

HISTORY OF THE MISSIONARY ACTIVITY OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

Emanuele Lupi, CPPS

Introduction

Let me first start by thanking the General Council for the invitation to share with you some reflections on the history of the missionary activity of our congregation. The first thing I thought I could do, was to use only the sources that can be found in our General Archive, which are: the “Books of the Congresses of the General Direction”, the Actas, the chronicles and the preparatory drafts of the General Assemblies, the “workshops” and finally the “Meetings of the Major Superior” (MMS) that, in the General Archive, are inventoried with the title *Acta Conventuum Curiae Generalis et Directorum Province lium et Vicariatorum*.

I was asked to provide you with a general historical overview of the topic by using also, and mainly, the most recent documentation. Going against those archival rules which state that sources from an archive cannot be published earlier than 70 years (in our case, therefore, not after 1939), I will also refer to deeds and names of people who are still alive. I thus apologize to those who may feel that reference is made to them in the course of my address.

I am aware, like the rest of you, that this meeting marks the beginning and is an input into that dialogue which, as the invitation letter which you have received says, “will have to continue over future years.” All of this is meant to be done in fidelity with the resolutions of the 18th General Assembly (extraordinary) convened in Rome in September 2004 which, in its final resolutions, invites the General Moderator and the General Council, in consultations with the Major Superiors, to develop a plan for the Mission which includes the formulation of a “theology of the Mission” that represent the synthesis of our CPPS tradition and constitutes that necessary basis for future programs planned by our Society.

Called as we are to “give a start within the congregation to conversations in order to produce a common view, a theology and a spirituality regarding the theme of the mission” we shall start our journey into history.

I. The Beginning of the Conversations

On the 15th of March 1985, the General Council gathered in the Abbey of St. Felice, in Giano. Much of that gathering was dedicated to the theme of Mission. From the emphasis of Fr. Leon Flaherty in underlining the importance of a “Mission Statement”, it was clear that within the congregation, no such a statement had been formulated before. As Fr. Raymond Cera, the General Secretary at the time, writes, Fr. Flaherty really wanted to stress and let all be aware of the importance of a “Mission Statement” for our congregation. Much time has been spent in the Assemblies to discuss issues regarding many other questions, yet very little time been really devoted to the theme of Mission. Nevertheless, the question of Mission should represent a priority in our Institute. It should represent such a central issue as to be considered the pillar on which all our work is based.

Allow me to say that these are prophetic words that, when analyzed in light of successive events, really pave the way to a long reflection over our past, made up of opportunities which we have so often missed, given the statement that our confrere clearly made.

What was Fr. Flaherty referring to? Up until that 15th of March 1985, there had been 13 meetings of the Major Superiors (MMS) in the congregation¹ and after reading the proceedings of all those meetings, I have never found the question of Mission raised. The MMSs started in 1969. They were called every year (MMS was not yet biannual) in diverse sites of the various provinces, and the main goal was to review and study what we call today the Normative Texts which form a part of all the congregation's legislative body.

The same General Assemblies, both ordinary and extraordinary, which only started in the congregation from 1896 onwards, until that moment (those that had been held, were 13) had never touched such an issue in a direct way. There had been exchanges of ideas, here and there, yet never in the context of the formulation of a general "Mission Statement" able to immediately condition the General Assemblies or the elections of the candidates. Fr. Flaherty clearly states that all of the CPPS' work should be newly understood and redirected from the point of view of the Mission, as was underlined during the meeting MMS convened in Kufstein in 2000, by Fr. Lucas Rodríguez and others. The CPPS will be characterized and show its distinctiveness according to the missionary action which it will be able to carry out. Mission, in Fr. Flaherty's view, must be that milestone and that starting point on which to refound our congregation. This, however, requires reflection and mostly a great ability to grasp and interpret those needs that today's society shows us in the historical *present* and in the geographical areas where St. Gaspar's children live and work. In this context, the words that Fr. Andrew Pollack spoke on the 8th of October 1947, resound even stronger, when, during a session of the General Assembly that finally elected him as a Councilor, he said that "basically, it is not us who decide how to serve the Church, it is the Church that decides how we have to serve it." The Pope, the Church, asked St. Gaspar to do what he did, the Church itself continues asking what it wants from us. That's why Fr. Anton Loipfinger, in one of the passages of his speech on the "state of the congregation" during the General Assembly in 1989, wanted to underline that our understanding of our apostolate should be large enough so as to let all share this vision, yet it should be concrete enough to imply practical consequences.

