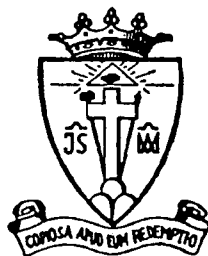


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Congregationis
SSmi Redemptoris



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Ogni collaboratore si assume la responsabilità di ciò che scrive.

IL NUOVO BEATO REDENTORISTA
PADRE FRANCESCO SAVERIO SEELOS (1819-1867)

Il 9 aprile del 2000 Giovanni Paolo II ha proclamato beato il p. Francesco Saverio Seelos. Durante la solenne celebrazione il Papa ha sottolineato lo spirito missionario del nuovo beato, che si dedicò all'apostolato tra gli immigranti negli Stati Uniti:

«Rendimi la gioia di essere salvato, sostieni in me un animo generoso. Insegnerò agli erranti le tue vie e i peccatori a te ritorneranno (Sal 51, 14-15). Fedele allo spirito e al carisma della Congregazione redentorista alla quale apparteneva Padre Francesco Saverio Seelos meditava spesso su queste parole del salmista. Sostenuto dalla grazia di Dio e da un'intensa vita di preghiera, Padre Seelos lasciò la sua Baviera natale e si dedicò con generosità e gioia all'apostolato missionario nelle comunità di immigranti negli Stati Uniti.

Nei vari luoghi in cui operò, Padre Francesco Saverio portò il suo entusiasmo, il suo spirito di sacrificio e il suo zelo apostolico. Agli abbandonati e ai derelitti predicò il messaggio di Gesù Cristo *causa di salvezza eterna* (Eb 5, 9) e nelle ore trascorse nel confessionale convinse molti a ritornare a Dio. Oggi, il Beato Francesco Saverio Seelos invita i membri della Chiesa ad approfondire la loro unione con Cristo nei Sacramenti della Penitenza e dell'Eucaristia. Mediante la sua intercessione, che quanti lavorano nella vigna per la salvezza del popolo di Dio vengano incoraggiati e rafforzati nel loro compito». *(Dall'omelia di Giovanni Paolo II).*

La Redazione presenta ai lettori due articoli, riguardanti la vita e la spiritualità del beato Francesco Saverio Seelos, scritti dal P. Carl Hoegerl, CSsR, storico della Congregazione e vicepostulatore della causa di beatificazione. Ci si augura che questi contributi aiutino a far comprendere meglio la vita e l'opera apostolica del nuovo beato redentorista.

LA REDAZIONE

SPICILEGIUM HISTORICUM
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ANNUS XLVIII 2000 FASC. 2

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CARL HOEGERL, CSSR

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA
OF BLESSED FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS, CSsR

- I. Short Curriculum Vitae
II. Extended Curriculum Vitae

I. SHORT CURRICULUM VITAE

- 1819 January 11: Füssen, Germany: birth and baptism of Francis Xavier Seelos
- 1825-1831 elementary schooling
- 1828 September 3: confirmation
- 1830 April 2: First Holy Communion
- 1831-1832 Füssen, tutored by the hospital chaplain
- 1832-1839 Augsburg, Saint Stephan's preparatory school and *Gymnasium*
- 1839-1841 Munich, Ludwig-Maximilian University, 2 years philosophy
- 1841-1842 Munich, Ludwig-Maximilian University, 1 year theology
- 1842 Dillingen, Saint Jerome, diocesan seminary, until December 9
- 1843 Altötting, Saint Mary Magdalen, Redemptorist foundation
- March 17: Le Havre, France: sailed for the United States
- April 20: New York: arrived in the United States

- 1844 May 16: Baltimore: began his novitiate at Saint James
 May 16: Baltimore, Saint James: religious profession
 December 22: Baltimore: ordination to the priesthood
- 1845-1854 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Saint Philomena Parish, assistant priest
- 1851 pastor and religious superior
- 1854-1857 Baltimore, Saint Alphonsus Parish, pastor and religious superior
- 1857-1862 Cumberland, Maryland, Saints Peter and Paul, pastor, superior, prefect of students, and professor
- 1862-1865 Annapolis, Maryland, Saint Mary's Parish, pastor and religious superior, prefect of students
- 1862 November: replaced as prefect of students, appointed superior of the mission band
- 1865-1866 Detroit, Michigan, Saint Mary's Parish, assistant priest
- 1866-1867 New Orleans, Louisiana, Our Lady of the Assumption, assistant priest and prefect of the German parish
- 1867 October 4: New Orleans, Louisiana, passed into eternal life

II. EXTENDED CURRICULUM VITAE

1. Childhood and Elementary Schooling

- 1819-1825 CHILDHOOD YEARS OF FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS
- 1819 January 11, Füssen, Bavaria, Germany: Francis Xavier Seelos was born to Mang (1782-1853) and Frances née Schwarzenbach Seelos (1788-1866) as the sixth of twelve children.
 He was baptized on the same day in the parish church of Saint Mang by Father Carl Zeitler, the parochial assistant. At the time, Mang Seelos was a weaver by trade, living in *Spitalgasse*.
- 1825-1831 FRANCIS SEELOS ATTENDED THE *FOLKSCHULE* IN FÜSSEN
- 1825 At the age of six, Xavier (as he was usually called in the

family) entered the town elementary school in the *Kornhaus*. From his fourth to his ninth years he was often sick and could not attend school.

In his childhood when his mother showed him a picture of his patron, Saint Francis Xavier, he was accustomed to say that he, too, one day would become a missionary like Saint Francis.

1828 September 3: when he was nine, he was confirmed in the parish church of Saint Mang by the bishop of Augsburg, Augustine Ignatius Albert von Riegg (1767-1836, bishop from 1824).

1830 April 2: on the feast of the Sorrowful Mother in Lent, he received his First Holy Communion.

November 2: Mang Seelos, father of Francis, assumed his new duties as sexton of the parish church and moved the family to the sexton's house near the church.

1831 April 11: Francis graduated from elementary school with high grades.

Encouraged by the acting pastor of the parish, Father Anton Heim, Francis planned to begin studies that would prepare the way for the higher branches of learning required of candidates for the priesthood. He intended to enter the Institute of Saint Stephan's in Augsburg. For some unexplained reason, he stayed in Füssen for another year, studying under the tutelage of the chaplain of the hospital, Father Joseph Lochbihler.

2. Saint Stephan, Augsburg; Ludwig-Maximilian University, Munich

1832-1839 FRANCIS ATTENDED THE INSTITUTE OF SAINT STEPHAN, AUGSBURG, GERMANY

1832 October: at the age of thirteen, Francis left home to begin his secondary education at the Institute of Saint Stephan in Augsburg. He entered the courses of the second year of the preparatory school (later called the Latin school). The over 600 students were under the direction of secular priests and laymen.

1833-1835 Augsburg: Francis attended the third and fourth-year courses of the preparatory school of Saint Stephan.

- 1835-1839 Francis attended the four-year course of the *Gymnasium* of Saint Stephan. Sometime during his studies in Augsburg, Francis confided to a school companion that he was thinking of becoming a Jesuit.
- 1835 November 5: when Francis was in his first year of the *Gymnasium*, King Ludwig I of Bavaria sanctioned a Benedictine Abbey at Saint Stephan and confided to the Benedictines the entire educational institution.
- 1836 During the summer vacation after his first year in the *Gymnasium*, Francis went on foot in pilgrimage to Maria Einsiedeln, Switzerland, and asked for admission to the Benedictines. He was not accepted because he was not a native of Switzerland.
- 1837 February 2: Francis became a member of the Greater Latin Marian Confraternity.
- 1839 August 26: Francis received his diploma of graduation from the *Gymnasium* with a recommendation to continue his studies in a university or lyceum. In five of his seven years in Augsburg, he had received a prize: three for general excellence, one for mathematics, and one for Greek.
- 1839-1841 FRANCIS ATTENDED THE TWO-YEAR COURSE OF PHILOSOPHY AT THE LUDWIG-MAXIMILIAN UNIVERSITY, MUNICH, GERMANY
- 1839-1841 Munich: Francis studied two years (four semesters) in the School of Philosophy, taking nineteen courses under twelve professors. He joined the *Bavaria*, a social fraternity at the University approved by the authorities.
- 1839 October 22: Francis received a stipend for study from the Office of Care of the Poor of Füssen.
November 5: he matriculated at the University.
- 1840 October: Father Benedict Bayer gave several lectures in Munich about the work of the Redemptorists for German immigrants in the United States. These lectures may possibly have had an influence on Francis's choice of vocation.
- 1841 March 11: King Ludwig I approved a foundation of Re-

- 1841 demptorists at Saint Mary Magdalen, Altötting, Bavaria.
August 24: Francis received his Diploma of Graduation in Philosophy and was authorized to begin study in a field of specialization. His moral conduct was entirely in accord with the prescriptions of the University.
- 1841-1842 FRANCIS STUDIED THEOLOGY FOR ONE YEAR AT THE UNIVERSITY
- 1841-1842 Munich: Francis attended the courses in theology for two semesters at the University. His professors were: Ignaz Döllinger for Church history, Daniel Haneberg for Old Testament exegesis, John B. Herb for systematic theology, Francis X. Reithmayr for New Testament and patristics, and Max Stadlbaur for dogma and moral theology.
- 1841 October 19: he matriculated in the School of Theology.
- 1842 February 2: this date's issue of the Catholic periodical *Sion* had a digest of a letter of Father Alexander Czvitkovicz, superior of the Redemptorists in America, in which he described the spiritual destitution of German-speaking Catholics in the United States.
- 1842 February: at the beginning of the month, Francis contracted smallpox and was taken to the hospital where he found time to compose some poems.

3. Vocation to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer; Application for Ministry in the United States; Interlude at the Diocesan Seminary of Saint Jerome, Dillingen

- 1842 Sometime during this year, according to the testimony of his brother Adam, Francis had an experience that convinced him that the Blessed Mother had indicated to him his missionary vocation.
During the early part of the year, Francis applied to be accepted by the Redemptorists in the United States for work with German immigrants.
August 4 and 11: two testimonials were issued by the authorities of the University about the good conduct of Francis during his years of study. The second of these

was issued for acceptance into the seminary. On the following day, he obtained a certificate of good health, part of the documentation for entrance into the seminary. Not having received an answer to his application from the United States, he applied for admission into the Augsburg diocesan seminary.

September 9: he was accepted into the diocesan seminary of Saint Jerome, Dillingen, by the episcopal ordinariate of Augsburg.

November 3: he began his brief stay in the seminary of Saint Jerome at Dillingen.

November 22: on the feast of Saint Cecilia, Francis received notification of his acceptance into the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in a letter of Father Alexander Czvitkovicz, signed July 26.

December 9: Francis departed from the Dillingen seminary and went to Augsburg to spend some time with Father Anton Heim before going to the Redemptorist foundation at Altötting to await his departure for the United States. He did not plan to say farewell to his family in Füssen.

December 27: he received his passport giving permission to travel outside the Kingdom of Bavaria.

4. Brief Stay with the Redemptorists at Altötting; Departure from Le Havre, March 17; Arrival in New York, April 20, 1843

1843 January - February, Altötting: Francis spent several weeks as a prospective candidate for the Redemptorist mission in the United States at Saint Mary Magdalen, a recent foundation of the Congregation in Bavaria. Here he met Father Alexander, the superior of the American mission, who informed him of his itinerary.

March 2: Francis left Augsburg for France.

Paris: he spent a week in Paris before setting out for Le Havre, the port of embarkation.

March 17, Le Havre: Francis left Europe for the United States on the American packet ship, the *Saint Nicolas*. His traveling companions were Father Ernest Glaunach, C.SS.R., his future novice master, and two Redemp-

torist brothers, Jerome Schenk and Xavier Burdych.
April 20, New York: after a passage of thirty-five days, Francis arrived in America on the Thursday of Easter week, having spent Holy Week on the high seas.

5. Novitiate, Religious Profession, Ordination, Early Priestly Ministry at Saint James, Baltimore, Maryland

- 1843-1844 FRATER FRANCIS SEELOS MADE HIS NOVITIATE AT SAINT JAMES, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND; ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD
- 1843 May 16, Baltimore, Maryland: Francis was invested with the Redemptorist habit and began his novitiate. It was located at Saint James the Less Parish; the novice master was Father Ernest Glaunach. Francis was the first Redemptorist in the United States to have the advantage of a firmly-established and well-regulated novitiate.
July 16, Saint James the Less Church: Francis received tonsure and the minor orders from Archbishop Samuel Eccleston.
- 1844 May 16, Saint James the Less Church: Francis completed his year of novitiate and made profession of the three religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and, in accordance with Redemptorist Rule, made a vow and oath of perseverance.
Until ordination, Francis spent the intervening seven months completing his theological studies.
December 14, Cathedral of the Assumption, Baltimore: he was ordained to the subdiaconate by Archbishop Samuel Eccleston.
December 21, Chapel of Saint Mary's Sulpician Seminary: ordination to the diaconate by the Archbishop.
December 22, Saint James the Less: ordination to the priesthood by the Archbishop.
December 25, Saint James the Less: Father Francis Seelos celebrated two Masses in private and then at ten o'clock his first High Mass.
- 1845 January 12, Saint James the Less: Father Seelos per-

formed his first baptism. Until his departure in August, he performed twenty-eight baptisms.

January 13: Father Seelos was granted the faculties of the archdiocese by the Archbishop.

March 29, Saint James the Less: Father Seelos heard his first confessions, both in German and in English.

April 13, Sunday, Patronage of Saint Joseph: he preached his first sermon, in German.

My 20-August 8: Father Friederick De Held, C.S.S.R., European superior of the American mission, held Visitation of the foundations in the United States.

During his stay at Saint James, Father Seelos, in addition to his regular duties in the parish, occasionally celebrated Mass for the Sisters of Charity and heard their confessions and celebrated Mass for the Sisters of Providence. He was prefect of four students preparing to enter the novitiate.

August 19: date of the last entry for Father Seelos in the parish books of Saint James.

6. Parish Assistant at Saint Philomena's Parish, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Novice Master; Socius of the Students

1845-1854 FATHER SEELOS, MINISTERED IN THE PARISH OF SAINT PHILOMENA, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

August 27: date of the first entry for Father Seelos in the parish books of Saint Philomena, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to which he had been transferred after Father De Held's Visitation.

1845 His first superior was Saint John Neumann (canonized in 1977). In addition to the care of the German-speaking parishioners, the Redemptorist community also cared for German Catholics scattered in outlying settlements: Sharpsburg, McKeesport, Riceville, Pine Creek, Greensburg, Wexford.

Father Seelos performed fifty-one baptisms in his first four months at Saint Philomena.

1846 Sometime during this year, he gave a successful mission with Saint John Neumann at Youngstown, Pennsylva-

nia, a settlement of German and Irish immigrants.

April 23: his sister Frances was professed as a Sister of Charity, taking the name Sister Damiana.

October 4: the new Saint Philomena's Church, five years in the building, was blessed by Bishop Michael O'Connor, ordinary of Pittsburgh.

The pastoral work of Father Seelos was extensive: 150 baptisms, 35 marriages. He preached, as occasion demanded, in three languages, German, French, and English; he gave a series of Lenten sermons, conferences to the numerous parish societies, and attended to countless sick-calls. Father Seelos carried this heavy workload during all his years at Saint Philomena.

1847

January 27: Father Joseph Mueller was appointed pastor of the parish and superior of the community. Saint John Neumann became superior of the American Redemptorists.

September: Father Seelos was appointed novice master. He had the distinction of seeing the first two English-speaking novices make their profession as Redemptorists in America. His term as master lasted only sixteen months, as a new novitiate had been established in Baltimore.

Father Seelos had 67 marriages and 167 baptisms this year.

1848

October 4-13: Father Seelos made his annual retreat and wrote out his reflections and resolutions.

Father Seelos had 71 marriages and 203 baptisms this year.

1849

January: Father Bernard Hafkenschaid was appointed superior of the American Redemptorists and Father Frederick Poesl was appointed pastor and superior of the community at Saint Philomena.

January- April: Father Seelos was socius to the newly professed students until they were transferred to Baltimore.

1850

Early in the year, Father Seelos suggested to Father Neumann who was then consultor to the provincial, that more missions be given for the good of the widely-scattered German immigrants.

February 2: the provincial, Father Hafkenschied, answering a request of Bishop O'Connor, allowed Father Seelos to give spiritual assistance to the Sisters of Mercy as long as it did not infer with his missionary duties.

December: Father Seelos prepared seven novices of the Sisters of Mercy for religious profession.

1851

January 2, Füssen: Kunigunda Seelos, his sister, fell from a hayloft and was killed; the next day, his father had a stroke; shortly thereafter his sister Liessett also had a stroke.

7. Appointment as First Canonical Rector of Saint Philomena, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at the Age of Thirty-Two

1851

January 2: Father Seelos was appointed the first canonical rector of the Redemptorist foundation of Saint Philomena and pastor of the parish. He was thirty-two-years-old and had been ordained only seven years.

April 21, Munich: his sister Mary Ann was professed as a School Sister of Notre Dame, taking the name Sister Romualda.

May: when the cathedral was completely destroyed by fire, Father Seelos invited the seminarians to stay at Saint Philomena. They were making their ordination retreat.

May 11-25: Father Seelos invited six missionaries to conduct a mission at Saint Philomena as part of the celebration of the jubilee year.

May 29-June 8: Father Seelos saw to it that missions were given in the out-missions of Pine Creek and Sharpsburg.

June 21: he preached at the laying of the cornerstone of the new cathedral of Saint Paul.

July 22: cornerstone laid for the orphanage for children of German immigrants on Troy Hill.

July to September: Father Seelos had Father Francis Krutil accompany Bishop O'Connor on a visitation tour of the diocese. He preached wherever there were German-speaking Catholics.

