm, whether possessing vigorous strength or not, the Institute is our all (1847).”

### Brief Summary of St. Gaspar’s Idea of a Mission House

The mission house was a unique contribution from St. Gaspar and was a fundamental part of his plan for the renewal of the Church and the clergy. There were other examples of mission houses during Gaspar’s life, but the main focus for many of them was personal sanctification. For Gaspar, the mission house was both a place of prayer and a place of mission. It was truly a center for evangelization. Gaspar gifted the Church with an idea of priests living together in the Bond of Charity and serving the Church through their mission and ministry. They truly *lived the mission*. The mission house was not just a residence, it was a mission.

There were two broad types of missions connected to the mission house. First, there was the external mission. Preachers went out from the mission house to preach popular missions and retreats all around Italy. Second, there was the internal mission. Those who were present in the mission house engaged in a variety of ministries for the local church. Each mission house had an attached church which served the local community. The mission houses also served as an ongoing formation center for the diocesan clergy. It was very important to St. Gaspar that the Congregation’s mission houses truly be an integral part of the diocese.

St. Gaspar was quite detailed in his plan for the mission house. From the *Transunto*, the rule of the Congregation from 1822, we learn that Gaspar envisioned the life of the mission house being devoted to both prayer and communal sharing. Time was set

aside during the week for organized conversations on different theological topics. Gaspar's plan called for seven priests and three brothers to be in each mission house and each one had his own responsibilities. There was a president, superior, vice-superior, archivist/secretary, treasurer, director of the missions, director of internal ministries, and a member responsible for the church and sacristy. Gaspar called for them to gather once a month to attend to the business of the community.

It is clear that St. Gaspar's notion of a mission house was an essential component of his vision for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. The specifics of Gaspar plan from the 19th century can not be copied exactly for the 21st century, however, can the underlying principles help us renew our community life for the 21st century?

*The information was compiled from various sources including an article by Rev. John Klopke, C.P.P.S. which can be found at [http://www.cppsmissionaries.org/download/history\\_and\\_archives/klopke\\_mission\\_house.pdf](http://www.cppsmissionaries.org/download/history_and_archives/klopke_mission_house.pdf)*

### **Questions for use in your discussion**

1. Do you have a favorite experience of living in community? What was it about that situation that made it a positive experience for you?
2. What are your hopes and dreams for the kind of community life that you want to live and that you want for our unit?
3. How would you describe CPPS community life at its best? What are the essential elements of good community life and what are the values that we must live?
4. Practically speaking, what would it look like for our community to be "like the open heart of Christ?"
5. Practically speaking, what would "the fullest participation possible of lay associates in our communal life, spirituality, and apostolic work" look like in our unit?
6. As members of a Society of Apostolic Life, we do not take the vow of poverty, yet we are challenged to live an authentic and simple lifestyle. What does that mean in our context?
7. How would we live Gaspar's concept of the mission house in our context?
8. How might our community life be renewed so to attract and welcome new vocations?
9. Any other aspect of community life that you would like to discuss and have a part of our worldwide dialogue?