Fifteen years after that speech, that marks the start of a reflection which still goes on, the word "Re-founding" was identified as the key word and the main engine which boosted the debate during the special General Assembly of 2004. In the *Instrumentum Laboris* of that Assembly, yet also in the meeting of the Major Superiors which was held in Niagara Falls in September 2002, the need to review the congregation's missionary action, emerged very clearly.

In the opening address of that Assembly, Fr. Barry Fisher, when referring to the topic of the "refoundation", wanted to stress that this choice does not draw on the central nucleus of the congregation as such, yet it is an invitation to live and work in a creative faithfulness. It is a question of recapturing the energy and the direction of St. Gaspar. Basically, as Fr. Barry

¹ It is interesting to note that since this time up to and including the MMS in Bangalore in 2008, there have been an additional 17 such meetings.

reminds us, CPPS is founded on the Mission and there it finds its strength and the reason for its existence. Outside of the context of the Mission, CPPS would have no reason to exist.

“Recapturing the energy of St. Gaspar.” This was the invitation of the General Moderator at the time, to the people gathered for the General Assembly. But what does that mean? We should review the history of our origin a little and allow me to do this by proposing a document, which to me is extraordinary, which I found, almost by chance, in the Public Records office in Rome and which basically is the only source used in this study that does not belong to our General Archive.

By making a logical reconstruction of the work, one can understand that it was definitely written before 1841 (probably in 1840) and that the author is a cleric or a lay person close to the ecclesiastical world who knows our congregation very well. The title of the document is: “Reflections on the Rules of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood” and a note below specifies that such a document is a sort of “Reflections on the Rules of the Congregation to be used for the draft of the Breve for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.” In five essential points the author says that: [1] The congregation was founded by the will of the Holy See, as a concrete realization of Pope Pius VII’s desire to [2] open a new pastoral field to the secular clergy so that [3] they may apply themselves in the Missions, [4] in the Spiritual Exercises. And, [5] by means of other works, they could nurture the people. Added to that, the members of this congregation will be called to be specialists of what we would call, in modern terms, the “theology of the blood of Christ”, in a diocesan ecclesial context that is both universal and particular. The Missionary of the Precious Blood, indeed, cannot be exempted from collaborating with the bishop of the dioceses where there is a Mission house.

II. Historical Itinerary of the Concept of Mission in the CPPS tradition

The word “Mission” has been recurrent in the texts quoted so far, but what did Gaspar really mean, in light of the mandate that the Pontiff himself had assigned him? To try to understand all of this, we are helped by a text that Fr. Beniamino Conti published some years ago and by which he intends to interpret the spirit of the Founder. Thus Conti writes:

The Mission must be a strong call to conversion and growth in the Christian life. Such a call takes place through certain elements: the action of the supernatural (divine assistance, prayer, and penitence), the organization before the mission starts and a precise order in its actuation (“Missions are like a holy machine with the shape of a watch” St. Gaspar writes), the witness to a holy life on the part of the missionaries, the announcement of the word of God in various ways (homilies, talks, catechisms, etc.), the services.”²

We also know that each mission produced fruits that had to be continuously nourished in any case. That is why “wherever St. Gaspar went and preached for a mission, he wanted that associations to be established according to different categories of people [...] and every now and then the missionaries would go and visit the places where they ran missions.”