- October 21: Father Seelos baptized in Wheeling, Virginia (later West Virginia).
- December 14-21: he preached a mission at Youngstown, Pennsylvania, with Father Alexander. During this year, a church was build for the German Catholics of the mission station at Sharpsburg.
- 1852 January 23-30: Father Seelos sent Father Francis Krutil to give a retreat to the diocesan priests of Wheeling.
- February 1-9: he took part in a mission in Butler, Pennsylvania.
- May 2-16: he was one of the group of missionaries under the leadership of the provincial on the mission at Saint Peter's, Philadelphia.
- summer: the German orphanage on Troy Hill was dedicated.
- August 11: Father Seelos asked his former superior, John Neumann, now bishop of Philadelphia, to administer the sacrament of confirmation at Saint Philomena.
- November 19: Father Seelos contracted a serious illness that lasted for three weeks. He was able, however, to say Mass in the community chapel each day. Bishop O'Connor, upon returning from Europe, came to visit him in his sick room.
- 1853 April 11: he preached at the laying of the cornerstone of the new Saint Mary's Church in Allegheny, Pennsylvania
- August 7: Father Seelos preached at the laying of the cornerstone of the first Passionist monastery in the United States.
- September 11: his father, Mang Seelos, died in Füssen after a long period of illness.
- October 13: Fathers Seelos and Lawrence Holzer wrote to Propaganda about the transferral of Bishop O'Connor to the newly-established diocese of Erie, Pennsylvania.
- October 31: Father Seelos, coming home from ministry in one of the out-missions, found the letter that informed him of his father's death on September 11. He recalled then that at the time of his father's death he had an unusual dream about him.
- 1854 Early part of the year: Father Seelos gave Father Law-

rence Holzer permission to begin a German newspaper to dispel misrepresentations about the Church and to give the Catholic viewpoint on the news. It was called the *Pittsburger Republicaner* (later *Der Beobachter*) and continued publication until 1923.

January 30 Baltimore: Father George Ruland was named the new provincial to replace Father Bernard Hafkenschied. Father Seelos was chosen to replace Ruland as rector of Saint Alphonsus Parish, Baltimore, Maryland. At the same time, he was also named second consultor to the provincial.

8. Appointment as Pastor and Superior of Saint Alphonsus Parish, Baltimore, Maryland; Pastoral Care of Saint James, Saint Michael, and Holy Cross

1854-1857 FATHER SEELOS, PASTOR AND SUPERIOR OF THE REDEMPTORIST COMMUNITY OF SAINT ALPHONSUS, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

1854 March 2: Father Seelos arrived from Pittsburgh to assume his duties as rector of Saint Alphonsus Parish, Baltimore, and as second consultor to the provincial, Father George Ruland.

He was superior of seven Redemptorist priests and eight brothers. The ministry of the community extended to four parishes within the limits of the city: Saint Alphonsus, Saint James, Saint Michael, and Holy Cross, which was just being organized. The community was charged with the spiritual care of all the Germans in the city of Baltimore. There were also mission stations outside the city for which the community was responsible. There were over a thousand children in the schools attached to the parishes. The fathers also gave spiritual care to a number of convents of sisters in the city.

April, Annapolis: despite many complaints about the severity of his treatment of the novices, Father Gabriel Rumpler was reappointed for another term as novice master and first consultor to the provincial.

Autumn, Annapolis: Father Ruland held a Visitation of

the novitiate to look into the complaints about the strange manner of acting of Father Rumpler. No changes were made or admonitions given.

December 6: the Provincial Chapter in preparation for the General Chapter in Rome in early 1855 was held at Saint Alphonsus. Contrary to all expectations, Father Seelos was not elected as an American delegate to the Chapter.

1855

The community of Saint Alphonsus consisted of eight fathers and eight brothers. Often convalescent students were in the house. The spiritual responsibilities of the community were as great, if not greater, than ever.

January: Father Seelos assisted on a mission at Saint Mary's, Allegheny, Pennsylvania.

9. The Rumpler Affair: Father Seelos Is Severely Criticized for Allowing Father Rumpler to Leave Mount Hope, a Mental Hospital

February: Father Ruland departed for the General Chapter in Rome. In his absence, Father Rumpler was appointed acting provincial.

May 3, Rome: Nicholas Mauron was elected Superior General of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

May 28, Annapolis: Father Rumpler summoned one of the fathers to Annapolis, who immediately noticed that Rumpler was acting strangely.

May 30: Father Seelos made a short visit to Annapolis and suggested that Rumpler go away for a rest.

June 2: Father Rumpler gave clear signs of a complete mental breakdown.

June 4: Father Seelos, made aware of the seriousness of Rumpler's mental state, went to Annapolis with Father Francis Krutil as temporary novice master and brought Rumpler to Mount Hope, an institution in Baltimore for the mentally deranged under the care of the Sisters of Charity. Father Seelos was now, in effect, the acting provincial.

June 8: Seelos wrote to Father Nicholas Mauron, the newly elected Redemptorist Superior General in Rome,

informing him of the mental breakdown of Rumpler.

June 20: after visiting Rumpler in Mount Hope, Father Seelos, thinking that his condition warranted it, took him to Saint Alphonsus, Baltimore.

June 21: Seelos took Rumpler to Annapolis with the intention of returning to Baltimore with him the same day or the next. Rumpler, however, insisted on staying in Annapolis. Seelos remained there with him.

June 21- July 12: sixteen letters of various fathers were sent to Rome about Rumpler's treatment of the novices, his breakdown, and the conduct of Father Seelos in handling Rumpler in his sickness.

June 23: Rumpler again manifested his severely deranged mental state and was taken back to Mount Hope in Baltimore. Father Seelos remained in Annapolis to reassure the novices who were greatly disturbed by the events.

June 25: Father Seelos returned to Baltimore and arranged to have Father Michael Mueller go to Annapolis as provisional novice master until a definite appointment came from Rome.

July: he assisted in a mission at Saint James, Baltimore.

August 28: Father Seelos wrote to the Superior General explaining his conduct in the Rumpler Affair.

October: Father Ruland, provincial, returned from Europe.

November 21: Ruland, was reappointed as provincial, although there had been much criticism of his manner of acting during his first triennium.

10. Reappointment as Pastor and Superior of Saint Alphonsus, Baltimore

- 1855 December: the provincial informed the community that Father Seelos was reappointed as rector of Saint Alphonsus; he was, however, no longer consultor to the provincial.
- 1856 At the beginning of this year, Father Seelos had nine fathers and eight brothers in the community at Saint Alphonsus.

March 9: Father Seelos celebrated a Solemn High Mass for the Sisters of Divine Providence, a congregation of black sisters, on their patronal feast, Saint Frances of Rome.

March 31: in a letter to the Ludwigs-Missions-Verein, Father Ruland noted that there were 1,500 children in Redemptorist schools in Baltimore and that in the past year there had been 1,098 baptisms.

April: Father Seelos permitted the Franciscan Fathers to take up a collection in the churches under Redemptorist care to build their monastery in New York.

May: he permitted a collection to be taken up for Saint Peter's Church, Philadelphia.

May 12: Archbishop Francis Kenrick administered confirmation in Saint Alphonsus.

July 6: Father Seelos obtained permission to have the Forty Hours Devotion in Saint James. This was the first time Forty Hours was celebrated in the city.

August: he gave a retreat to the Carmelite nuns, Baltimore.

August 18-27: he made his annual ten-day retreat.

September 8: Father Seelos laid the cornerstone of the new church for the mission station of Saint Joseph on Bellaire Road, Baltimore.

late September: Father Francis Baker, a converted Episcopalian minister, celebrated a Solemn High Mass of thanksgiving in Saint Alphonsus Church assisted by two other priest converts from Protestantism.

October 2: Father Seelos allowed a collection to be taken up for the work of the Sisters of Providence.

October 8: a Know-Nothing mayor was elected in Baltimore. There were a number of riots in which five were killed and fifty were wounded.

October 23: Father Rumpler was released from Mount Hope mental hospital and was sent to Holy Redeemer Parish, New York City, where he died December 13.

November 4: the entire State of Maryland voted for the Know-Nothing party in the presidential election. There were a number of riots in Baltimore.

December 8, Annapolis: Father Seelos received the

vows of eight novices and preached a memorable sermon.

1857

The community of Saint Alphonsus began the year with eleven fathers and nine brothers. Parish demands were as pressing as ever.

January 4: Father Seelos preached a sermon on the obligations of parents in the care and education of their children.

February 11: Father Seelos accompanied Archbishop Kenrick to the Carmelite Sisters for the voting of the community in the admission of Sister Mary Bernard Dorsey. She was admitted to profession; many years later she was a witness in the sessions of the *Processus Informativus* conducted in St. Louis, Missouri.

February 25, Ash Wednesday: Father Seelos was scheduled to preach a Lenten course at Saint James.

11. Violent Hemorrhage; Transferral to Saint Mary's, Annapolis, Maryland, as Pastor, Superior, and Novice Master

1857

March 7: while hearing confessions at Saint James, Father Seelos suffered a hemorrhage which continued for three days. He was in critical danger of death.

March 10: he passed the crisis and was on the mend but was ordered to stay in bed.

March 18: Father James Poirier, a member of the community, died. He had offered his life to God for Father Seelos when he heard of his dangerous sickness.

April 3: Father Seelos was allowed to get up from bed for the first time since the hemorrhage.

April 16: Father Seelos was assigned to Saint Mary's, Annapolis, as superior, pastor, and novice master. The provincial considered that the condition of his health made it necessary that he have less strenuous work. In the novitiate, there were two fathers and three brothers, fifteen choir novices, and ten novice brothers.

12. Unexpected Appointment to Saints Peter and Paul, Cumberland, Maryland, as Pastor, Superior, Lector, and Prefect of Students

1857 May 18: Father Seelos received an unexpected communication from the provincial informing him that he was to go to Cumberland, Maryland, as pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Parish, superior of the community, prefect of students, and professor. Difficulties had arisen there between the students and the prefect, Father Michael Mueller.

1857-1862 FATHER SEELOS, PASTOR AND SUPERIOR OF THE REDEMPTORIST COMMUNITY AT SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND, AND PREFECT OF STUDENTS AND PROFESSOR

1857 May 21: Seelos arrived at Saints Peter and Paul, Cumberland, Maryland. There were about 300 souls in the parish and 100 children in the school with some eighty baptisms and twenty marriages annually. He was, however, forbidden to preach for an entire year.

There were three fathers in the community and eight brothers. The number of students was forty-two of whom he was prefect. He also taught dogma and Sacred Scripture.

Last week in August: the provincial held Visitation for two weeks to investigate some trouble with several students that began under Father Mueller, the previous prefect. As a result, two students left the studentate on September 8.

September 30: Father Seelos began a five-day retreat for the students.

October 8: Father Nicholas Mauron, the Superior General, having received an accusatory letter from one of the members of the community, sent a severe letter to the provincial about the studentate. Students were not to be permitted to go swimming in the river; there were not to be many exceptions to the Rule, especially for the sick; smoking was permitted only under doctor's orders and then in private; malcontents were to be dismissed.

November: for the first time the students were permitted to vote in the elections.

- December 3, feast of Saint Francis Xavier: the nameday of Father Seelos was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm by the entire community.
- 1858 At the beginning of the year, the community consisted of four priests, fifty-one students, five professed brothers, and five novice brothers. During the year nine newly-professed students were added.
- Holy Week, March 28-April 4: Father Seelos saw to it that the liturgy were carried out with special solemnity in the parish church during Holy Week. On all of the great feasts of the year, he insisted on special splendor in the liturgical celebrations. This had a noticeable impact upon the piety of the people.
- April 4, Easter Sunday: Father Seelos preached for the first time since his hemorrhage.
- Easter Week: Father Seelos summoned the students to the common room and told them that Father Isaac Hecker and four other Redemptorist confreres had been dispensed from their vows and were no longer members of the Congregation.
- May 13, Ascension Day: Father Seelos preached a moving sermon at the First Communion of the children of the parish.
- May 19: seven young fathers began their second novitiate under the direction of Father Seelos.
- May 23, Pentecost: Father Seelos inaugurated the devotion of Forty Hours in the parish. Adoration was continuous day and night. The entire Office was sung at a convenient time before the Blessed Sacrament.
- June 3, Corpus Christi: Father Seelos preached the sermon at the First Solemn High Mass of Father Joachim Heymann, ordained May 29.
- June 5: Father Francis X. Tschenhens, one of the six pioneer Redemptorists to come to the United States in 1832, became a member of the community. Father Seelos had a special affection for this aging father.
- Father Seelos gave permission for the institution of a Debating Society so that the students could attain greater fluency in English. One of the complaints of the five fathers who had left the Congregation was that

learning good English was not encouraged among the students, most of whom came from German-speaking backgrounds.

August 1: Archbishop Kenrick consecrated the Church of Saints Peter and Paul.

August 2, Feast of Saint Alphonsus: the Archbishop administered the sacrament of confirmation to 102 confirmands.

November 30: the provincial began his annual Visitation of the community.

December 3, Feast of Saint Francis Xavier: as usual an enthusiastic celebration was held in honor of Father Seelos for his nameday. The provincial took part and was well pleased with both prefect and students.

December 25, Christmas: Father Seelos did not restore the Midnight Mass, which had been discontinued because of the rowdiness of some of the people, but ushered in the birth of the Savior at a joyful Mass at 2 A.M.

December 31: Father Seelos preached the sermon at the funeral of the clerical student, James Hummel, who died on December 30.

1859

At the beginning of the year, Father Seelos was superior and prefect of a community of five fathers, fifty-one students, six brothers, six novice brothers. During the year some fifteen new students were added to the community. He continued to teach dogmatic theology and Sacred Scripture.

Sometime during this year, he gave permission to the students for the First Friday devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

February 16: Mr. Martin Schwer a spiritual son of Father Seelos from his years at Saint Philomena, Pittsburgh, was admitted to the Trappists at Gethsemani. Father Seelos was his guide toward this decision. Mr. Schwer, however, died suddenly on July 19.

April 24, Easter Sunday: Father John De Dycker assumed his office as the new provincial to succeed Father George Ruland.

13. Father Seelos Is Reappointed as Pastor, Superior, and Prefect in Cumberland

1859

Easter week: Father De Dycker came to visit the students at Cumberland. He announced the reappointment of Father Seelos as rector and prefect of students and pastor of the parish. Seelos then made a three-day retreat as required by the Rule.

August 14: Forty Hours devotion was held. Adoration continued both day and night.

August 23-28: Father De Dycker presided over the examinations of the students and held Visitation of the community. He promulgated twenty-seven rather severe regulations.

September 8: Father Seelos gave eight students their retreat in preparation for ordination.

September 22, 23, 24: Archbishop Kenrick ordained to major orders eight Redemptorist students in Saint Alphonsus Church, Baltimore.

September 24: Father Seelos conducted a retreat for diocesan priests. The topic was the great dignity of the priesthood and the temptations to which a priest is subject.

October 18: Father De Dycker came to Cumberland with the dispensation of three students. They had lost the religious spirit and had asked to leave the Congregation. They left Cumberland on the following day.

October 19: Father Seelos gave the students their annual retreat, which had been postponed until the three dispensed students had departed from the community.

November: Father Seelos arranged to have two Redemptorist fathers give a mission in the parish of Saints Peter and Paul.

November 8: Bishop John Neumann arrived in Cumberland. The next day he gave minor orders to twenty-eight students.

December 1: Father Seelos wrote to the provincial asking him how he should proceed with Father William Wayrich, one of the professors, who was teaching unusual and novel opinions in his classes of philosophy.

December 8: Father Seelos accepted the vows of Father Nicolas Firle.

Christmas: he celebrated Midnight Mass at the Visitation Convent in Baltimore; then, at 5:30 A.M., he celebrated Mass in the orphanage conducted by the Sisters of Charity; at 10:00, he had the High Mass at Saint Alphonsus.

December 26: Father Seelos preached at the dedication of the new church of Saint Michael, Baltimore.

1860

At the beginning of the year, the community of Saints Peter and Paul, Cumberland, consisted of three priests, sixty students, six professed brothers, and six novice brothers. As in previous years, there were a number of out-missions that were taken care of by the community.

January 6, Saint Philomena, Pittsburgh: Father Seelos preached on the Feast of the Epiphany in his former parish.

January: he preached a mission at East Liberty, a small town near Pittsburgh.

January 31, Cumberland: Father De Dycker, the provincial, came to Cumberland to attend to some personal matters. Father Wayrich was transferred to the mission band in Philadelphia, no doubt, as a result of the letter of Father Seelos of December 1, 1859.

March 19: Father Seelos wrote a strong letter to Bishop Lefevere of Detroit who wanted some altar cards from the former Redemptorist parish in Monroe, Michigan, returned via express mail. He said that would cost more than the cards were worth.

14. Father Seelos Is Considered for Bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh

1860

March 23, Pittsburgh: Bishop Michael O'Connor of Pittsburgh, who intended to resign from the diocese, wrote to Archbishop Kenrick of Baltimore asking him to make nominations for a successor.

March 25, Baltimore: Archbishop Kenrick wrote that he did not want to make nominations until the Holy See gave the order to do so.

March 29, Pittsburgh: Bishop O'Connor wrote to Ken-

rick that he would select the names of possible candidates for the diocese. He asked Kenrick to support his request for resignation.

March 29, Baltimore: Kenrick said that he was prepared to help Bishop O'Connor's plan to resign if he recommended worthy candidates.

March 30, Baltimore: Kenrick wrote O'Connor that he did not want to recommend anyone himself, but would favor those O'Connor recommended as far as conscience permitted.

March 30, Pittsburgh: Bishop O'Connor wrote Kenrick that he considered Father Seelos as the best qualified to be the next bishop of Pittsburgh.

March 31, Baltimore: Kenrick wrote to O'Connor that he approved the nomination of Father Seelos.

April 6, Baltimore: Father De Dycker wrote to Father Nicholas Mauron, Redemptorist Superior General in Rome, that he had been informed under secrecy that Bishop O'Connor had placed the name of Father Seelos first on his list of candidates. De Dycker said that the General would do the Congregation a great service if he could avert such an appointment because Father Seelos was needed in the Province.

April 6, Baltimore: Archbishop Kenrick wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda that he seconded O'Connor's desire to resign. Three names were proposed as possible candidates for the diocese, first among whom was Seelos.

April 7, Wheeling, Virginia: Bishop Richard Whelan of Wheeling wrote to the Cardinal Prefect about the three proposed names. Without himself stating a preference, he did say that, although Father Seelos was a holy and prudent priest, he would not get along with others because he was a German.

April 10: Father Seelos went to Baltimore for an undisclosed purpose. Possibly the provincial wanted to talk to him about his nomination to Pittsburgh.

May 10, Baltimore: Archbishop Kenrick wrote to the Cardinal Prefect that Father Seelos was the most worthy of the names proposed, but that he would not ac-

cept unless ordered by the Holy Father due to his humility.

May 20, Rome: the Holy See accepted the resignation of Bishop O'Connor.

May 31: three students were ordained to the priesthood in Baltimore by Archbishop Kenrick.

June 7, Cumberland: Corpus Christi procession.

June 19, Baltimore: Archbishop Kenrick invited the bishops of the province to convene on July 5 in Baltimore to confer on the recommended candidates for the diocese of Pittsburgh.

June 22: Bishop O'Connor wrote to Kenrick that opposition to Father Seelos because of his nationality made it prudent not to put his name on the terna.

June 23, Pittsburgh: Father James O'Connor, brother of the bishop and administrator of Pittsburgh, wrote to Kenrick that Father Seelos was the most deserving but that all the priests objected to him because of his nationality.

15. Father Seelos Was Not on the Terna Sent to Rome, Chiefly Because of His German Background

July 5, Baltimore: in the meeting of the bishops of the province, the name of Father Seelos was not included in the terna sent to Rome.

July 31, Baltimore: Father Seelos wrote that he had given a five-day retreat to the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

August 2, Baltimore: Father De Dycker wrote to the Superior General in Rome that Father Seelos was not on the terna, for which he said he was very glad.

August 9, Rome: Father Mauron wrote to the Cardinal Prefect, giving in detail three reasons why Father Seelos should not be chosen as bishop of Pittsburgh.

August 24: Father Francis Verheyen, Roman visitor of the Province, arrived in Cumberland with the provincial. After the examinations of the students, the Visitation was opened.

September 17, Cumberland: Father Seelos wrote a let-

ter to Pope Pius IX, giving reasons why it would be a calamity if he were named bishop. This letter probably never reached the Pope because a bishop for Pittsburgh was chosen before the letter arrived in Rome.

September 18, Rome: Michael Domenec, C. M., was chosen as the new bishop of Pittsburgh.

September 19, Wheeling, West Virginia: two students were ordained by Bishop Richard Whelan.

September 20: the Visitation ended. Little was found to correct or change.

Mid October: eleven students in the humanities, with their professor, were transferred from Cumberland to Annapolis, because there was more room for them there.

October 27: Archbishop Kenrick confirmed sixty at Saints Peter and Paul.

November 13: the students considered it a blessing for them that Father Seelos was not chosen for Pittsburgh and had a grand celebration and enjoyed the recreation day he had promised them if he were not taken from them.

December 2: the nameday of Father Seelos was celebrated as usual with general enthusiasm and rejoicing.

December 31: Father Seelos wrote to the Superior General thanking him for a letter in which he praised him highly for his conduct during the period when he was being considered for Pittsburgh.

1861 At the beginning of the year the community consisted of three fathers, thirty students, six brothers, and four novice brothers. The younger students, those not in theology, had been sent to Annapolis where there was more room for them.

January 9: Brother Adam Parr, the school master, was transferred to Annapolis. Father Seelos engaged two ladies to come from Baltimore to teach in the school. They arrived January 28.

16. Difficulties of the Seminary during the American Civil War

1861 April 11, Charleston, South Carolina: the shelling and

surrender of Fort Sumter marked the beginning of the Civil War.

April 14-24, Cumberland: Father Seelos with Fathers Joseph Wissel and Joseph Jacobs gave an English mission in Saint Patrick's Church. As prefect, he allowed the students to take part in the mission, which helped to make it a great success.

May 3: Father Seelos left for Parkersburg, West Virginia, to assist Father Wissel in a mission where Father Jacobs was incapacitated due to typhoid fever.

May: after the mission in Parkersburg, Father Seelos went with Father Jacobs to a mission at West Union in the diocese of Wheeling.

May 20: Father Seelos returned to Cumberland from the missions.

June 19: a rumor in Cumberland that Confederates soldiers from Virginia were coming to take over the town caused panic among the people. Some of the townspeople, suspecting that weapons were being hidden in the monastery, urged that the house be searched. A more sensible captain came to the house but did not conduct a search.

August: Father Seelos made his annual retreat.

August 15: Father Seelos departed to help with a mission being given by Fathers Francis X. Tschenhens and James Bradley at Harmon's Bottom, a town near Pittsburgh.

August 19, Cumberland: the students, playing baseball on the heights opposite Virginia, were mistaken for Confederate soldiers. The town militia was sent out to repulse them but soon realized their mistake.

August 26: the provincial arrived in Cumberland for the annual examination of the students.

August 28: Father Seelos was appointed prefect of the brothers at the departure of Father Tschenhens, the former prefect.

August 31 - September 9: the provincial conducted the Visitation of the community. At the closing he left twenty-three regulations, some concerning the conduct of the students in view of the war.

September 21, Wheeling, West Virginia: two students were ordained to the priesthood in the cathedral by Bishop Richard Whelan. It was easier and safer to travel to Wheeling than to Baltimore.

September vacation: three rooms on the top floor of the monastery were joined to serve as a community oratory during the winter. Up until this time, community prayers took place in the choir loft of the parish church.

September 30: Father Seelos conducted the five-day retreat of the students.

October 7: Father Seelos began the second novitiate for five young fathers and two older students.

December 3: Father Seelos was honored with the usual affection and enthusiasm on his name day. The students were permitted to put on Cardinal Wiseman's play, *Hidden Gem*, the life of Saint Alexis.

December 23: Father Seelos invested a candidate brother with the Redemptorist habit to mark the beginning of his novitiate.

Christmas: Father Seelos had the usual renewal of vows, not in the morning, but in the evening in the church so that the people of the parish might be present.

1862

At the beginning of the year, the community consisted of two fathers, twenty-three students, five brothers, five novice brothers, and five young fathers making their second novitiate. The year was a difficult one because of the nearness of Cumberland to the Confederate border. The community had spiritual care of many of the war wounded who were sent there.

January 23: in a report to the provincial, Father Seelos wrote that all the students were well and in good spirits.

January 27, Baltimore: Father De Dycker, the provincial, sent a slate for the triennial appointments to the Superior General in Rome in which he recommended that Father Seelos be reappointed as prefect of students as there was no one better for the position. In case he himself should not be reappointed as provincial, he named Father Seelos as his third choice for provincial.

February 8, Cumberland: an army surgeon and a quartermaster came to the house to see if it could be used as a military hospital, but they decided that the rooms were too small and too poorly ventilated.

March 18, Baltimore: Archbishop Kenrick wrote to Father Seelos that he was to have spiritual care of the Sisters of Charity.

March 31, Cumberland: the second novitiate under the direction of Father Seelos came to a close.

April 3: Father Seelos with Father Charles Wensierski left for a German mission in Zanesville, Ohio. The mission began on April 6 and was considered a great success in reconciling many to the Church who had been alienated through the conduct of former unworthy pastors.

April 14, Holy Week: Father Seelos gave the students a five-day retreat.

April 26, Rome: the Superior General signed the triennial appointments for the province. Father De Dycker was reappointed as provincial and Father Seelos, as pastor, superior, and prefect at Cumberland.

17. May 1862: Father Seelos Is Appointed Pastor, Superior, and Prefect of Students at Saint Mary's, Annapolis; Letters Criticizing Seelos as Prefect Are Sent to Rome

1862-1865 SAINT MARY'S, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND; SUPERIOR OF THE PARISH MISSION BAND

1862 May 15, Baltimore: the provincial and his consultors decided to move the studentate to Saint Mary's, Annapolis, and the novitiate to Cumberland.

May 18, Cumberland: news reached Cumberland that Father Seelos was appointed pastor, superior, and prefect of students in Annapolis, Maryland, and Father Michael Mueller, rector and novice master at Cumberland.

May 21: the provincial arrived at Cumberland and announced that all the students were to be transferred to Annapolis and all the novices to Cumberland.

May 31, Annapolis: Father Michael Mueller, wrote a

very long letter to the Superior General, giving in detail the reasons why he thought Father Seelos was not qualified to be prefect of students.

June 3, Baltimore: De Dycker explained to the Superior General why he had made the changes in the location of the studentate and the novitiate, permission for which had been given him previously. In Annapolis Father Seelos was to be prefect of the older students; Father Peter Zimmer, of the younger students.

June 13: Father Seelos, with the last of the students, left Cumberland and arrived in Annapolis.

June 14: with the provincial present, Father Seelos entered upon his office as pastor, superior, and prefect of students. The community at Saint Mary's consisted of eight fathers, sixty-five students, eight brothers, five novice brothers, and six candidate brothers - ninety-two in all.

June 11, Baltimore: two students were ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Kenrick in Saint Alphonsus Church.

July 2, Baltimore: Father De Dycker, in explaining to the Superior General why he had made the changes in the formation houses, wrote that there had been too much confusion at Annapolis under Father Michael Mueller.

July 3, Cumberland: Father Joseph Wissel wrote to the Superior General that he had reservations about Seelos as prefect of students. The letter echoed the remarks of Father Mueller's letter of May 31.

July 25, Cumberland: Father Michael Mueller wrote another letter to the Superior General, again attacking Father Seelos as prefect of students.

August 4, Washington: the Secretary of War called for a Draft of 300,000 soldiers to serve in the military for nine months. If any State could not fulfill its quota, a special Draft was to be made.

August 15, Annapolis: the students began their summer vacation.

18. August, 1862 Father Seelos Is Removed from Being Prefect of Students

August 30, Rome: Father Mauron, the Superior General, explained to his consultors why it was necessary to name a new prefect of students for the American Province to replace Father Seelos. All the consultors agreed on naming Father Gerard Dielemans, prefect of students in Wittem, Holland.

August 31, Annapolis: Archbishop Kenrick confirmed eighteen at Saint Mary's.

September 1, Annapolis: Archbishop Kenrick gave tonsure and conferred minor orders on twenty students.

September: all the students were enrolled to be drafted, but an assurance was given that they would be exempted as clerics. The Draft commissioner in Annapolis, a bigoted anti-Catholic, said that the students, nonetheless, were liable to be drafted like everyone else.

September 13, Rome: Father Mauron informed De Dycker that Father Seelos was being replaced as prefect of students by Father Dielemans. He was, however, to remain as superior of the community and professor. Mauron suggested that it might be wise to appoint him superior of Saint Alphonsus, Baltimore, and provincial consultor, thus having him exchange places with Father George Ruland who held these positions.

September 15, Annapolis: Father Seelos gave the students their semi-annual five-day retreat.

September 22: Adj. Gen. Thomas came to Saint Mary's and told the community that there was nothing to fear about being drafted. If trouble should come, however, they could write to the Secretary of War in Washington, Edwin Stanton.

September 22: classes resumed for the students after vacation. Father Seelos was slated to teach Sacred Scripture and Church history.

September 29: a school, newly reorganized, was opened with 149 children under a schoolmistress, using the old church for classrooms.

October 6, Baltimore: De Dycker, while thanking the

Superior General for his concern for the American studentate, told him that he was convinced that conditions under Father Seelos as prefect were not as bad as had been represented to him. Those who spoke against Seelos did not do him justice; in his opinion, there was no one more qualified for the position than he.

October 6: Baltimore: Father George Ruland, informed that an exchange was being considered between himself and Father Seelos, wrote to the Superior General giving the reasons why he did not favor such a plan.

October 7, Rome: Mauron sent to De Dycker an instruction on the preparation and formation of Redemptorist students.

October 28, Rome: Mauron wrote De Dycker permitting Father Seelos to remain in Annapolis as superior and professor.

Beginning of November, Baltimore: Archbishop Kenrick asked the community of Annapolis to give spiritual help to the soldiers at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. There was also a military hospital there.

November 3, Baltimore: Father De Dycker writing to Dielemans told him that he believed the Superior General had been badly informed about the spirit in the studentate, something that he would see for himself once he arrived. Father Seelos was happy about his coming and would not pose any problem to him.

19. The New Prefect of Students Arrives from Holland: Father Seelos Remains in Annapolis as Pastor, Superior, Professor

November 17, Annapolis: Father Gerard Dielemans arrived in Annapolis. Seelos remained pastor of the parish, superior of the community, and professor of Scripture and Church history.

December 3: the nameday of Father Seelos was celebrated by the community with the usual festivities and enthusiasm.

December 7-10: Father Seelos went to Fortress Monroe to minister to the soldiers at the base and in the military hospital. This was the first of two times that he

went there.

December 21-30, Annapolis: Father De Dycker held Visitation of the community. The two divisions of the students were done away with; six of the seventeen remarks in the recess book had reference to the studentate.

December 27: Father Seelos thanked Father Mauron for his concern for the studentate in sending Father Dielemans. The change-over went well because everyone received it with joy. He himself was grateful for being relieved of the heavy responsibility.

1863

At the beginning of the year, the community at Saint Mary's, Annapolis, consisted of nine fathers, sixty-three students, nine brothers, three novice brothers, and four candidate brothers. Father Seelos was superior of the community and pastor of the parish; he taught Sacred Scripture and Church history.

February 7: Father Seelos went to Baltimore for a few days to give pastoral assistance.

March 3, Washington: President Lincoln signed the Conscription Act. All able-bodied men between the ages of 20 and 45 were liable to be drafted into military service for a period of three years. Service could be avoided by obtaining a substitute or paying \$300.00. Clergy and religious were not exempted.

March 13: Father De Dycker came to Annapolis for a long consultation with Father Seelos and the consultors to deliberate on what to do with the students in view of the Draft. It was decided to ordain twenty of the students as soon as possible, because as clerics it might be easier to obtain exemption from military service for them.

March 16, Baltimore: De Dycker sent his report for the Visitation of the previous years to the Superior General. At Annapolis there seemed to be tension between Father Seelos and Father Dielemans, which was to be expected in two men so different in temperament and personality. Father Seelos was doing himself violence not to interfere in the affairs of the students. De Dycker would not welcome another change in the studentate.

March 19-20-21: Archbishop Kenrick ordained on three consecutive days twenty students to the subdiaconate, the diaconate, and the priesthood at Saint Mary's, Annapolis. This was the largest number Archbishop Kenrick had ordained at one time, and it was the largest ordination class so far in American ecclesiastical history.

March 21: Father Seelos returned to Baltimore with the Archbishop, who gave him as a gift some Latin and Greek works of the Fathers.

March 30- April 3, Holy Week: the community of Saint Mary's made their usual five-day retreat.

May 9: Father Seelos with three other fathers went to Baltimore for pastoral assistance.

May 12-15, Baltimore: Father Seelos took part in the Archdiocesan Synod.

May 24, Baltimore: Father De Dycker wrote to the Superior General that he had decided to have Father Helmpreaecht direct the next class of the second novitiate at Annapolis.

June 20-22: De Dycker came to Annapolis to discuss what was to be done with the students to avoid induction into the military. A first suggestion was that all the students be sent to Canada. Then it was decided that several of the fathers go to Washington and petition President Lincoln to exempt the students. Before leaving, the provincial ordered the recitation of the Five Psalms of Saint Bonaventure in honor of Mary for protection from the Draft.

June 24-25, Washington: Father Van de Braak and Henning had an interview with the Postmaster General, Montgomery Blair, who assured them they had nothing to fear from the Draft.

July 1-3: Battle of Gettysburg.

July 8, Baltimore: Archbishop Kenrick died.

20. Father Seelos Goes to Washington to Ask President Abraham Lincoln for Exemption from the Draft

July 22-24, Washington: Fathers Seelos and Van de

Braak went to Washington to see about exemption from the Draft. They had a meeting with President Lincoln who said he did not know what could be done. They also met with the Postmaster General, Montgomery Blair, William H. Seward, the son of the Secretary of State, and with Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War.

July 23, Baltimore: De Dycker wrote to the Superior General that he planned to appoint Father Seelos as head of the mission band. He informed Seelos of this, who mentioned it in a letter of August 3.

July 27-29, Annapolis: the students took their oral examinations.

August 1: summer vacation began for all.

August 3: Father Seelos began his ten-day annual retreat.

21. August, 1863, Father Seelos Is Appointed Superior of the Parish Mission Band

August 29: Father Seelos was named head of the mission band. Father Joseph Helmprecht arrived to direct the second novitiate and to function as vice-rector in the absence of Father Seelos on the missions.

September 22: Father Seelos departed from Annapolis to begin his work as superior of the missions. He remained superior of the community in Annapolis in name only, as Father Helmprecht was the acting superior. He did not return to Annapolis.

September 29 - October 5, Loretto, Pennsylvania: Father Seelos gave a retreat to the diocesan priests of Pittsburgh.

October 4-17, Waukegan, Illinois: English mission in Immaculate Conception Parish.

October 18-24, Woodstock, Illinois: English mission in Saint Mary's Parish.

October 25-November 7, Hartland, Illinois: English mission in Saint Patrick's Parish.

November 8-22, Ottawa, Illinois: English mission in Saint Columba's Parish.

November 22-29, Henry, Illinois: English mission in

Saint Mary's Parish.

November 29 - December 6, Henry, Illinois: German mission in Saint Mary's Parish.

December 13-25, Chicago, Illinois: English mission in Saint John's Parish.

1864

December 27 - January 10, Chicago, Illinois: English mission in Saint Mary's Parish.

January 11, Saint Mary's, Detroit: Father Seelos and the missionaries stayed with the Redemptorists to rest before the next mission.

January 17-31, Toledo, Ohio: English mission in Saint Patrick's Parish.

January 31 - February 10, Cleveland, Ohio: English mission renewal in Saint Patrick's Parish.

February, Cleveland, Ohio: retreat to the Ursuline Sisters.

February, Holy Redeemer, New York City: Father Seelos and the missionaries stayed with their confreres to rest in between the missions. He wrote a letter from here on February 28.