² Beniamino Conti, *L’apostolato nella Congregazione dei Missionari del Preziosissimo Sangue, studio storico dalle origini fino ai giorni nostri*. Edizioni Sanguis, Roma 1979.

For all of this to be possible, the missionaries needed to be free of any other commitment that could hamper them from those ministries. This explains the insistence on several occasions, from the very beginning, on that mobility which caused hard arguments in the successive years.

Another vital element, I would say, is that of community. It is hard to understand a Missionary of the Precious Blood who does not live the dimension of community life. Living together is essential and represents from the very outset, a strong element of novelty in a time when it was really odd to see diocesan priests living such a dimension. On the 4th of July 1848, during a session of the General Council it was reaffirmed that “the places where our people live, must be called *mission houses*.” And, as if it were not enough, we find a list of those houses that had to be called ‘mission houses’. From this list the Houses in the United States are ruled out. The latter will be referred to as a single group called “Mission”, as they were in a territory which directly belonged to Propaganda Fide and had an ecclesial typology different from the European one.

What features, then, should a house have to be defined a ‘Mission House’? What sort of apostolate did it carry on, besides that which permitted members to depart freely in order to dedicate themselves to itinerant preaching? Again, Fr. Conti tells us in his study that there can exist at least four types of Mission House. The *domus missionis*, the typical missionaries residence, with a church, that was not a parish church, annexed for religious services; the *domus spiritualium exercitium* that could be autonomous from the *domus missionis* or associated with the latter and that was used for the spiritual exercises. In the *domus convictum* only those who were preparing to become priests in the congregation would live, whereas the *domus probationis* housed those young men who had already finished ecclesiastical studies and were trained for the specific ministries of the Institute as well as those young priests that had asked to enter the congregation.

One immediately understands that, in light of what has been said, it was unthinkable to have a member of the congregation living ‘on his own’ or to have houses with no members. Probably the habit of creating situations where companions lived outside of the communities is quite ancient, that is why such an attitude was reported in the General Assembly of 1896.

The indications emerging from the Proceedings of this Assembly are very clear - one: that those companions who live in diocesan parishes, helping diocesan priests and not living in the CPPS communities, re-enter the community within three years; two: larger communities and of the establishment of communities in the cities instead of small villages. All of these things were ignored to such extent that the Apostolic Visitor himself had to reaffirm the importance of them on the 18th of December 1937 and even suggest which houses had to be closed, at least in Italy, though we know that the young Teutonic Province and other areas of the American Province had the same problems.

III. History Evolves

The situation that Conti presents us in his historical study seems idyllic; yet we know from the author himself that, when St. Gaspar was still alive, the “Carboneri” case had already occurred. Being the first Missionary of the Precious Blood sent out to evangelize non-Catholics, Fr. Gaspare Carboneri, was by the decree of June 22, 1826, appointed by Monsignor Luigi

Scacoz, bishop of Cefalonia and Zante as the parish priest of Santa Maura and vicar forane of the Leucadi islands. The Dominican, Mattia Abela was appointed his vicar. In that case, the principle of 'adaptability' typical of each missionary activity in special contexts, was applied. The same principle was adopted by Brunner as Fr. Andrew Pollack correctly points out in his work "Francis De Sales Brunner...". Not only were certain decisions of Brunner clearly accepted by Rome's Central Administration, they were even stressed as is clear also from what Fr. William Volk underlined in his address during the General Assembly of 1989, by quoting a passage from the same book of Pollack.

When, after Fr. Brunner's death on the 29th of December 1859, Fr. Andrew Kunkler was confirmed as a superior in America on the 6th of June 1860, the Superior General, don Giovanni Merlini said: "In no way, must the aforesaid Fr. Andrew introduce any changes, yet he must observe all that was decided by the Reverend Brunner until there are new instructions."