March 2-27, Providence, Rhode Island: English mission in the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul.

March 29 - April 15, Holy Redeemer, New York City: Father Seelos spent part of Easter week and the two following weeks here.

April 17 - May 1, Chicago, Illinois: English mission in Saint Patrick's Parish.

May 1-10, Bloomington, Illinois: English mission in Saint Patrick's Parish.

May 15-23, Bridgeport, Illinois: English mission in Saint Bridget's Parish.

May 22-30, Morris, Illinois: English mission in Saint Patrick's Parish.

June 5-16, Joliet, Illinois: English mission in Saint Patrick's Parish.

June 19-28, Peoria, Illinois: English mission in Saint Mary's and Saint Patrick's Parish.

June 20: the missionaries received word that they were to spend the summer months, July and August, when there was no mission work, at Saints Peter and Paul,

Cumberland. Father Seelos was to remain as superior of the band of missionaries.

July 3: mission work ended for the summer months.

July 9, Cumberland: Father Seelos arrived at Saints Peter and Paul for the summer. During these weeks he made his annual retreat.

August 20-26, Cumberland: under the leadership of the provincial, the missionaries had a mission conference. As a result, a number of additions were made to the Provincial Statutes regarding the conducting of missions.

September 12, Saint Philomena, Pittsburgh: Father Seelos had been appointed to be socius to the provincial for the Visitation of the community which ended on this date.

September 16, Pittsburgh: Father Seelos preached on this Sunday at Saint Philomena and stayed until the beginning of the priests' retreat.

September 20-27, Loretto, Pennsylvania: Father Seelos conducted an eight-day retreat for the diocesan clergy of Pittsburgh.

September 29, Holy Redeemer, New York City: Father Seelos spent a few days with the confreres before the next mission.

October 2-13, Providence, Rhode Island: English mission renewal in Saint Joseph's Parish.

October 18, Holy Redeemer, New York City: Father Seelos spent a few days here in between missions.

October 23 - November 5, Waterbury, Connecticut: English mission in Immaculate Conception Parish.

November 6-21, Hudson City, New Jersey: English mission in Saint Joseph's Parish.

November 24, Holy Redeemer, New York City: Father Seelos was here in between missions.

November 27 - December 11, Cincinnati, Ohio: German mission in Saint Joseph's Parish.

December 18-27, White Oak, Ohio: English mission in Saint James's Parish.

1865

At the beginning of the year, Father Seelos was still superior of the missionaries and, officially, rector of Saint

Mary's, Annapolis, although he was always on the missions.

January 1-8, Bucyrus, Ohio: German and English mission in Holy Trinity Parish.

January 8-15, Shelby Settlement, Richmond County, Ohio: German mission in Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish.

January 22 - February 1, Massillon, Ohio: German mission in Saint Mary's Parish.

February, Detroit: in between missions Father Seelos stayed with the Redemptorist community at Saint Mary's.

February 2-5, Massillon, Ohio: three-day retreat to three sisters.

February 12-20, Toledo, Ohio: English mission renewal in Saint Patrick's Parish.

February 25, Chicago: Father Seelos was with the Redemptorist community at Saint Michael's.

March 4-14, Chicago, Illinois: solemn novena in Saint Patrick's Parish.

March 19, Joliet, Illinois: English mission renewal in Saint Patrick's Parish.

March 28: Chicago: with the Saint Michael's community.

April 1-5, Rochester, New York: on his way to New York, Father Seelos stayed several days with the Redemptorist community at Saint Joseph's. He preached in the evening of April 2, Passion Sunday.

April 6, New York: Father Seelos arrived at Most Holy Redeemer.

April 9: the Civil War came to an end with the surrender of General Lee to General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia.

April 14, 15, 16: New York: Father Seelos was asked by the pastor of Most Holy Redeemer to take the services on Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday.

April 14, Washington: President Lincoln was assassinated.

April 22, New York: the provincial, Father John De Dycker, with Father Joseph Helmprecht, left for Rome where they had been summoned by the Superior General to consult about affairs in the province.

April 23-May 3, Danbury, Connecticut: English mission in Saint Peter's Parish.

May 14-31, New York City: very large and very successful English mission in Saint Peter's Parish. Nine missionaries took part and 10,000 confessions were heard.

May 24, Rome: Father Joseph Helmptraecht was named provincial to succeed Father De Dycker. He did not return from Europe until the end of July.

May 30, Rome: the Superior General informed Father Ruland, acting provincial, that he was permitting Father Dielemans to return to Europe after less than three years as prefect. Father Michael Burke was appointed in his place.

June 3, Rome: the Superior General appointed Father Leopold Petsch as rector of Annapolis, officially terminating the tenure of Father Seelos as superior there.

July-August, Cumberland: the missionaries spent their summer months at Saints Peter and Paul.

July 5, Annapolis: Father Dielemans departed from the studentate. He sailed for Europe on July 12.

July 4-5, Pittsburgh: on his way to Chicago for the priests' retreat, Father Seelos stayed several days with the community at Saint Philomena's.

July 10, Chicago, Illinois: retreat to the diocesan priests of Chicago.

July 18-19, Pittsburgh: Father Seelos left Chicago, July 17, and stayed a few days at Saint Philomena on his return trip.

July 25, New York: Father Helmptraecht arrived from Europe to begin his tenure as provincial.

22. August, 1865: Father Seelos Is No Longer Superior of the Missionaries

August 2, Baltimore: Father Helmptraecht wrote to the Superior General that Father Peter Zimmer was the new superior of Saint Michael's, Chicago and that Father Seelos was to be consultor and admonitor. On the same day, Father Seelos wrote in a letter that he was transferred to Chicago and was no longer superior of

the missionaries. In view of the following, this first assignment was quickly changed.

September, Rochester: the House Chronicle of Saint Joseph's, Rochester, has an entry in September, 1865, that states that, around the time of the retreat to the priests of Buffalo, Father Seelos was assigned to Rochester. On January 1, 1866, an entry states that Father Seelos ceased to be a member of the house and was assigned to Detroit and that he never lived in the Rochester house.

September 12-18, Buffalo, New York: Father Seelos gave a retreat in English to forty-seven diocesan priests of Buffalo. Around this time, he spent some time with the community of Saint Mary's in Buffalo.

September 21-28, Pittsburgh: on his way west, Father Seelos spent these days with the community of Saint Philomena.

October 1-15, St. Louis, Missouri: German mission in Saint Mary's Parish.

October 2, Baltimore: the provincial wrote to the Superior General that Fathers Albert Schaeffler and Joseph Wissel were the consultors in Chicago, changing what he had written on August 2.

October 22 - November 5, Cincinnati, Ohio: German mission in Saint Mary's Parish.

November 7-11, Nazareth, Ohio: retreat to students of Saint Mary's College.

November 12-21, Dayton, Ohio: German mission in Holy Trinity Parish.

November 19-30, Toledo, Ohio: English mission in Saint Francis de Sales Parish.

November 22-28, Detroit: Father Helmpreaecht held Visitation of the community of Saint Mary's. It is possible that as a result of this Visitation, Father Seelos was transferred to Detroit.

23. Father Seelos is Transferred to Saint Mary's Parish, Detroit, Michigan

DECEMBER 1865 - SEPTEMBER, 1866: FATHER SEELOS MINISTERED AS A

PARISH PRIEST AT SAINT MARY'S, DETROIT, MICHIGAN

December 1, Detroit: Father Seelos arrived at Saint Mary's, Detroit, where the missionaries were gathering for a very large mission in Montreal of which Father Seelos was to have been the superior. However, the house chronicler states that at the provincial's order he was to remain in Detroit and assist the community in its ministry and rest from his labors on the missions.

December, Connors Creek, Michigan: three-day mission in Assumption of Mary Parish. Preaching was in English, German, and French.

December, Ionia, Michigan: three-day German mission in Saints Peter and Paul Parish.

December, New Baltimore, Michigan: German Jubilee service in Immaculate Conception Parish.

1866

January 1, Detroit: Father Seelos is listed as a member of the community of Saint Mary's with the duties of an assistant to the pastor and prefect of the brothers in the community. The parish books record his baptisms and marriages; the house chronicle, the occasions on which he preached.

January 26: Father Seelos gave the evening conference to the Confraternity of the Holy Family. He did this often.

February 11-13: Father Seelos preached for the Forty Hours devotion: Jesus is the Good Shepherd who dwells with his sheep, offers himself for them, and protects them.

April 24-27, Nazareth, Ohio: Father Seelos gave a three-day retreat to the students at Saint Mary's Boarding School and prepared them for First Holy Communion and confirmation.

June 4: in a letter of spiritual direction, Father Seelos mentioned that the provincial had told him to curtail his correspondence.

July 2, Chicago: Father Seelos arrived at Saint Michael's from Detroit on his way to give a priests' retreat. He left for the retreat on July 5.

July 6-12, Alton, Illinois: Father Seelos gave a German

retreat to twenty-five priests of the Diocese of Alton (later Springfield, Illinois). He stayed with the bishop, Henry Damian Juncker. After the closing of the retreat on July 12, he attended the diocesan synodal conference.

July 9-10, Annapolis: three fathers and two students lost their lives by drowning in a boating accident.

July 13-20, Alton, Illinois: retreat to the Ursuline Sisters at the convent of the Holy Family.

July 21: Father Seelos returned to Saint Michael's, Chicago, where the provincial was making Visitation.

July 22, Chicago: the provincial appointed him socius of the Visitation.

July 24: in his diary Father Joseph Wissel recorded the departure of Father Seelos for Detroit: "Parting he said to me that I would see him no more and that he hoped to see me in heaven, because great things were going on - he wouldn't tell me more - what might that be?!"

August 2-9, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: these dates best accord with other data for a retreat that Father Seelos gave to the clergy of the Diocese of Milwaukee at the Salesianum, the diocesan seminary.

August 11, Chicago: Wissel's diary for this date has: "F. Dold went to Milwaukee this morning to see Fr. Seelos there, as he appears to believe that Fr. Seelos is to be his successor there in Pittsburgh." The rumor that Father Seelos was to take Father Louis Dold's place as rector of Pittsburgh, of course, was not true.

August 15, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Father Seelos preached in English for the Assumption of Mary in Immaculate Conception Church, having stopped there on August 14 on his way back to Detroit in order not to miss saying Mass.

24. Father Seelos Is Transferred to New Orleans, Louisiana

August 29, New Orleans: the house chronicle of the community of Saint Mary's noted that Father Seelos was to be stationed there.

September 12, Detroit: Father Seelos departed from De-

troit for his new assignment in New Orleans.

September 14, Chicago: he began his annual ten-day retreat at Saint Michael's.

September 25: Father Seelos left for New Orleans together with Brother Lawrence Fischwenger and two School Sisters of Notre Dame.

September 27: his mother died in Füssen, Germany, but the news did not reach him until November.

1866-1867 FATHER SEELOS MINISTERED AS A PARISH PRIEST IN NEW ORLEANS

September 28: Father Seelos arrived in New Orleans and was joyfully received into the community as prefect of Saint Mary's Church for the Germans, one of the three churches under the direction of the community.

November 4: he gave assistance to the missionaries at Saint Joseph's Parish in Gretna, Louisiana.

November 6: Father Seelos received news of his mother's death on September 27.

November 30: he was appointed zealor of the community.

December 3: after only two months in New Orleans, his nameday was celebrated with enthusiasm by the community and members of the parish.

December 4: the provincial began the Visitation of the community, for which Father Seelos was named socius.

December 30 - January 14: he helped with confessions in a mission given in Saint Alphonsus Church.

1867 As the year began, Father Seelos was consultor to the rector, Father John B. Duffy, who had been his novice in Pittsburgh, and prefect of Saint Mary's Church. He also gave assistance in the other two parishes. A member of the community was Father Alexander who had accepted him as a novice in 1843.

February 11: Father Seelos was appointed prefect of the seven brothers in the community.

February 21-28, Natchez, Mississippi: Father Seelos gave a retreat to the priests of the diocese of Natchez.

March 6, Ash Wednesday: during Lent, he preached of-

ten in Saint Mary's Church, Carrollton.

May: Father Seelos preached the May devotions.

July 17: he blessed the statue of the Sorrowful Mother in Saint Mary's Church.

August 9-14: Father Seelos gave a retreat to the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

August 26: the house chronicle noted that there were so many cases of yellow fever in the city that it was declared an epidemic.

September 3: Father Benedict Neithart came down with the fever

September 9: Father Joseph Jacobs came down with the fever, he recovered quickly but had a relapse on the 14th, but then recovered again.

25. Last Sickness and Death, September 17 - October 4, 1867

September 17: Father Seelos made an urgent sick call after the midday meal, came home, and at 3:00 P.M., took to his bed with yellow fever after fighting it for several days.

September 18-20: there was little alarm about his condition as the fever was not very high and he was a good patient, quiet and composed.

September 22: Father William Meredith and Brother Gerard Fleddermann came down with the fever. Father Meredith was well on the 27th.

September 25: Brother Lawrence Fischwenger came down with the fever.

September 26: Father Seelos received the last sacraments.

September 27: Brother Lawrence died. The doctor thought that Father Seelos was improving.

September 28: Brother Gerard died. Neithart, Jacobs, and Meredith were recovering.

September 29: Father Seelos began to have intermittent periods of delirium.

October 1: his condition was worsening, but he was happy with the news that he was most likely going to die. Father Charles Stiessberger came down with the

fever. He died on October 6.

October 2: Father Seelos had a sinking spell and the prayers for the dying were said, in which he participated as best he could. He asked to have the habit put on, he renewed his religious vows and gave his blessing to the confreres. He wanted to die on Friday in honor of the Passion and Death of Our Lord, or on Saturday in honor of Our Blessed Lady. He said: "Now I see what it is to die a Redemptorist." He begged pardon for all his faults. He was very much at peace.

October 3: when news spread of his condition, there was a flood of prayers for him. The doctor was amazed that, as one so sick, he did not complain about his pain. He called Father Jacobs to his bedside and warned him about losing his vocation. At an obedience of the superior, he tried to get up but was too weak. When asked if he wanted anything to eat, he said "only Holy Communion."

October 4: shortly after midnight, Father Duffy gave him Holy Viaticum. The community made morning meditation in his room and he tried to participate in the prayers. He was delirious but praying. He renewed his vows and tried to repeat the prayers whispered in his ear. At 4:30 P.M. his agony began. The prayers for the dying were recited. He seemed to be conscious, his lips constantly moved in prayer. While those around his bed were singing his favorite German hymns to Mary, he died quietly at 5:50 P.M., Friday, October 4. He was 48 years and 9 months old.

26. All Night Vigil at His Casket in the Church; Solemn Requiem Mass, October 5: Burial in Saint Mary's Church

October 4: in less than two hours his body, clothed in violet vestments, was laid out in Saint Mary's Church. Despite a violent storm, people began to flock to the church and kept coming throughout the whole night. There were no signs of corruption and no odor as was usual in such cases.

October 5: great crowds came, all wishing to touch the

body. At 8:00 A.M., there was the Solemn Requiem High Mass sung by Father John Duffy. The homily was preached by Father Henry Giessen in English for the benefit of the many Americans, Irish, and Creoles who filled the church. This was followed by the *Libera*, after which the people touched rosaries, medals, prayer books, and cards to the body. This lasted a good half hour.

Just before noon, the body was lowered into the vault before the altar of Saint Alphonsus at the side of the large mission crucifix and the statue of the Mater Dolorosa.

RÉSUMÉ

Le Bienheureux François-Xavier Seelos est né à Füssen, Allemagne, le 11 janvier 1819, le sixième de douze enfants de Mang et Frances Schwarzenbach. Après l'école élémentaire de son village, il étudia à Saint-Étienne, Augsburg, durant 7 années (1832-1839); puis durant trois ans à l'Université Ludwig-Maximilien, Munich: deux ans de philosophie (1839-1841) et une année de théologie (1842). Le besoin urgent de prêtres parlant l'allemand aux États-Unis l'amena à entrer chez les CSsR pour travailler en Amérique, où il arriva le 20 avril 1843. Il fit profession le 16 juillet 1844 et fut ordonné prêtre le 22 décembre 1844, à Baltimore, Maryland. Il travailla d'abord au ministère paroissial à Sainte-Philomène, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvanie, 1845-1854, où il fut nommé supérieur en 1851; puis il devint supérieur à Saint-Alphonse à Baltimore, 1854-1857. Il servit comme supérieur, professeur et préfet des étudiants à Saints-Pierre-et-Paul, Cumberland et à Sainte-Marie, Annapolis, Maryland, 1857-1862. Remplacé comme préfet des étudiants, il fut nommé supérieur de l'équipe des missions, 1862-1865. Après une année (1865-1866) comme vicaire à la paroisse de Sainte-Marie, Détroit, Michigan, il fut transféré à la Nouvelle-Orléans, Louisiane, où il fut nommé curé substitut à Sainte-Marie de l'Assomption en 1866. Il mourut dans une épidémie de fièvre jaune à la Nouvelle-Orléans le 4 octobre 1867, entouré d'une réputation générale de sainteté.

CARL HOEGERL, CSSR

THREE APPRAISALS OF THE SPIRITUALITY AND CHARISM
OF BLESSED FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS, CSSR

INTRODUCTION

This article consists of three synthetic descriptions of the spiritual life and charismatic gifts of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos. It is a reworking of chapter 17 of the *Documentary Study* that is the major part of the *Positio super Virtutibus* presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in the process of his beatification.¹ It is found in volume II, part 2, pp. 1325-1410. Each of the authors of these appraisals had written a biography of Father Seelos and had, therefore, the advantage of a long familiarity with him, enabling them to write of him as a long-experienced personal friend. The three Redemptorist authors are: Fathers Peter Zimmer, Michael J. Curley, and Carl Hoegerl, each of whom will be introduced more fully at the beginning of each appraisal.

APPRAISAL I

PETER ZIMMER, C.S.S.R.

INTRODUCTION

The first appraisal is by Father Peter Zimmer, C.S.S.R. It is taken from his biography of Father Seelos, entitled in the original German *Leben und Wirken des Hochwürdigsten P. Franz Xaver Seelos aus der Congregation des Allerheil. Erlösers* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1887) (*Life and*

¹ The full title of the entire work is: *Novae Aureliae Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Francisci Xaverii Seelos, Sacerdotis Professi Congregationis SS.Mi Redemptoris (1819-1867): Positio super Vita, Virtutibus et Fama Sancitatis*, 2 vols. (Roma: Tipografia Guerra, 1999). Volume 2, in 2 books, has this subtitle: *Documentary Study of the Life, Virtues, and Fame for Holiness of the Servant of God, Francis Xavier Seelos, Professed Priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer* (cited hereafter as *DocStud*).

Work of Reverend Francis Xavier Seelos, of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer). The text is found in chapter 34, pp. 289-318, "Uebersichtliche Darstellung der vorzüglichen Tugenden des Hochw. P. Seelos" ("Summary Description of the Outstanding Virtues of Father Seelos").

Zimmer's biography has a particular value. It is made up, for the most part, of longer or shorter citations from original contemporary documents that have to do with Father Seelos. In addition to this, where Zimmer supplies non-documental material - observations, additional data, reflective commentaries, it must be borne in mind that he himself was a contemporary of Father Seelos and knew him personally, as did others whom Zimmer cites in the course of the book. The preponderance of the material in this biography can be traced back to someone who, at one time or another, had come in contact with him. This gives readers of this biography unusual assurance of the veracity and reliability of the material contained in it.

It will be immediately evident that Zimmer, methodologically, follows a rather traditional schema in his appraisal of the spirituality of Father Seelos. This is to say, also, that his presentation has more the character of a synthesis than does that of Father Curley, which is to follow this one. His assessment of the virtuous life of Father Seelos begins with the theological virtues and then continues with those that are usually looked for as signs of the holiness of a priest who is a member of a religious order. This is followed by a schema that is more original in a presentation such as this: Zimmer points out, in a special section, how Father Seelos possessed in an unusual way the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Zimmer developed his presentation of the spirituality chiefly through anecdotes from the life of Father Seelos that bring out some particular virtue or characteristic of his inner personality. And, it must be said, his emphases are those that reflect the spiritual concerns of the end of the nineteenth century rather than our own.

He incorporated into his text some of the poems that Father Seelos was wont to write. These poems are not great literature by any means, but they do give expression to the inner sentiments of Father Seelos and so bring us into contact with his spirituality. The poems are given here in their original German, followed by a somewhat literal translation. Father Zimmer, unfortunately, did not arm his text with explanatory footnotes. The annotations found here have been added for the purposes of the article.

TEXT

It is difficult to say in which virtues our departed Father stood out and excelled the most during his lifetime, since there is not a single one that we can name that he did not practice in an outstanding way with great joyfulness and perseverance. His heart was a well-enclosed garden which, under the expert care of a skilled gardener, brought forth the most precious and beautiful flowers and fruit that filled the air with their pleasant perfume and fragrance.

Before all else the three theological virtues shown forth in him, which, so to speak, really were the soul of his virtuous life.

1. First of all, in what concern his faith, we can in all truth say that the *Servant of God really lived out of his faith*, for his entire life was founded on it and went forth from it as from a living wellspring. As a child of truly God-fearing and devout parents, he passed the years of his innocent childhood in an atmosphere of faith. It was thus that he felt the call of God to give himself to the religious state.

To attain this goal, he spent the years of his youth in the study of the various branches of learning and in the practice of the virtues. Then, when divine Providence had opened the way for him into the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, he joyfully gave up everything in the world that was near and dear to him and entered into the path of the spiritual life with fervent faith and rejoiced as a giant to run his course.

Faith was the measuring rod that he strictly adhered to in his external deportment and in his entire manner of thinking and judging. Life on earth was for him a mere time of probation that he had to make use of conscientiously to attain successfully the exalted goal of his pilgrimage. He inculcated this teaching upon the people publicly in the pulpit as well as privately in the confessional and in other dealings with them. In this school he taught in a very special way the confreres of his Congregation who were entrusted to him; in such a way, however, that in applying this teaching he was himself a living example and model. Beautifully he expressed these sentiments of the faith in the following verses.

MEINE GRÖSSTE PLAGE²

1. O, wie arm und wie verlassen
Fühl' ich mich in dieser Welt!
All ihr Thun und all ihr Lassen
Meinem Herzen nicht gefällt.
Nach der Heimat - dort nach oben,
Diesem Elend ganz enthoben;
Dort bei Engeln möcht' ich sein,
Auch so heilig, auch so rein.
2. Könnt' ich doch auch heilig werden,
Nach und nach, so schön, so neu!
Alle Kreuze und Beschwerden
Wollt' ich tragen ohne Scheu.
Dürft' ich's hoffen, o wie gerne
Wollt' ich leiden, wenn auch ferne
Noch vom Ziel, vom Heimatland;
"Zeitlich" wär ich gern verbannt.
3. Ob gedrückt von grossen Leiden,
Wär auch alles freudenleer;
Oder, ob beglückt von Freuden,
Diese schätzt' ich auch nicht sehr!
Eltern, Heimat, Blut und Leben,
Glück und Reichthum möcht' ich geben.
Alles! Nur so schön, so neu
Möcht' ich sein und sündenfrei!
4. Kommt mir gar so schön vor's Auge,
Wie's kein Mensch gesehen hat,
Was vom Himmel lehrt der Glaube
Von Jerusalem, der Stadt;
Wo von Sünde, Kummer, Plage,
Frei vom Schmerze, frei von Klage,
Von der Furcht zu fallen frei,
Alles heilig ist und neu.
5. Doch da fühl' ich gar so drückend
Eine grosse, schwere Last!
Alles and're schien erquickend,

² The autograph poem is found in the Redemptorist Archives of the Baltimore Province (hereafter RABP), where the MSS of Seelos are preserved, which location we will presume in further citations of the poems: Seelos MS XIII, pp. 3-4. Zimmer was often not content with the words that Seelos used, so he asked Father Henry Meurer, C.SS.R., to edit them. We give here the original of Seelos.

Diese Bürd' erdrückt mich fast.
All mein Elend, Fehler, Mängel,
Leidenschaft mit Wurz und Stengel
Wuchert frisch und altert nie,
Bleibt mir nah', wohin ich flieh'.
6. Gut sein wollen, Tugend lieben
Und dabei doch jeden Tag
Meinen lieben Gott betrüben:
Dies ist meine grösste Plag'!
Sünden stets auf Sünden haufen,
Alle Vorsätz', auch die steifen,
Grad zu brechen; und gemacht,
Halten sie kaum über Nacht.

English Translation

MY GREATEST COMPLAINT

1. O, how poor and how forsaken
Do I feel myself in this world;
All its doing and all its not doing
Do not please my heart.
For my homeland - there above,
Completely freed from this misery;
There with angels would I be,
Just so holy, just so pure.
2. If I could only be holy
By and by, so beautiful, so new!
Every cross and difficulty,
I would bear without reserve.
Might I hope it - O, how gladly
Would I suffer, even if far away
Still from the goal, from my homeland;
"From things of time," I would gladly be banished.
3. Even if burdened with great sorrow;
And were everything empty of joy;
Or, whether fortunate with joy -
These things I would not value much.
Parents, home, blood, and life,
Success, and riches, I would give -
Everything. Only so beautiful, so new
I want to be, and so free of sin.
4. It does come so beautifully to my eye;

As no one has every seen it -
 What from heaven faith teaches,
 From Jerusalem, the city.
 Where freed from sin, care, trials;
 Free from pain, free from complaint,
 Free of fear of falling -
 Everything is holy and new.
 5. Still here I feel so oppressive
 A great, heavy burden;
 Everything else seemed enlivening.
 This burden almost crushes me;
 All my misery, mistakes, want,
 Passion, in root and stem,
 Rages afresh, and never changes,
 Stays close to me, flee where I may.
 6. To desire to be good, to love virtue,
 And yet, despite this, each day
 To sadden my beloved God.
 This is my great complaint!
 Always to pile sin upon sin;
 All resolutions, even the strongest,
 Actually to break; having made them
 Hardly to keep them overnight.

Because the devout priest was accustomed *to see and to adore the wise Providence of God in all the events of his life*, neither good nor bad fortune could put him out of sorts. Rather he always preserved a never beclouded cheerfulness of disposition. Only one thing could arouse his displeasure: when he heard that something was said or done that was not in harmony with his rule of faith. In such cases his zeal flared up, and he gave animated and strong opposition. The following instance gives evidence of this.

In August 1859, around the feast of the Assumption, the mystery of this feast was the topic of discussion during the evening recreation. Father Seelos was particularly animated as he spoke of the logic of the Catholic belief in the Assumption of Mary into heaven: because she was not touched by original sin and by not the slightest breath of sin; because in everything she was so like her divine Son. Therefore, it was fitting that her body too, like that of her divine Son Jesus, was taken up into heaven shortly after her death. This privilege she merited through her faithful cooperation in the work of salvation.

There was a pause after this explanation and then these words were heard in a mutter from the mouth of one of those present: "But this is absolutely not an article of faith." This aroused the feelings of the prefect of students. "Why," he then shouted to this theologian, "Why did Saint Alphonsus oblige all the fathers and theologians of his Congregation to accept as Catholic truth and to defend it as such the teaching of the Immaculate Conception of Mary long before the definition of the dogma? My dear confreres! If we want to be true Redemptorists, we must accept such Catholic truths beforehand and not merely wait until the Church obliges us to them under pain of excommunication."³

In this way, he did not permit even a hint of a doubt about the Catholic tradition in this question. Actually, this theologian was for a rather long time no longer a Redemptorist in his heart, and in a few months after this event was dismissed from the Congregation.⁴

To be truthful, *in matters of faith Father Seelos was incapable of a doubt*, and in all other things he adored the ways of God with a heart filled with faith. For this reason, this noble priest possibly was accused of exaggeration and extravagance. But this has to be understood properly. To begin with, it is clear, this alleged exaggeration and extravagance in Father Seelos never had anything that was harmful in its effects, because it never pushed him to exceed the demands of fraternal charity; nor to overstep the limits of the obedience due to superiors. His faith was exaggerated in regard to the power of God and his saints, in his trust in the efficacy of prayer, in his hatred of Satan and his accomplices and their false doctrines, in his burning zeal for everything that concerned external reverence and adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

But can one ever be too exaggerated in such things? Is not what unbelievers call exaggeration and extremism precisely in the eyes of God and of true Christians a supernatural and more than ordinary degree of zeal in the exercise of virtue and one's duty? Is not this kind of exaggeration that divine foolishness which is proper to the great saints and which their contemporaries also found fault with? Were not those hermits of Palestine and the Thebaid exaggerated when they left their hermitages and appeared suddenly in their penitential garb in the streets of Antioch and Alexandria to defend the belief in the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father against the Arians and, through their words and example,

³ *Codex Regularum et Constitutionum CSSR* (Roma, 1896), p. 32, no. 8: Constitution approved in 1749: "[...]et choristae, absoluto studiorum theologicorum curriculo, voti religione sese obstringent ad doctrinam illam de Beata Virgine sine labe concepta propugnandam."

⁴ For details about this, see *DocStud*, II/2: 774-775.

strengthened the wavering believers? Were not the martyrs of the first four centuries also exaggerated when they not only suffered death with unbelievable steadfastness and joyful longing but also presented themselves to the pagan judges, spoke to them, and joyfully offered themselves to endure every kind of suffering? And to come closer to our own times, were not those famous saints of the Middle Ages, a Saint Francis Assisi, a Saint Bernard, and many others also exaggerated when they pushed the practice of evangelical poverty and mortification to such a severe degree that it actually seemed impossible for human endurance? Father Seelos was exaggerated in the manner of these saints, for faith taught him that even in our times the arm of God is not hindered nor shortened.

This living faith of his showed itself especially when he spoke of the dignity and power of the priesthood. O how much esteem and reverence was he able to instill in those young Redemptorists who were committed to his care for this exalted state in which a human person is deemed worthy to perform the greatest works of divine power; that is, the work of consecration in the sacrifice of the Mass and the forgiving of sins in the sacrament of penance!

He gave the most *childlike and joyful assent to all the doctrines of the Church*; and he would have considered himself fortunate to be in a position to give his life for any one of them. It is self-evident that the Fathers of the Church stood in high regard with him. Next to Sacred Scripture their words furnished the material for his wonderful conferences that were listened to with an attitude that was nothing less than intense attention. As he himself, in his high regard for the word of God, never failed in preparing carefully by prayer and study when he was to teach or correct others, so he exhorted his students to always prepare themselves well for their apostolic work. Even when he had to speak on a topic that he had already often used, he was accustomed to improve, change, and arrange the previously preached sermon so that it would have more appeal both to himself and to those who would hear it.

Impromptu preaching had little credit with him. He believed that effort and care were due to the word of God and the people who were desirous of help. It was for this reason that he found much fault when the people, hungry for the word of God, were merely given a poorly prepared and roughly delivered scrap.

From his living faith in the mysteries of our holy faith came forth also *that otherworldly presence, reverence, and dignity with which he celebrated Mass.* Everyone considered himself fortunate to be present then, and even his confreres, who as students were still under his direction, were always overjoyed when they were able to serve his Mass. He

seemed to shine as if transfigured. The precious gift of faith made it very sweet and desirous for him to die in the bosom of the Catholic Church and as a Redemptorist. He lived and breathed in faith; he died in faith. And we confidently hope that he already enjoys in full measure the fruits of his efforts for the faith.

2. *Not less did hope shine forth in him*, which sprung from his faith as from its sure root and which he possessed in rich measure. Not in the slightest did he doubt the fatherly care of God, but confidently hoped for the graces necessary for eternal blessedness. This hope of his was especially discernible in his extraordinary devotion to prayer. Entirely forgetting about created things, he placed all his hope in God, and for this reasons his peace of mind was never disturbed. Always of an optimistic frame of mind, he accepted everything from the hands of divine Providence. He was wont to say that the more he was conscious of his own weakness, the more he hoped to obtain greater results from his efforts; and that, on the contrary, when he thought that he had done something good, he knew for certain beforehand that his efforts would be totally fruitless.

And so it happened at times, as he himself admits, that, because of many other preoccupations, he could not prepare himself well for his sermons; for which reason he considered himself ill-suited to proclaim the word of God. However, in such circumstances, he preached, trusted whole-heartedly in God, and, as he found out later, always with great profit for the people. *His strength was his mistrust of self and trust in God.* He followed closely the words of the Rule of his Congregation: "They shall join very great confidence in God to their pure intention, for, if this is wanting, the laborer is, as it were, dumb, weak, powerless, nay even quite useless for his ministry. A missionary without confidence is like a soldier without a shield. [...] If his confidence is very great, then, very great will be the number of souls brought back to virtue; but, if it is little, there will be but a scanty number of conversions."⁵

As the same Rule ordains, he joined to this confidence the conscientious use of his natural talents and study; he did not want to be identified with those who fold their hands on their lap and are not reluctant to tempt God.⁶ He gave clear evidence of his trust in God in 1861 during the

⁵ *Constitutions and Rules of the Congregation of Priests under the Title of the Most Holy Redeemer* (English translation: London: St. Mary's, Clapham, 1939), p. 69, no. 44.

⁶ *Constitutions and Rules*, p. 70, no. 45: "Nevertheless, they should never separate from that great trust in God the use of the mental gifts and abilities, which the Divine Goodness has bestowed on them. They must not belong to that class of men, who, leading

war, when he wrote: "The war will not do us any harm. I don't have the slightest worry because our loving God is taking care of us."⁷ For his physical separation from the members of his family, he consoled himself with the sweet hope of recompense and a meeting in heaven, as he wrote:⁸

1. Wiedersehen hier auf Erden
Wird wohl nicht beschieden werden;
Die ich liebe, lieb' ich sehr,
Lieb' ich täglich mehr und mehr.
2. Lauter Seelen, die da leiden;
Lauter Seelen, die da meiden
Was den Aufschwung hindern kann
Dort hinauf, dort himmelan.
3. Wiedersehen hier auf Erden
Soll Euch nicht beschieden werden;
Jenseits in des Himmels Flur
Wünsch ich sie zu sehen nur.
4. Viele Schwestern, viele Brüder
Seh' ich dann auf einmal wieder;
Seh' ich dann für immerdar,
Liebe lebt dann rein und klar.
5. Armes Herz, drum sei zufrieden,
Dein Genuss is nicht hienieden;
Harre, und in Jesu Herz
Leg die Sehnsucht und den Schmerz!

English translation

1. Meeting here on earth will, indeed, not be granted again; those I love, I love very much; I love them daily more and more.
2. All of them, souls who suffer here; all of them, souls who here avoid whatever can hinder the rising up to thee, up to heaven.

a life of sloth, are not afraid to tempt God."

⁷ The letter with this citation has not been found; however, similar sentiments are expressed in a letter to his sister Antonia, October 12, 1862: "Dear Sister, when one hears of such general misery and sees how our loving God protects us as the apple of his eye with such boundless goodness, so that up until now we have had nothing to suffer from the war, shouldn't we be filled with the deepest gratitude toward such loving Providence?" For the letter, see RABP, Seelos Letters, 1862.

⁸ *DocStud*, II/2: 975-977, where the poem is found in a letter to his two sisters, Antonia and Josepha, November 19, 1861.

3. Meeting here on earth is not to be granted you; only on the other side, in the fields of heaven, do I want to see you.

4. Then of a sudden, I will see again many sisters, many brothers; I will see them forever. Love will live then pure and clear.

5. Therefore, poor heart, be content; your pleasure is not here below. Persevere and lay your yearning and your sorrow in the heart of Jesus.

3. *He cultivated the love of God to such a degree that he acknowledged no other love but this.* He held it to be the only substantial and true love and considered that which people are accustomed to call love as empty, futile, and lacking any solid foundation. Evidence of how deeply his heart burned with divine love is found in the unction-laden and inspiring conferences that, with holy enthusiasm, he gave to his subjects. Evidence is also to be had from many of the effusion of his heart in poetry; from the loving letters he wrote to confreres and other spiritual people whom he inflamed with the love of God; finally from his many practices of mortification and penance performed with so much joy and magnanimity.