As we all well know, there were plenty of misunderstandings at the beginning of this missionary work. This was mainly due to a deep lack of mutual knowledge between the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The only news available in Europe was the news carried by the confreres in their journeys from the United States to Rome. One can begin to talk of an Internationalization of the General Curia only since 1928 when, in the Congress of August the 6th, Fr. Isidore Oberhauser entered the Council. Fr. Giuseppe Schaeper, already a member of the General Council, though he had been born in Maria Stein, Ohio, had joined the congregation in Italy at the age of 15. He trained and was ordained in Italy and spent nearly all of his life there. He also died in Rome. The first official visit to the American Province by a General Moderator, only occurred between June and September 1932. When the General Moderator went to America for the first time, that unit of our congregation was already 88 years old. The General Moderator was to write the following about that visit:

Only in the totality of affective relationships, is there still something to work on in order to overcome a sense of coldness that comes from the lack of meetings and from the different natures. It is a task of the General Direction, therefore, to lessen differences and favor fraternity.

From the words of Velardi, a Superior General who was little known yet most important in the history of our congregation, one can perceive a great love for the congregation. A love which he will also express when forced to resign by the Apostolic Visitor perhaps in this most tragic event, yet at the same time most fruitful, that our congregation has ever experienced.

In my opinion, the time of the Apostolic Visit represents a real time of grace for our congregation. Many things came from that event – these were inauspicious for some, yet prosperous for others. We all know it too well, sometimes the need is of a great shake-up to understand that something needs to be changed.

The Apostolic Visit starts in a time of great economical, legislative and spiritual turmoil for the congregation. The state of the finances was so bad that they thought of reducing the number of boarders, even if this decision was interpreted as "one catastrophe after another." We are at the end of the 1930s, the world's economical crisis had reached its highest level. The Italian-American Delegation and the American Province helped a little. The latter, sends 1,000 dollars a year in spite of the economic crisis. The Brazilian Vicariate had already been founded and a possible opening in China was being taken into consideration.

But the congregation had not yet been officially approved - the *Decretum Laudis* of December 17, 1841 was a simple acknowledging decree with no such a formula as “*approbamus et confirmamus*”, typical of any legal recognition, as Brotini underlines in pages 160 – 161 of the text **CPPS Heritage I**. In addition, the original decree of 1841 and the constitutions that were approved on that occasion are not found in the General Archive. The norms added in the printed edition of 1881 after each article of the Constitutions, under the title *Pro Praxi*, were not approved by the Holy See and thus didn't have the strength of Constitution. In 1922, two samples of our Rules with appropriate changes wanted by the Canon Law Code of 1917, were presented yet the Holy See had never replied - possibly, it was thought, the documents had been lost. Last but not least, there was the question of the House of Foundation in Giano, in which nobody from the congregation had lived in for 75 years - not only had they lost the house following the expulsion of 1862 by the Italian Government, they could not claim it back³ for, as can be read from the record of the meetings of the General Council, to get the house back, the proposal was to write to the Minister of Religious Affairs but the request cannot be put forward from Italy because the congregation has not yet obtained legal recognition from the state. Such legal recognition of the congregation by the Italian State came into force only on the 31st of March 1932 and was then published on the Gazzetta Ufficiale N° 100 of April 30, 1932.

On November 10, 1937, after a long and wearisome meeting, the Visitor relieved all positions. On December 14, little over a month later, the new General Administration led by Fr. Lorenzo Colagiovanni took an oath. The Apostolic Visit affected only the Italian and the Teutonic Provinces, although the Visitor delegated Fr. Othmar Knapke for the visit to the Teutonic Province. He was asked to keep in touch constantly with the Nunciature in Berlin. Within the framework of this workshop on the Mission, I can't talk at length on this chapter of our history, though I think it is worth saying something. All in all, the situation that emerges from the records of the visits, especially to the Teutonic Province, shows a very interesting context and helps us understand the reality of that historical moment. Fr. Knapke reported on the visit during the session of the General Council of October 17, 1938:

Between 1930 and 1936, many students of theology joined and were ordained with no precedent investigations, no witnesses and no particular tests. The missionaries do not know the Rule, do not know each other, have not absorbed the spirit of the Institute, do nothing to propagate the Precious Blood's devotion. Many priests live by themselves outside the communities, serving as assistants in diocesan parishes and this makes knowledge of the Congregation difficult. Another problem is that the priests are young and not trained to preach.