A great mistake would be made were one to assume that his direction of others toward love of God was effeminate and sentimental. Absolutely not! On the contrary, *love impelled him rather to the many rigors of mortification* that we marvel at in him. What he practiced himself that he taught others to do also. He considered every love worthless that was not imbued with blood and had not taken root at the foot of the cross. For this reason he considered sufferings more acceptable than pleasures. Indeed, he maintained that if there were any consolation on this earth it was to be found only in suffering. What wonder then that he was so very successful in encouraging the students so easily and without hesitation toward higher perfection.

WAHRE LIEBE IST NICHT OHNE LEID⁹

1. Das liebende Herz möchte gerne oft klagen,
Weil häufig gedrückt und geprüft und geschlagen,
Als wollte da Gott unser Vater nicht sein,
Und stellte verdriesslich die Liebe nun ein.

2. Wie gerne, ach, möchte man "Mutter" da rufen

⁹ The autograph poem is found in Seelos MS XIV, fols. 39v-41r, as well as in Seelos MS XIII, pp. 13-16, where the title is "*Die Göttliche Liebe Ist Nicht Süßelnd*" ("Divine Love Is Not Sentimental") Zimmer's emendations have been changed to restore the text according to the MSS.

Im Elende ganz auf den untersten Stufen.
 Doch da ist's gerade, als sagte sie: "Nein,
 Auch ich will nun nicht deine Mutter mehr sein."
 3. Da denkt man der glücklichen, goldenen Zeiten
 Wo alles so leicht ging - ohn' Kämpfen und Streiten,
 Als heiter die Sonne am Himmel stets stand -
 Kein Wölklein, kein Sturm, noch ein Wetter im Land.
 4. Gott liebte und koste und wollte uns zeigen
 Wie süß, wenn in Huld Er zu uns sich thät neigen;
 Doch seht, wie sich plötzlich gewendet das Blatt,
 Die Kehrseite sich nun herausgestellt hat.
 5. So trocken im Herzen, wie fühlt man verlassen!
 Wie sieht man bloss Sünden, möcht' selbst sich gern hassen;
 Im innern da tobt's wie auf stürmischem Meer,
 Und Nacht ist's und finster und wüste und leer.
 6. Geheimniss des Lebens - wer kann es erfassen,
 Und wer kann den Wechsel auch tragen gelassen?
 Nur wer da den Himmel als Vaterland kennt,
 Und nach dieser Heimat von Herzen sich sehnt.
 7. Geheimniss des Lebens - wer kann es ergründen,
 Und wer kann im Drucke Zufriedenheit finden?
 Nur der, den belehrt hat ein gütiger Gott,
 Erkennt den Werth nur von Elend und Noth.
 8. Geheimniss des Lebens - wer wird wohl nicht klagen
 In harten, verhängnissvoll bitteren Tagen?
 Nur der, welcher weiss, dass die flüchtige Zeit
 Die Prüfung blos ist für die Ewigkeit.
 9. Geheimniss des Lebens - und mancher möcht' fragen:
 "Warum denn werd' ich grad' gestäupt und geschlagen?"
 Doch still, und kein Wort mehr! denn Er ist's der schlägt,
 Der ewige Liebe im Herz für dich trägt.
 10. O Brüder, ach! lasst doch die Leiden uns lieben
 Die einzig allein in den Tugend uns üben!
 O Leiden, wie macht ihr so engelrein;
 Wie glänzt ihr im Himmel im blendenden Schein!
 11. Voran denn zum Ziele - ist gar so erhaben!
 Nicht jetzt, sondern jenseits soll Ruhe uns laben;
 Im Himmel wird Wonne uns reich aufgetischt,
 Wo Gott selbst die Thränen vom Auge dann wischt.

12. Nur eines ist gross und belohnt uns're Mühen;
Das Herz für dies eine nur sollte erglühen:
Im Himmel beim liebenden Vater zu sein,
An Seele und Leib wie ein Engel so rein.

13. D'rum kommt nur, ihr Kreuze, d'rum kommt nur, ihr Leiden;
Ich grüss euch von Herzen, umarm' euch mit Freuden
Und stelle die Thüre des Herzens euch auf;
Ihr führt mich zum Himmel, dürft selbst nicht hinauf.

14. Nein, dort ist der Zugang euch nimmermehr offen,
Und dürft euch den Himmel auf ewig nicht hoffen.
Statt Elend und Mangel gibt's da nur Genuss,
Statt Leiden und Trübsal der Freuden Erguss.

15. Ein Freudengenuss denn auf ewige Zeiten,
Ein Wonnengenuss ohne Mühseligkeiten,
Ein Leben des Lieben ist ganz ohne Scheu;
Denn nun ist beim Lieben nichts Böses dabei.

Schluss

16. Und ist dann die Seele vom Leibe getrennt,
Dann hat eure Herrschaft, ihr Leiden, ein End'!
Die Seele, sie eilt ohne Rast, ohne Ruh'
Dem lieblichsten Lande, der Heimat nur zu,
Zu Englein rein
In den Himmel hinein.

17. Und dort nun, was meint ihr wohl, fanget sie an?
Sie huldigt dem Herrn und betet Ihn an,
Und trinket vom Freudenquell, ganz nach Genügen,
In vollen und immer erquickenden Zügen.

O Wonne-Erguss!

Welch Himmelsgenuss!

18. Und kommt dann der Tag, wo der Leib auch verklärt
Die Lust bis zur äussersten Fülle vermehrt;
Dann kann mit der Wonne verglichen nichts werden,
Denn Aehnliches wird nicht gefunden auf Erden.

O einzige Freud'

Nach irdischem Leid!

19. Gelöst ist das Räthsel, gelöst zum Genügen,
Auf Leiden hienieder folgt ewiger Frieden.
Die Heiligen litten auf Erden und schwiegen;
Sie litten nur kurz, um dann ewig zu lieben.
Sie duldeten - schwiegen,
Sie leben und lieben.

English Translation

TRUE LOVE IS NOT WITHOUT SORROW

1. The loving heart is often wont to complain
Because it is often oppressed, tried, and battered,
As if God did not want to be our Father
And curtailed his love in annoyance.
2. Oh, how gladly we would like to call mother,
In complete misery on the lowest step.
But then it's just as if she said, "No.
Neither do I want to be your mother anymore now."
3. At such times one thinks of the happy, golden times
When everything went so well - without fighting and struggle,
When the sun was always cheerfully in the heavens,
No cloud, no tempest, no storm in the land.
4. God loved us and caressed us and wanted to show
How sweet it was when he did turn graciously to us;
But look. How quickly the page is turned,
How different the reverse side has become.
5. So dry in heart, one feels so forsaken!
One sees only sins; one could almost hate oneself;
Inside it's seething like on a stormy sea,
It is night and dark and forlorn and empty.
6. Mystery of life - who can grasp it,
And who can endure the change calmly?
Only he who acknowledges heaven as his fatherland
And who longs in his heart for this homeland.
7. Mystery of life - who can fathom it,
And who can find contentment in the trouble?
Only he, whom a kindly God has taught,
Knows the worth of misery and need.
8. Mystery of life - who will not actually complain
In these difficult, threateningly bitter days?
Only he who knows that fleeting time
Is just a period of trial for eternity.
9. Mystery of life - and someone may ask:
"Why is it just I who am dirtied with dust and beaten?"
But be quiet, not another word! For it is he who strikes,
The one who has everlasting love for you in his heart.
10. O brothers, Oh! Do let us love sufferings
That only alone give us practice in virtue!
O sufferings, how you make us pure as angels;

How you shine in heaven with blinding splendor!

11. Then onward to the goal - it is so beautiful!

Not now, but beyond is peace to delight us;

In heaven, joy will be richly served up to us,

Where God himself will wipe the tears from our eyes.

12. Only one thing is great and rewards our efforts;

Our heart should burn for this one thing alone:

To be in heaven with our loving Father,

To be as pure as an angel in soul and body.

13. Therefore, come you crosses, therefore come you pains;

I welcome you from my heart, embrace you with joy,

And open the door of my heart to you;

You will lead me to heaven, though you yourselves are not permitted there.

14. No. Entrance there is never open to you,

And forever you must have no hope for heaven.

Instead of misery and want, there will be delight,

Instead of suffering and trouble, overflowing of joy.

15. An experience of joy, then, for all times,

An enjoyment of happiness without travail,

A life of loving is all without restraint;

For only loving has nothing evil about it.

Conclusion

16. And when the soul is separated from the body,

Then, you sorrows, your rule is at an end!

The soul rushes without rest and peace

Toward the beloved land, its homeland,

Toward angels pure

Into heaven.

17. And then, what do you think it does?

It does homage to the Lord and adores him,

And drinks from the fountainhead of joy, just as it desires,

In full and always refreshing drafts.

O enjoyment of joy,

What a heavenly delight!

18. And comes then the day when the body is transfigured,

And joy is increased to its utmost limit;

Then nothing can be compared with the joy,

For nothing like it can be found on this earth.

O singular joy

After earthly sorrow!

19. The riddle is solved, solved to satisfaction,
 Eternal joys follow upon sorrows here below.
 The saints suffered upon earth and remained silent;
 They suffered only a short time in order to love eternally.
 They were patient, they were silent,
 They live and love.

The supernatural fervor that was burning interiorly took shape and form in his external appearance also. For, whether he was walking or standing, resting or working, talking or singing, exhorting or praying, alone or with others: in every situation and circumstance one saw in him the man of God, the herald of divine love. To have him as one's spiritual director or confessor was considered a very special grace; and those who were directed by him made wonderful progress in the love of God, the most beautiful of all the virtues.

4. *Just as unmistakable were the signs of his tender love for the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God.* One had only to hear him pronounce the sweet name 'Mother' in the unctuous way so peculiar to him in regard to Mary to become aware of his child-like, warm, and inspired love for her. Who does not remember the great predilection he had for the Rosary and for the feast days of this most blessed and immaculate Virgin? Witnesses of his love for this Queen of Heaven are to be found in some of the poems he composed for the month of May that will be presented in an appendix.¹⁰ With an effusion of joy and exaltation he sang with the students in Cumberland his favorite hymns: "*Mutter Ich vergehe*," "*Milde Königin gedenke*," "*Maria zu lieben*." With a smile still on his face, he sang these hymns in his hour of death, after which he passed on peacefully.¹¹

5. *Love of neighbor* shown so early in him that even as a small child he manifested his tender compassion and love for the poorest and neediest and continued this energetically his entire life. If he was a superior, he was magnanimous in his help; if he was a subject he made it a point to humbly ask permission from his superiors to come to the help of those in need.

¹⁰ ZIMMER, *Leben*, pp. 319-374, where a number of poems are found, among which are two to Mary: "*Mai-Mona*" ("Month of May") and "*Der Mai im Thränenthale*" ("May in the Valley of Tears").

¹¹ *DocStud*, II/2: 1282: Brother Louis Kenning's account of the hymns Father Seelos sang on his deathbed.

What he did himself, he allowed other to do also. He never gave them a refusal to distribute alms to the poor sick, without even asking if they were really in need of them. And wonderful to relate, although he gave out much in this way, and permitted others do so also, the house never suffered any indebtedness. Everything came back again, either through the poor boxes in the church, or through personal donations. It became known that he lifted entire families up out of deprivation and misery.

Just shortly before his death, he saw to it that, with the permission of his superior in New Orleans, some financial support came to a poor fellow countryman in Philadelphia. At the same time, he admonished him to persevere as a good Christian under his cross.¹² To be sure, his kindness was imposed upon and abused by some who were unworthy of it; however, following the example of Jesus Christ and Saint Francis de Sales and Alphonsus Liguori, he preferred to be too generous to those who were unworthy than to incur even once the danger of treating with indifference someone who was really in need.

6. *And how deeply did he not burn at all times with love for his confreres!* This was so universally acknowledged that no one could ever be angry with him. His love was so honorable and impartial that one could say that he had toward each one a very special affection; for even today every priest who had the good fortune to be with him is convinced that he stood on very intimate terms with Father Seelos. So-called particular friendships, however, were entirely alien to him. In this, he followed his divine Master, who loved, and still loves, each soul as intimately as if he became man solely for it in order to die solely for it also.

He did not exclude from his love the most unattractive of people. Although as superior he was very busy, still it was not too much for him to spend about a half-hour almost every day with a half-demented person who received his meals in the house. He did this to cheer him up. In doing so, he put himself completely in the situation of this poor individual. He did this throughout a rather long period of time.¹³

¹² *DocStud*, II/2: 1269-1270: Seelos to Mr. [Ambos], New Orleans, July 1, 1867.

¹³ *Wissel Fragments*, 9A. When Father John Berger, C.S.S.R. (1839-1884), began to work on the first biography of Father Seelos (later completed and published by Zimmer), he asked various confreres to send him accounts of their recollections of Father Seelos. Among those who responded was Father Joseph Wissel (1830-1912), a friend and missionary companion of Seelos, whose accounts number 42 and have been gathered into a collection which is given the name "Wissel Fragments." They are preserved in RABP. This particular fragment (9A) is printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1509, no. 6.

But before all else what did he not do for his subjects and confreres in the community? At recreation he always surpassed the others in joviality. He was not pleased with someone who was not cheerful and did not make his contribution toward a pleasant time at recreation. He used to say that he would rather go a bit too far in talking than to let recreation be devoid of pleasantness. Once he came to recreation and three of the older fathers had the newspapers in their hands and were busy reading. He took the papers out of the hands of each one of them, folded them quietly and laid them on the table. Then he sat down and started a lively discussion. None of those involved made a sad face. He could do this in such a kindly way that no one took offense.¹⁴

If one of the confreres was sick, especially a member of his community, he was most sympathetic with his sufferings and visited him often and tried to cheer him up.¹⁵

It happened once on a mission that one of the missionaries was called to a dying woman who was afflicted with smallpox. When after this he caught the same sickness, Father Seelos wrote him a letter of condolence and made the bitterest accusations against himself for letting the priest go there. "It was my duty and responsibility," he said, "to visit that sick person. It would have done me no harm. I've had the smallpox already. Still," he added roguishly, "God in his Providence has allowed it and it is good for you that your pleasant face is spoiled to some degree."¹⁶

Father Seelos had no notion of ever indulging in offensive remarks. Sarcasm was a stranger to him. Who ever heard him criticize someone else, either in his presence or in his absence? He could indeed tease, but how? In such a way that by his affectionate teasing you felt affirmed rather than put down.

7. The zeal for souls that grew out of his fraternal charity is too generally known for us to have to prove it more extensively. With burning zeal and youthful enthusiasm, he told the young students about the mission houses of his Congregation that were being founded in distant lands and encouraged them to learn the languages spoken there. By the intense interest that he took in the great work of the missions, he displayed in a shining way how great was his zeal for souls. All his activity and all his striving were directed, as we all know, to save immortal souls. In this, he

¹⁴ Wissel Fragments, 9B.

¹⁵ Wissel Fragments, 9C.

¹⁶ Wissel Fragments, 18A; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1220, no. 4.

fully embodied the spirit of the sainted founder of the Congregation, who wore himself out with his zeal for the salvation of souls.

8. *A yearning desire for heaven* could not be lacking in someone who was fortunate enough to possess the three theological virtues in such a high degree. To convince us of this, let us read the following poem written by Father Seelos.

AN DIE HEIMAT DORT OBEN¹⁷

O, ein edles Heimweh zieht uns nur nach oben,
Wo nicht stille Seufzer mehr den Herren loben,
Wo kein Leid die heisse Thräne fließen macht,
Nein, wo nur Genuss und Freude uns entgegen lacht.
O, wie schön und rein
Wird dann alles sein!
Dann erst werden wir erkennen,
Was man Liebe nur darf nennen.
Wahre Liebe wird nur sein,
Die durch Leiden wurde rein.

English Translation

TO OUR HOME UP ABOVE

O, a noble homesickness pulls us only upward,
Where no longer quiet sighs praise the Lord;
Where no song makes the hot tears flow,
No, where only pleasure and joy laugh to us.
O, how beautiful and pure
Will then everything be!
Then only will we know
What one alone can call love.
There will only be true love
That became pure through suffering.

KANN'S NICHT LEIDEN, WENN MAN DEN VERBANNUNGSORT
IN EIN PARADIES VERWANDELN WILL¹⁸

Jenseits in des Himmels schönen Auen,
Wo die Blüten nie Verwelkung schauen;

¹⁷ Seelos MS XIII, p. 113, where the autograph poem is entitled "*An Meine Heimat*" ("To My Home"); in Seelos MS XIV, fol. 37v, it is entitled as here.

¹⁸ The autograph of this poem is found in Seelos MS XIV, fols. 48r-49v.

Jenseits, da, wo alles knospet, alles blüht,
Und in neuer Himmelssonne duftend glüht;
Jenseits, wo die Lebensfrüchte ewig reifen,
Und nicht kalte Winde durch entlaubte Aeste Pfeifen;
Jenseits, wo im Palmenhaine Gottes Kinder spielen,
Und ihr frohes Herz von reiner Lieb' erglühen fühlen;
Jenseits, wo ein Liebesstrom das müde Herz erquickt,
Und in voller Sättigung es ohne End' entzückt;
Dort, ja dort allein
Soll mein Genuss einst sein;
Dort, wo ein Gott uns liebt,
Nichts uns're Liebe trübt;
Dort wo die Lieb' so rein
Und doch so voll wird sein;
Dort, wo ein Paradies
Uns zu erzählen weiss
Alles, was Gott gethan,
Und was Er machen kann,
Wenn Er die Tugend lohnt,
Die dann im Lichte wohnt.
Sie, die einst schwer bedrückt,
Fühlt sich nun ganz beglückt.
Jenseits, in des Lebens freiem Lande,
Wo gelöst sind alle Erdenbande;
Da, wo frei ein jedes Gotteskind,
Alle majorene geworden sind;
Jenseits will ich schauen und geniessen,
Jubelnd jene neuen Scenerieen grüssen,
Die ein Gott nach seines Herzens Lust formirt,
Und dem frohen Kinde vor die Augen führt!
Nicht romantisch wild,
Nicht der Sünde Bild!
Alles gross nach neuen Dimensionen
In den ewig milden Heimatzonen.
Doch Verbannung lasst Verbannung sein,
Denn gezwung'ne Pracht verursacht Pein.
Eher lasst uns duldsam warten,
Bis herankommt jene süsse Zeit,
Wo sich öffnen wird der Himmelsgarten
Und geöffnet bleibt in Ewigkeit.

English Translation

I CAN'T STAND IT WHEN PEOPLE WANT TO CHANGE
THE PLACE OF EXILE INTO A PARADISE

Beyond, in the beautiful meadows of heaven,
Where the flowers never see their wilting;
Beyond, there where everything is budding, flowering,
And glows fragrantly in a new sun in the heavens;
Beyond, where the fruits of life ripen eternally,
And cold winds do not whistle through leafless branches;
Beyond, God's children play in groves of palms
And feel their joyful hearts glow with pure love;
Beyond, where a stream of love quickens the tired heart
And enthalls it endlessly with full satisfaction.

There, yes there alone
Is my pleasure once to be;
There, where a God loves us,
Nothing disturbs our love;
There where love will be pure
And yet will be so complete;
There, where a paradise
Knows how to tell us
Everything that God has done,
And what he can do
When he rewards virtue,
That then lives in light.
She, who was formerly badly depressed,
Feels herself now completely rewarded.
Beyond, in the free land of life,
Where all the bonds of earth are loosened;
There, there every child of God is free,
All have reached their majority;
Beyond, I will see and enjoy
Joyfully enjoy those new scenes,
That God has formed in his heart's desire
And places before the eyes of the happy child!
Not romantically wild,
Not an image of sin!
All things are big in a new dimension
In the eternal, gentle zones of home.
But let exile be exile,
Since forced glory causes torment.

Rather let us wait patiently,
 Until those sweet times arrive,
 When the garden of heaven will be opened
 And will remain open for eternity.

9. But what should we say of the virtues that were conspicuous in him as a religious? *All who knew him attest that he was a perfect religious priest and excelled in the practice of all the necessary virtues.* If those who lived with him in the community searched, could they really recall even one significant infraction of the Rule? Even as superior of the house, he very rarely was absent from the community acts and then only when some urgent necessity demanded it. Very often he was called to the parlor, especially during recreation. There he made short work of it and spent the greater part of the recreation with the community.¹⁹

10. *Not only did he manifest his love for the Congregation on every occasion* in his speech and in his conferences to the community, *but also gave practical evidence of it.* During his novitiate he had as a fellow novice, a father who had already been a priest in Germany for many years. The idea came to him to return to the world. The young novice Seelos advised him against it as well as he could. But the priest stood by his intention. Then Seelos threw himself on his knees before him and begged him in the name of God not to throw his vocation away. This worked and the priest persevered and did many great things in the Congregation, so much so that he was held in high esteem everywhere.

As rector of Saint Alphonsus in Baltimore, Father Seelos was, so to speak, deluged with work; however, he still managed to find enough time to give Latin classes to young boys who showed signs of having a vocation to the religious life. By doing this he prepared them for entrance into the Congregation; or in general, for the priestly state. Several highly placed priests among the secular and religious clergy began their studies under Father Seelos.²⁰

11. *With extreme exactness and strictness did he observe religious poverty* and also inculcated its observance relentlessly upon those entrusted to him. In regard to food, clothing, and living quarters, he limited himself to the barest necessities and was content with the least and the most despicable. Dissatisfaction and complaints on this point annoyed and

¹⁹ Wissel Fragments, 19.

²⁰ Wissel Fragments, 25, this and the preceding paragraph.

hurt this poor man of Jesus Christ most painfully. He was never heard to complain that he was missing something necessary. Indeed, the awareness of complete poverty called forth in him especially that amiable cheerfulness that made being in his presence so uplifting and pleasant. Transgressors of religious poverty were for him the enemies of the religious life. "O sweet poverty!" he frequently called out.

12. *He loved and practiced virginal chastity and purity of heart in a truly remarkable way.* Daily he begged for it from God in constant prayer and bodily discipline. He sings about this virtue in these short verses.

UNSCHULD²¹

Glaub' mir, Kind, des Himmels Frieden
Ist der Unschuld nur beschieden.
Lebe sittsam, lebe rein,
Und du wirst stets glücklich sein.
Glücklich macht dich dein Gewissen;
Denn es ist ein Ruhekipfen,
Wenn die Seele nur sittsam, rein,
Von der Sünd' sucht frei zu sein.

English Translation

INNOCENCE
Believe me, child, the peace of heaven
Is given only to innocence.
Live virtuously, live purely,
And you will always be happy.
Your conscience makes you happy;
For it is a pillow for resting upon,
If only the soul, virtuous, pure,
Strives to be free of sin.

The well-founded opinion prevails that he never lost his baptismal innocence. Those, namely, attest to this to whom, shortly before his death, he laid open his entire life. O, that pure, honest, I want to say, most gracious look! How clearly it showed to everyone his soul shining with virginal chastity! If one were with him, one was secure from the attack of any evil temptation. This is maintained by his former penitents.

²¹ Autograph of this poem is found in Seelos MS XIII, p. 39.

13. As he was most chaste and retiring, so, with persons of the opposite sex, he was most discreet, earnest, modest, and cautious. Although he was called to the parlor very often, it was rarely by young women; and when he was called for by them, he finished the business quickly by speaking with them while standing. If they wanted him to extend his hand, he presented at most his finger tips which he hardly permitted to be touched. Frivolous young women, ingratiating and pretentiously pious faces, did not find a welcome in him.²²

He was certainly one of the best spiritual directors there was. But in this regard he did most of this work in the confessional; or in regard to those absent, in letters. He never aspired to certain, even if excusable, confidences with women. If it actually was not a question of little girls, he always used the polite form of address, never the familiar form.²³

At the sight of his ever cheerful and beaming face one was automatically reminded of the words of Wisdom: "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present, they imitate it; and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts" (Wis 4:1-2). A single look at this devotee of the angelic virtue inspired one to imitation.

14. *With regard to religious obedience, he was able to attain to great perfection.* Even as a superior he seemed to have not a trace of self-will; that is except when he had to chose between various things. In that case, he unfliningly chose for himself the most uncomfortable, most insignificant, and most difficult. Often he used to say that he was not at all made for giving orders; that it was much easier for him to obey. Often he was heard to say: "If I had someone to lead me, I would be happy to follow, no matter what it was." And he actually did this in many circumstances. As rector in Baltimore, he was requested to discontinue many customs in church services that were brought over from Germany; for example, benediction Masses and other similar things. The order came from the archbishop and was given to Father Seelos by the provincial to be carried out. Immediately, he complied, even though it was hard for him, because of the people who were accustomed to these practices.²⁴

²² Wissel Fragments, 23A; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1517, no. 23.

²³ Wissel Fragments, 8.

²⁴ Wissel Fragments, 20; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1515-1516, no. 15.

Whenever he received a letter from the provincial while on the missions, he said an Ave Maria while opening it to submit himself beforehand to its contents.²⁵

If special care was not taken on the missions, he was the subject and the others the superiors. As soon as something was to be done, he asked: "How are we going to do this?" And after hearing the opinions of the others, he said so pleasantly: "Yes, indeed, that's it. That's how we'll do it. Now you take the lead and I'll come along right after you."²⁶

In 1861, he went on a mission with a father who was significantly younger than himself. Right at the beginning an argument arose between the two over the question of who should be the superior. Father Seelos did not want to have any part of it and the other father did not accept this refusal despite the many reasons brought forth. Finally they came to an agreement that they would divide the superiorship: Father Seelos would be superior in the house and the other father superior in the church.²⁷

After the four-year-long burden of being superior was taken from him, he felt like a bird released from a string, cheerful, happy, and care-free. *To obey was for him a necessity and a joy of heart.* For this very reason, it was also a joy for a superior to direct him and give him orders. Yes, *even fighting with death, he gave a stirring example of his heroic obedience* when, at a simple command, he made a superhuman effort to sit up, until the command was recalled.

15. *He devoted himself to humility in the highest degree.* He took little account of himself; and, humiliations, which in regard to this virtue are most important, were not only frequently his portion, but he yearned and longed for them. He frequently said that if it were the will of God, he would desire to serve in the Congregation as a lay brother; and for this reason, he helped the most humble brother in the most menial services cheerfully and with gusto. In his letters he used the most contemptuous expressions about himself; and this to such a degree that his parents and family members were tempted to consider him as prone to making mistakes since he gave them this impression. He humbled himself in every way; when he chanced to speak about himself, he spoke only of his miserableness and proneness to error. His sister Antonia writes that he found fault with himself in every letter, saying that he was full of human weaknesses and was not doing his duties as he should; that they ought to pray

²⁵ Wissel Fragments, 27A; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1221, no. 5.

²⁶ Wissel Fragments, 27B; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1222, no. 6.

²⁷ Wissel Fragments, 27C; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1222, no. 7. The young father mentioned in this paragraph is no doubt Father Wissel himself.

for him that he might eventually, at long last, fulfill the will of God better and be a better religious than up to that point.²⁸

As the superior he gave his orders in the form of a humble request and gladly took advice from the least of his confreres. Never was this humble priest more upset and anxious than when he was being considered to be the bishop of Pittsburgh; but also, never did he show greater and more genuine joy than when he found out that he had evaded this danger.

He was heard to say that, if the members of the Congregation ever had to be dispersed by force, or if he should ever be expelled from it through some misdeed of his, he would beg from some bishop the poorest corner of his diocese where no other priest could or would go. There he would work for the most abandoned souls, even if he were to have only an extremely impoverished dwelling and only a miserable piece of bread for his food.²⁹ This attitude of his was sincere.

If he ever felt that he had offended anyone, he did not consider it beneath his dignity to humbly ask his pardon. Among other things, he believed that he had treated with too little kindness a father who was his subject. He therefore wrote to this confrere, who had in the meantime become a superior himself and was busy in constructing a large church, that he earnestly desired to become a member of his community to be able to make good the alleged unkindness that he had shown him.

16. *Father Seelos's humility was combined with genuine simplicity and uprightness* and with a distinct aversion to every species of vanity in all that had to do with his external appearance. In his speech, in his actions, in his clothing, everything was simple and unadorned as is befitting a religious. Never did he avail himself of little conveniences, which he, without failing against the Rule, could have used. He carried this so far that he was able to shave himself without the use of a mirror. Such an article was not found in his room. He had his hair cut short, not meticulously parted, something he considered effeminate. To please his family, he only once let a small photograph be taken of himself and this in a clerical suit, which he sent them in Germany, for no one else came into possession of his photograph. After his death, this was sent for to Germany and was taken to a photographer who substituted his religious habit.³⁰

²⁸ See the letter of Antonia Seelos to Mr. Ambos as found in *DocStud*, II/2: 1457-1458.

²⁹ *Wissel Fragments*, 22.

³⁰ *Wissel Fragments*, 24A; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1517-1518, no. 19.

His clothing was so poor and worn that it was still just presentable for the dignity of a priest in dire straits. He seemed to neglect his external appearance almost completely, without, however, in any way failing against cleanliness. And with all this, nonetheless, he possessed such a power of attraction that all were impressed with him, just seeing him for the first time.³¹ On one occasion a student came to the parlor of the Redeptionist house in Pittsburgh to speak with the superior. Father Seelos came. The impression that he made upon him at this meeting was never erased and the young man later entered the Congregation himself and encouraged others to do the same.

17. *As one especially devoted to the cross and self-denial, he considered this present life meaningful only in so far as it was richly furnished with crosses.* As the Church makes use of the sign of the cross in all its blessings and services, so Father Seelos considered that life not blessed if the sign of the cross was not painfully impressed upon it everywhere. For this reason, we must not be surprised that he mortified himself in everything so perseveringly and courageously, and endured the bitterest suffering, not only with great patience but actually with joy, until his blessed death.

In one of his first letters from America to his family, we find, among other edifying things, him mentioning that as a novice he had given up the use of tobacco in the form of snuff. He made a sacrifice of its use not only during the novitiate but for his entire life without ever again taking up this habit.³² Only those who had to break such a habit will understand the value of this sacrifice.

One day when he was asked whether he wanted to return to Europe, if this were allowed him, he answered quickly that he would never think of a return as long as he could still find some cross in America.

18. *With the spirit of mortification, there grew also in him the spirit of prayer.* We can rightly apply to our devout Father what the Church says about Saint Martin and about many other saints, namely, that their hearts never stopped praying. Really, in prayer he was positively tireless. Vocal prayer and meditative and contemplative prayer were for him refreshing nourishment and a blessed consolation. Above all, he was perseveringly

³¹ *Wissel Fragments*, 24B.

³² *DocStud*, II/1: 418.

devoted to meditation on the bitter sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, which enkindled in him the consuming fire of his love for God.

Actually, it no longer required any effort from him to pray all the time and never to cease. *Prayer was for him a sweet necessity and he could not do without it.*

On sick calls and other necessary exits from the house, he either prayed the Rosary on the way, which he always carried with him, or he busied himself with meditating on spiritual themes. It seemed to him to be too meaningless and Protestant to wander in the streets doing nothing and without praying. He avoided traveling on buses or other means of transportation when no special urgency called for it. "If you go on foot," he used to say, "you can pray more."

He said the prayers prescribed by the Church and by the Rule with nothing but the greatest attention, preciseness, and recollection. His posture was always free and highly devout, his articulation, when he lead the prayers, was clear and precise.

Even on missions, when he was overburdened with other work, he could not bring himself to make use of the usual dispensation from the recitation of the breviary. After the multiple exertions of the day, he was found, often late into the night, in the church with the breviary in one hand holding a light in the other to pray the liturgical hours.

The attitude of his soul, lifted up through communing with God in continual prayer, sometimes revealed itself in striking ways. At the instance of Father Seelos, the Forty Hours Devotion in honor of the Blessed Sacrament was at that time held for the first time in Saint James Church in Baltimore. To him, also fell the honor to celebrate the solemn High Mass, during which the unusual glow of his devotion and love could not but be noticed by anyone who had the good fortune to observe him closely.

Eye witnesses commonly agree that, at the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, he seemed as if transfigured; for which reason it was considered a special blessing to be present then. Merely by looking at him, one was filled with warm sentiments of devotion, reverence, and joy. His nightly rest was short and mostly on the hard floor. He spent a great part of the night in the church before the Blessed Sacrament, to which he had forever turned and consecrated his whole heart as to his great treasure.

Let us mention here an incident from the life of Father Seelos which shows clearly how far he had come through his constant watching and praying before the Blessed Sacrament. A father had just given Holy Communion to a sick person when she threw up violently. Following the prescriptions of the Church, the father gathered the emission from the

floor into a vessel and carried it to the Church to preserve it in the tabernacle until the complete dissolution of the sacred species. Father Seelos said that he wanted to consume it, but the other priest advised against this. Whether he did it or not is uncertain. But it is certain that the vessel disappeared from the tabernacle very soon, before the other priest could burn its contents.³³

In a few words we have now seen what were the essential virtues that this tree, planted by God, brought forth as spiritual fruits. "A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit." From childhood on, Father Seelos was a noble tree of paradise and, therefore, brought forth only fruits of the Holy Spirit, of which, according to the witness of Saint Paul, there are twelve.³⁴

1. In regard to what, in the first place, concerns the *love* that Father Seelos had, everyone knows that his superabundant enthusiasm and effusions of heart, like a marvelous rising and flooding of the sea, were felt by all who had contact with him.

Love for God, for the Mother of God, for the angels, for the saints, for our holy faith, for the Commandments, for his vocation, for the Catholic Church, for the sacraments, for his neighbor, for his confreres; love for everything that reminded him of God; a burning longing for the eternal possession of God, for the most intimate union with all the heavenly saints - this was the consuming and animating fire with which his whole being was permeated.

2. Chaste love begets *untroubled joy*. Who does not know that from his friendly face there streamed forth only serenity and joy? It was the noble joy of his pure conscience that drew all into his presence and enchanted them: joy and gratitude for the glory of God, for the successful results of apostolic labor, for the good that others did, for the hope of salvation for himself and for all; joy over the triumph of holy Church and victory over the powers of hell.

But still more wonderful was his joy in being humbled and despised, which made him like the apostles who were joyful to suffer disdain for the name of Jesus.

We also still remember what great joy the festivities of the Church brought him, which reminded him so vividly of the heavenly Jerusalem.

³³ Wissel Fragments, 35.

³⁴ Gal 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity."

If those in his charge wanted to do him a real favor they had only to be very observant and strive earnestly for perfection, for this was for him the most acceptable consolation.

3. His interior was, moreover, *a genuine habitation of peace*, for he was versed in the use of victorious weapons against the enemies of God and of his own soul. Just as a skillful gardener with an expert use of knife and spade keeps his beautifully laid-out garden blossoming with beautiful flowers, gives it harmony and order, so our enlightened religious with the application of many-faceted mortifications succeeded in establishing and preserving peaceful rest and harmony in the garden of his soul. Who ever saw him inordinately wrought up or bad-tempered? And with whom did he not live in harmony and peace? Even in his childhood he was the peacemaker among his companions in their little disagreements.

4. Trained early in the school of the Crucified, he could do nothing else but imitate this meek Lamb in every respect. Already in his tender years, when he suffered from constant poor health, *his patience and resignation were a subject of wonderment*. His longing for suffering later on was really insatiable. From this came his strict spirit of mortification. He treated the roughest of people with the greatest kindness and patience; for this reason he was sought out by all as a confessor and spiritual director. The judgment of the people is altogether correct when it thinks that only a meek, gentle, and patient priest is a trustworthy guide on the road to salvation. He loved this virtue so much that during his lifetime he often said that he wanted to be sick for a long time before he died in order to be able to prepare himself better for death. If this petition of his to God was not heard, still he was sick long enough that, to his last breath, he gave many and very moving signs of his perfect patience and resignation.