What has been just said about the Teutonic Province could also be said, in different terms, about other very similar situations, of different geographical areas of the congregation. We all know too well that issues such as CPPS identity, or such as the knowledge of our history and our rules have been debated continually so far. In 1949 they were still discussing which official title was to be adopted for the congregation.

³ The CPPS were expelled from Giano on January 21, 1862 and the House was officially closed in 1896. In 1914 the negotiations to claim it back started but only on the 27th of December 1937, CPPS had it back officially, although they were already living in there unofficially since November of the same year.

In the meantime, on October 18, 1942, the Apostolic Visit was officially closed. The main outcomes were new Constitutions and the birth of the Italian Province. One of the most relevant results from the *Costitutiones* confirmed in 1946, was the enrolment of the clerics into the Society with the consequent loss of their own dioceses. The Missionaries of the Precious Blood started to depend totally on the congregation and thus they lost that free devotion of themselves to this Society, by the bond of charity.⁴

The birth of the Italian Province allows the General Administration to be freer in dealing with the congregation's international questions, yet at the same time it increases the desire for a new headquarters, which was inaugurated only in 1953. The records of the General Council's sessions of the time show how much time was spent by the General Administration in discussing the conditions and place to choose for the headquarters of the General Curia. In the meantime, on December 1st, 1947, the General Councilors unanimously approved the proposal to open a new Vicariate in Chile.

The following years, represent the start of a very interesting time in our congregation's history. The idea of the Provinces sharing the opening of new units in the congregation finds growing consensus. Fr. Luigi Contegiacomo himself spoke of this idea during a session of the Council - 2 or 3 members from each Province, working together.

The first occasion for a missionary collaboration between provinces happened when on the 29th of February, 1956, Monsignor Geiger starts to seek help for the Prelature of Xingu. They look for confreres to volunteer to collaborate with the members of the Teutonic Province who already served there. The choice was for the American Province to send missionaries because they were already considering the idea of splitting into 2 or 3 units, which subsequently happened in 1965.⁵ The danger was that our confreres of the Brazilian Vicariate had to give up the Prelature of the Xingu and pass it over to the Maryknoll Fathers due to lack of personnel on the part of the CPPS.

The General, referring to the principle of mutual help among the different units of the congregation, at first started to gently induce the confreres of the American Province. Then he chose stronger methods so as to make them go.

On March 18, 1956 a letter signed by the Provincial and the four Councilors of the American Province came to the Generalate. With it, the American Province wanted to explain, in 9 articulated points, the reasons why it did not intend to send its confreres to Brazil.

IV. Winds of Change

As I said at the beginning of my speech, the tradition of the meetings of the Major Superiors, started in October 1969. At the beginning those gatherings were seen as a need for the Provincials and the General Moderator with his Council to dialogue, mainly so as to review the questions regarding the congregation's legislation. They were mainly meant to update the

⁴ Mario Brotini, *Inizio ed evoluzione giuridica della Congregazione dei Missionari del Preziosissimo Sangue*, Roma 2001, p.207.

⁵ On the 11th of January 1965, the General announced that he had received a letter dated December 31, 1964, in which it was asked that the American Province be separated into three Provinces. Such a request was then approved unanimously on the 18th of January 1965.

Normative Texts in light of the great experience of the Second Vatican Council and its related documents. If, in the drafts, we reviewed all the parts under the entry “Apostolate” in the evolution of the formulation of the Normative Texts, we would find all the gaps, the uncertainties and the indecision which characterized those years.

In January 1976, during the session of the 15th of that month, points on the agenda included the selling of the Generalate of Viale di Porta Ardeatina which had been inaugurated only in 1953 after 11 years of research, studies and meetings of all kinds. That 15th of January 1976, actually, is only the beginning of a long discussion which will then concern not only the premises of the General Moderator and his Curia, but also, more generally, the Curia itself. Under the pretext of poverty, out of a very partial reading of the Second Vatican Council’s documents, the General Curia’s premises were seen only as a “luxury mansion” in Rome that had to be left because it did not express what the evangelical mandate of poverty required. The alternative was that the General Curia be moved to Via Narni, where it would join the Curia of the Italian Province and with what was left of the Major Seminar of that entity. They seemed to ignore the decisions taken in the 1940s, when they had thought of dividing the various entities and they were thus going back to the same situation.

In connection with the problem of the General Curia there was also the question of the General Council. In January 21, 1978, echoing the discussion in Santa Rosa, California, the 26th of September 1977 during the gathering of the Major Superiors, the General Council seriously starts to reflect on its role within the congregation. “We have to justify our existence,” was what emerged from that gathering. What is the sense of such a body, the General Council, for the congregation? Somebody had proposed that, given the fact that the Provincials were meeting every year, it was thus possible to eliminate the figure of the General Moderator and that of the Councilors, creating a Confederation of Provincials in the congregation and leaving a Procurator in Rome who would coordinate the gatherings. Yet all the decisions regarding the congregation would be taken during the Meeting of the Major Superiors.

In the context of such a debate, the word “animation,” starts to recur as a task and a principal mission of the General Administration. Personally, I found this word clearly pronounced in the meeting of the 26th of September 1977. Finally, the General Administration starts to put itself forward as the driving force for the unifying work of the whole CPPS, from the point of view of the missionary activity. Many times during Fr. Schaefer’s mandate as General, they discussed the role of the Curia and who should live there. It was clear that that minimal sense of identity, which makes people feel committed to a role which is assigned to them, was lacking. Therefore, they were looking for valid reasons for such a body to exist. Such a reflection also affected other Congregations, not only ours. In this context, as a matter of fact, the Association of the members of the General Curias was set, as a space of encounter and mutual exchange of experiences and ideas.

V. The New Era

In July 1983 (from the 11th to 16th), the 13th Ordinary General Assembly is held in Rome. During it, Fr. Anton Loipfinger is elected as the new General Moderator. The legacy that the former Provincial of the Teutonic Province inherited was not among the simplest - during his mandate some Councilors resigned. Yet his 12 year administration saw the beginning of what I

would like to call the new era in the recent history of the congregation (though more clearly in his second mandate 1989 – 1995). Basically, most of the topics we have been discussing so far originate from the many gatherings and meetings organized during his mandate.

Between 1983 and 1995 3 General Assemblies and 9 meetings of the Major Superiors are held. Apart from the Assemblies of 1989 and 1995 which were “*de electione*”, one cannot but remember the special assembly of 1986 during which the Normative Texts were approved. Out of the 9 meetings of the Major Superiors, therefore, we cannot but remember that of July 1990, celebrated in Salzburg, in the course of which the issue of the Mission within the congregation was tackled. In January 1992, in Valdivia, if on the one hand it is true that they spoke about the Program of Formation, on the other hand it is also evident that the reflections of the Mission and its theology, were given predominant space. Last but not least, the meeting of September 1994, held in Caceres, where they insisted on the issue we are discussing now. But let us proceed in an orderly manner.

The second phase of Loipfinger’s mandate, begins, I believe, with the words spoken by John Paul II on October 19, 1989. Addressing the capitularies who gathered for the election of the General, the Pope, among several other things, said that the Missionary of the Precious Blood must be the word that knocks on every human heart to that it will open up and receive the Savior. Words which, apart from wakening or keeping the missionary spirit alert in each and every member of the CPPS, also remind us of a challenge that each child of St. Gaspar can never forget.

Echoing the Message to the General Assembly, Fr. Loipfinger returned to the same topic during the meeting of the Major Superiors held in Salzburg between July 23 and 28, 1990. Fr. Anton points out three basic issues in the reflection on the Mission and defines them as “operating principles.” These are: 1) priority given to the proclamation of the Word (it is the command of Christ ‘go and announce’, besides the fact that there is a great hunger in the world for the Word of God); 2) the mystery of the Blood of Christ (the mystery of suffering has never been resolved, the message of the Blood of Christ is that the Son of God has chosen the way of suffering for the sake of mankind. The message of the redemption in the Blood of Christ is a message of solidarity and hope); 3) missionary community (the community’s dimension is an integral part of the discipleship; the community is the first place to experience and live the values of the Gospel).

Chronologically and logically in its content, the meeting of Salzburg in 1990, was followed by that of Valdivia, 1992. The Major Superiors, gathered in Chile between January 13 and 17, 1992, in the wake of the General Assembly of 1989, continued to deal with the same topic of the Mission. In the message that traditionally is written to the congregation as a synthesis of the meeting, they wanted to stress one aspect: although in Salzburg they had dealt with the issue of the Evangelization as a follow-up to the Message of the 15th General Assembly, what they wanted to actually do was to deal with the topic of the Missionary Identity: “to gather in Chile to underline the awareness of our missionary action today”, as we read in the final message.

From the written memories of that meeting, we know that the Major Superiors dedicated all of the 15 and 16th of January to reflect on this issue. On January Wednesday 15, there were two addresses: one from Fr. Segundo Galilea, a Chilean theologian and the other from our Fr. Robert Schreiter. Thursday 16 January was dedicated to work-groups and other

meetings. Fr. Segundo's address was aimed at helping our superiors to reflect on the life of Christ as an example and a model for a Missionary life; Fr. Schreiter's address focused more on the history of the mission and the missionary models that had emerged throughout the course of our history (mobility, flexibility and adaptation).

No doubt, the most eloquent image coming out of the meeting in Valdivia and that can sum up all of our missionary activity, is that of a bridge. "To be bridge builders" -- this is the greatest challenge that each follower of Gaspar must always keep in mind.

The fourth part of this long reflection which started in the General Assembly of 1989, can be found in the Caceres meeting of 1994. Between September 18 and 25, the Major Superiors gathered once again to reflect on these issues. On September 22, after a short speech of Fr. Barry Fisher who had proposed a synthesis of the article written by the Jesuit Michael Amaladoss on the topic "The Religious in Mission," study groups are formed. From these groups emerged the need of dedicating the successive Assembly to the topic of Mission. As we say in Italian, "detto e fatto" "said and done": the Assembly which was the closest to the gathering of 1994 was that of 1995 which, technically meant the end of the Generalate of Fr. Loipfinger. However, from a charismatic point of view, it marked the continuation of his ideas and did not mean a break with the past but a sort of consolidation. From the 15th General Assembly of 1995, the language of our congregation emerged enriched, with words such as "subsidiarity and interdependence within a collaboration among the Provinces" and also the term "internationality" started to emerge forcefully. The Assembly of 1995 was able to catch the essential elements that were mostly felt at that very moment by the whole congregation. It was clear, then, that times had changed and that we needed to undertake a new path on which we have been continuing to walk so far, in the coherence of intents. Another important element the Assembly highlighted strongly was the awareness that we are one and only congregation and that no unit can feel excluded. "To work together," to foster this awareness by means of meetings, seminars, and exchanges of personnel between one unit and another. This meeting of 2009, anyway, would not have been possible if in the consistency of intents that characterized the period 1995 – 2007 there had not been the great Extraordinary General Assembly of 2004. It launched the main reason why we are gathered here, today, as a real challenge for the future. No one can feel free from contributing to what has been asked. And those who are more experienced are called to do more so as not to betray that "Congregavit nos Domine in uno" which is part of our heritage.

Conclusion

Every historian, in the framework of their Mission, know that their research has a double function. The first is to tell the facts in the most objective way, trying to be as impartial as they can impartial in the understanding and the telling of events. The other function is to help the reader reflect on the data provided with the report. Personally, I tried to balance these two essential aspects by attaching importance sometimes to one and sometimes to the other. My research and my reflections were guided by the sources which I had to limit in order to be brief enough, though complete, in reporting. The aim of my address, at the end of the day, is mainly to be informative without forgetting the scientific element.

From what I have said, it is clear that, over the years, after a strong initial drive, the congregation, has settled on other topics, which, though they have not lead it to drift completely from staying faithful to its initial charisma, they have nevertheless slowed the evolution of the events. Turned in on itself and sometimes confused by other priorities, our congregation for many years stopped offering itself and the Church, those genuine fruits which were at the basis of its origins. Reading here and there about the past events, it seems as if the wind of history, the preoccupations of the time or the places where the congregation had been developing, have taken it far from the initial nucleus that characterized it so well and made it so unique and original in a more general ecclesiastic context. Added to that, there is the question of a bigger and bigger de-evolution which has taken place over the decades and that in some periods prevailed in such a manner that between unit and unit, people were questioning whether they all belonged to the same Family of St. Gaspar. These are all real problems that have been partially tackled but still need to find definitive solutions.

The reality is that the congregation as such, has not yet succeeded in producing a missionary style of its own. It is clear that the different local attempts such as enculturation, adaptations, and new understandings, must all flow into a single vision of the whole, in order to create that way of being which makes us unique and distinguishes us in the Church as was the case at the time of our foundation. We are not to search for theories yet practical deeds as we live in a real world seeking for real answers.

While studying the cases of some confreres who left the congregation I was particularly struck by the case of one who received the definitive indult to leave not long ago. Among other things, to explain the reason why he left, he writes:

“The purpose of the Society is in law and in fact very general; the apostolate of a CPPS member shows no difference to that of the Diocese priest. [...] Many of the CPPS members live alone. [...] When I made the promise of fidelity, I was too idealistic. I had no practical experience of the CPPS community life.”

It is not a question of searching for wrongs or for justifications, but just like this ex-member, there are many others, already out or still in, who could say the same things. On June 2, 1987 Fr. Loipfinger, after visiting the Provinces of the Pacific and Kansas, said:

“From my visit I have learnt about the importance of being with the members - the visit is not only a formal act. [...] we feel the need of a major coherence in the Apostolate of the Province. This is to be considered necessary in such a way that the young, especially, can clearly see their expectations as for the path the Province wants to undertake.”

I have just reported these words spoken in a specific situation. Yet I think they are valid for a more general context. We urgently need the Provinces to gather together to dialogue, plan and put into practice a common strategy which represents a sort of guideline that can lead the specific realities of each place and culture where such a plan will be put in place.

Out of the General Assembly of 1989, we have started moving some steps forward which, step by step, have taken us, 20 years later, to this point of our history. I am sure this is really an historical moment which is destined to be remembered as long as it bears those fruits which we all hope for, in faithfulness and for the sake of the whole Church.

Discussion questions

Emanuele has presented a brief account of how “mission” has been perceived with the CPPS during our history. Our discussion will focus on our contemporary history (what he called the New Era) by looking at ideas that come from our two most recent past Moderators.

- Anton Loipfinger offered these operating principles for mission:
 - 1) Proclamation of the Word
 - 2) Redemption in the Blood of Christ as a message of solidarity and hope
 - 3) Being a missionary community
- Barry Fischer has often described the CPPS mission in terms of “responding to the cry of the blood.”

As you consider CPPS Mission today- can you suggest one important concept/operating principle that you think is essential?

Is there an image or idea that best expresses CPPS mission today? (Like the image of ‘bridge builder’ proposed at the MMS in Valdivia in ’92.)