5. As a spiritual director *he knew how to combine severity with benignity in a masterful way*. For this reason, at the proper time, he could be severe without being rough or repelling. He had learned in the school of Jesus Christ to be kind and understanding with everyone and neither to extinguish the smoldering flax, nor to break the bent reed. As a mild, constant rain penetrates and softens the driest and hardest ground and fosters growth in a wonderful manner, so Father Seelos, in his gentle ways, knew how to soften the hardest sinners and change them into people of good living. From far back in his life, he hated a rough, repellent spirit in a priest.

6. Not less salutary was the effect of his goodness upon the people who came into contact with him in any way. The essence of God is goodness. *This follower of Christ seemed to be goodness itself toward all*. Some went so far as to reckon his goodness as a fault. This was, however, the

only accusation that was made against him. In all this, he sided with our divine Savior and with Saint Francis de Sales, saying that it was better to be too kind rather than too severe with others. He was so genuinely kind with everyone that this quality of his was proverbial.

7. There are, to be sure, some pious souls who are patient, meek, and kind, but only to a certain degree and at certain times; then patience has reached its limit, and as the saying has it, the storm breaks loose. But with Father Seelos, kindness was a permanent quality of his spirit; *he was always the same, because he had attained the virtue of longanimity* as well as equanimity to an unusual degree. He never lost control of himself and of his patience; and he really seemed to share in God's imper-turbable serenity to a more than usual degree. In making a correction, he never gave in to the feelings of the moment, but waited for an opportune time; and in this way, he almost infallibly attained his intended purpose. This longanimity remained a principle of his until the last moment of his life.

8. *He seemed to have been born with meekness.* He had overcome the passion of anger so completely that one could not speak of temper and anger with regard to Father Seelos without having to laugh heartily and to stir up universal laughter among others. Let us consider an example of his meekness.

Once he celebrated Mass in a convent of nuns and was unusually long at the altar. After his thanksgiving he spoke to one of the sisters: "A short time ago I was philosophizing with the students (he was then prefect of students in Cumberland) and today I experienced exactly what I was talking about then. I took, as I thought, the first host out of the container and consecrated it. When I came to breaking it, I found out it was paper! I had to get another host and consecrate a second time. That's what took me so long." He said no more. Still, apparently, the mistake cost him much. To keep the hosts very clean, the sacristan had placed a piece of white paper the size of the hosts over them. This was stopped from then on.³⁵

In this way he was accustomed to check all outbursts of anger and resentment and thus imitate the meek and gentle Lamb of God.

9. *His faithfulness was inviolable.* It is sufficient for us to recall that he himself showed himself most exact and prompt in the observance of even the smallest rule of his Congregation and in the conscientious cooperation with the graces God gave him; and he encouraged and directed most zealously those entrusted to him to do the same. It was customary

³⁵ *DocStud*, II/1: 565-566.

for him to have everyone value this kind of fidelity to little things. In him our heavenly Father had, in truth, a faithful steward who was always busy to increase the goods of his Master, so that at the hour of his death he was found worthy to be invited into the enjoyment of the eternal blessedness of heaven.

10. *With similar zeal he took care to use prudent moderation over the movements of all his passions:* moderation in the use of food and drink, of recreation and sleep, of pleasure and enjoyment. He was a master of abnegation. No one ever saw him in idle rest or letting himself be mastered by physical tiredness. His spirit had full control over his senses.

11. We, therefore, cannot be amazed that *he practiced continency in everything and never gave his sensual nature full satisfaction.* He even did not approve of the merely sensual contemplation of the beauties of nature. Everything seemed to be of no value to him if it did not tend to the praise and glory of the Creator. This is evident from many of his letters. We can maintain about him what Saint Vincent de Paul said about himself, that nothing pleased him except God.

12. As a last and genuine fruit of Paradise, *virginal chastity attained its fullest maturity and beauty on this healthy and vigorous tree.* Everything in, on, and around him breathed the heavenly fragrance of this virtue, which is also the most glorious predilection of the Queen of Heaven. Everything that he thought or spoke or did or desired was angelic purity and chastity. We know that his mere presence was already sufficient to keep at a distance every suggestion of any impure temptation.

What an excellent tree that produced such fruit for eternal life! After this concise overview of the outstanding virtues of this religious priest who was so pleasing to God, there remains for us only to remark that *he could endure nothing less in religious, especially Redemptorists, than lukewarmness and remissness in striving for perfection.* What he censured in others, he avoided most strictly for himself. He was insatiable in his practice of virtue. For this reason he could publicly express himself thus:

A genuine and honest-to-goodness religious has more need of heroism in striving for perfection than others because he needs greater virtues. For example: holy indifference to living conditions and kind of work; a purity that must be compared to that of the angels; blind obedience without questioning; selflessness that lifts the heart above every thought of reward, gratitude, or ingratitude; no hope or expectation for anything here below. A person concerned about friends, parents, homeland, convenience is not

qualified for this exalted way of life. What a foundation is required for such a building!³⁶

We have given the honorable reader the biography of Father Seelos from childhood to the grave as far as this was possible for us, citing facts, sources, and witnesses. From it, it becomes clear to everyone that he buried none of his talents; rather with all of them strove for a rich profit. For this reason we can conclude that, after his life came to an end, he received his share in the consoling invitation that the Master promised the faithful servant: "Come thou good and faithful servant, because you were faithful in little things, I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Lord!"

APPRAISAL II

MICHAEL J. CURLEY, C.SS.R.

INTRODUCTION

The second appraisal is by Father Michael Curley, C.SS.R. (1900-1972). In his biography of Father Seelos, *Cheerful Ascetic: The Life of Francis Xavier Seelos, C.SS.R.* (New Orleans: Redemptorist Fathers, 1969) it forms chapter 13, pp. 264-285, entitled "Personality and Piety of Seelos." The competence of Father Curley to make this appraisal is unimpeachable. In writing the biography, Father Curley had at his disposal nearly all the documents, certainly all those of any significance, that have been found that contain data concerning Father Seelos. His appraisal is based on that fund of documentation. Not to be overlooked, also, is the fact that for several years, while Father Curley was writing the biography, he was in daily contact with this documentation, and we have no reason to doubt that, through it, he was imbued with the personality and spirituality of the one about whom he was writing. He became, so to speak, a daily conversant with Father Seelos and, not to exaggerate, his friend.

Curley's appraisal broadened the scope of the overview of the holiness of Father Seelos to include his personality, character, and temperament. He did not want to give the impression that holiness could be separated from the human endowment of the one he was writing about. So, we see included in his assessment such natural qualities as the health and physical appearance of Father Seelos, his congenital cheerfulness, his

³⁶ The source of this citation has not been found.

gift as an interesting conversationalist, his poetic temperament, to mention merely a few.

The headings for various sections are not in the original but have been added for this presentation of the appraisal. The texts translated from German have been taken from the *Documented Study* rather than from the version found in *Cheerful Ascetic*. Father Curley's annotations have been reformulated to take into account the publication of the *Positio super Virtutibus*.

TEXT

Seelos's life accomplishments lay not in the structures he built nor in the formulation of social plans, nor his scholarship, but rather in his personality and piety. Only by studying these can we gauge the full measure of his life's achievements. First, we must take a close look at his personality.

1. *His Mildness of Disposition - His Health*

By nature and grace Francis Xavier Seelos had a mild, gentle character. A study of his bodily health would indicate that this was a natural factor influencing his general conduct. As mentioned before, his health as a child was so delicate that his family believed he would not survive his childhood. This condition kept him from the rougher games of childhood companions, though it did not stop him from taking hikes in the mountains near his home. As a young man he outgrew his earlier weakness, though not entirely. He was sickly at Munich and his stay in the hospital in 1842 was a serious matter, but it was only temporary. Nevertheless, every indication points to the fact that, while he was not often confined to bed, he never enjoyed really rugged health.³⁷ His first biographer, Father Zimmer, maintained that he had a weak constitution.³⁸ Though Zimmer was speaking about Seelos's³⁸ health at the time he was going to New Orleans, other indications before that time show that his health had been weak. He was very sick at one period in Pittsburgh,³⁹ and the hemor-

³⁷ CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, pp. 6, 10, 13, 16, 33.

³⁸ *Summarium super Virtutibus Heroicis* (Rome, 1997) (cited hereafter as *Summarium*), p. 50: testimony of Peter Zimmer, C.S.S.R. RABP, Berger/Beck Correspondence, 56: Account of Francis Van Emstede, C.S.S.R. He said that at one time Seelos was strictly forbidden to visit the sick because of his own sickness. Cf. *DocStud*, II/1: 123-124 for a description and evaluation of the collection of 67 texts in Berger/Beck Correspondence. The collection is in RABP.

³⁹ CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, pp. 86-87.

rhages he suffered in Baltimore almost cost him his life.⁴⁰ When a young seminarian, Frater Kuper, arrived in Cumberland in 1859 and embraced Seelos, he was astonished at the skeleton-like figure of the prefect.⁴¹

Yet two references to Seelos's health indicate that, while he did not have a strong constitution, he was not a weakling. In 1862 Father Wuest said that Father Seelos had a strong constitution,⁴² and in 1866 the provincial declared that he had good health,⁴³ though on the missions in the spring of 1865 Seelos himself feared a recurrence of the throat hemorrhages. All of this shows that Seelos was inclined by nature to take less vigorous physical exercises because of his questionable health. As a general rule, those with weak health do not manifest strong physical traits. This does not always follow, especially when a man has as strong a will as Seelos. Whether because of his health or because of the innate gentleness of his manner, Francis Xavier Seelos was mild in his external deportment.

2. His Most Consistent Personality Trait: Cheerfulness

The most consistent trait of his character was his pronounced bent for cheerfulness. He never changed mercurially, but stayed steadily in a state of pleasant geniality. The testimony of witnesses during his whole life stresses this point. His sister, Antonia, noted it when describing his childhood.⁴⁴ One of his schoolmates at the *Gymnasium* pointed out, likewise, that graciousness was a lasting trait with the young man from Füssen. Out of this happy spirit came a kindly manner of treating people; even as a child he endeavored to preserve peace among his companions, and as a man his love of peace and his affability continued.⁴⁵ Father Joseph Firle said that all who came to him were attracted by his merry manner; his joyful disposition accompanied by a calm serenity inspired all with great reverence and esteem. He was affable without being familiar.⁴⁶ Lay people noticed it; one of the witnesses in Baltimore, Joseph Herzog, claimed that Father Seelos was always happy.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, pp. 146-149.

⁴¹ Berger/Beck Correspondence, 22A: Henry Kuper, C.S.S.R., to John Berger, C.S.S.R., Ilchester, Maryland, May 20, 1883.

⁴² CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, p. 225.

⁴³ AGHR, *Provincia Americana* (hereafter PAM), II, 3: Joseph Helmprecht, C.S.S.R., to Nicholas Mauron, C.S.S.R., Baltimore, February 20, 1866: Visitation Report on the Detroit Community.

⁴⁴ *DocStud*, II/2: 1450-1457; 1458-1461; 1470-1477.

⁴⁵ *DocStud*, II/2: 1462-1470.

⁴⁶ *Summariun*, pp. 62-63: testimony of Joseph Firle, C.S.S.R.

⁴⁷ *Summariun*, p. 158: testimony of Mr. Joseph Herzog.

About him was a natural gaiety, a built-in pleasantness. He was mirth-provoking rather than productive of explosive laughter by wise-cracking words or sharp repartee. He could appreciate a joke, and he could tease. Once a Father arrived in Pittsburgh and seemed perplexed when he noticed that his saliva was black the next morning. Seelos, who knew this was caused by Pittsburgh's smoky atmosphere, sidled up to him and said, "What's the matter? Are you suffering from some internal disease?" All the Fathers chuckled. His constant attitude of geniality made all who knew him realize that he was a man who truly wished them well.

3. Adversity and Difficulties Did Not Quell His Pleasant Outlook on Things

Father Girardey maintained that even in the greatest adversities Seelos never lost his cheerfulness. As another witness in Baltimore, Valentine Winheim, said, he was serene when trials came and never seemed despondent; he was never impatient.⁴⁸ Father Benedict Neithart, who had spent many years with him, remembered how often as prefect of students Father Seelos inculcated the idea that pleasantness and urbanity are the outcome of virtue. Seelos was accustomed to say:

Rudeness does no good and kindness can do no harm. If a priest is rough with the people he injures himself and others. He sins, at least unknowingly, against charity, patience, poverty, humility, and self-denial. He scandalizes all that witness or hear of his rudeness. He turns souls by the hundreds, not only from himself, but also from God and religion. Thousands have neglected church and sacraments, and have gone to hell simply because they were treated rudely by the priest or confessor.⁴⁹

Because he was gentle and happy with everybody, people were naturally attracted to the ascetic-looking priest, while those particularly who were caught in the ways of sin felt that here was a man who would receive them kindly.

4. His Physical Appearance

He was tall and thin-framed, with a full crop of hair - hair that turned white years before he died. His appearance invited friendliness. One of his students, who later became a secular priest in Europe, said of

⁴⁸ *Summarium*, p. 140: testimony of Ferreol Girardey, C.SS.R.; p. 134: testimony of Mr. Valentine Winheim.

⁴⁹ *DocStud*, II/2: p. 1295-1302: Reminiscences of Benedict Neithart, C.SS.R., November 9, 1876. The citation (found on p. 1296) is different here from that in the *Cheerful Ascetic*, because Curley apparently did not have the original English and translated from the Latin found in the *Copia Publica* of the Cause.

him, "The whole external appearance of the man showed him to be a man apart from earthly things and filled with zeal for God's glory. The first time I saw him he left a profound impression on my heart."⁵⁰ "His face and his actions manifested a man withdrawn from worldly things," said another. One man summed up Seelos's appearance, saying, "His look was piety; his glance was comfort; his expression, love; charity glistened in his eyes and benevolence played around his venerable aspect."⁵¹

This attractiveness was all the greater since it was not promoted by those external aids often used by men to capture favorable impressions. Father Seelos did not wear expensive clothes. Though always neat and well-groomed, he wore very old attire and did not seek new apparel.⁵²

The room he used was usually one of the least desirable in the house. He had few creature comforts and no surplus articles in it; as a matter of fact, he never used anything but a candle as a light. Even the stove in his room at Cumberland, he did not use, except when the students entered for interviews; he preferred going to the common room to study there, as did the students, though he could have used his own room, a place apart for himself. Naturally as a superior he could have had a laybrother to arrange his room and clean it for him, as his hours of service were many, but he would not have any of this and did both himself.⁵³

5. Good Conversationalist without Hurting Anyone in Words

He was a good conversationalist, and his flow of ideas and words held his listeners' attention. The subjects of his conversation were usually history, botany, astronomy, or an anecdote from the lives of the saints, or a passage from Sacred Scripture. But besides his piety and his profound erudition, he had an abundance of jokes and liked to tell them. When he told a joke, he would look at the person to whom he was telling it and laugh with such cordiality and hilarity that he was like a boy. In his conversation he never blamed anyone. He abhorred a joke that wounded the feelings of another because it violated the virtue of charity. Three topics he never approved of in conversations: to speak of indelicate subjects; to

⁵⁰ CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, p. 139. His photograph shows the abundance of hair; RABP, Seelos Letters, 1864: Seelos to [Mrs. Wagner], New York, October 18, 1864; *Summarium*, p. 42: testimony of Father Constantine Hergenroether, ex-Redemptorist.

⁵¹ *Summarium*, p. 48: testimony of Peter Zimmer, C.SS.R.; Berger/Beck Correspondence, 56.

⁵² *Summarium*, p. 108: testimony of Benedict Neithart, C.SS.R.; p. 115: testimony of Mr. Joseph Herzog; p. 90: testimony of Mr. John Letzkus.

⁵³ *Summarium*, pp. 62-63: testimony of Joseph Firle, C.SS.R.; pp. 107-109: testimony of Benedict Neithart, C.SS.R.; pp. 142-143: testimony of Ferreol Girardey, C.SS.R.; p. 117: testimony of Hubert Bove, C.SS.R.

hurt the feelings or reputation of others; to be too eager to hear novel opinions which went against the common ideas of the faithful. Not that he was afraid of truth, but the cocksure manner in which some gave avant-garde opinions as truths, not sustained by clear logic, won no applause from Seelos. Some men had more reason in them than faith. While Seelos could appreciate the value of reason, he also had a deep faith. In regard to the latter, his principle seemed to be, to be more ready to believe, rather than doubt, in matters of faith and piety.⁵⁴

6. He Conducted Spiritual Direction through His Correspondence

One of the most notable things about him was that he was always busy - praying, teaching, counselling, and studying. The odd moments of time left from his occupations he spent in letter writing to penitents and souls under his direction. More than once, curious confreres wondered about his voluminous correspondence. We have close to two-hundred of his letters. Unfortunately many more have been destroyed or their whereabouts are unknown. The extant letters, some only a few lines in length and others running ten and twenty pages, were for the most part letters of spiritual direction. Apart from those addressed to his family in Europe and some few to his confreres, they did not, as a rule, relate the topics of the day or give descriptive details of his material surroundings.

The chief contents of his spiritual direction to suffering souls were the doctrine of love of the cross, the value of suffering, patience in difficulties, and a childlike simplicity of heart. He also advocated a special love of the Blessed Sacrament, and, when writing on this subject, his language bordered on the ecstatic.⁵⁵

Once when a penitent remarked that spiritual direction by mail must be burdensome, he answered, "I do not regard it as a burden to write to persons who need consolation and wish encouragement on the narrow way."⁵⁶

In writing to a certain Miss Mary, he sometimes betrayed his lack of precise English and for that reason begged pardon. As a rule he was most kind to her and she noted it; but, as he explained, he wrote to her in this fashion because it was the only way he could help her.⁵⁷ Previously

⁵⁴ *DocStud*, II/2: 1299: Reminiscences of Benedict Neihart, C.S.S.R., November 9, 1876.

⁵⁵ ZIMMER, *Leben*, 167-173, 196-197. Seelos's many letters of spiritual direction confirm this appraisal.

⁵⁶ *Doc Stud*, II/2: 995-998: Seelos to Miss Mary, Annapolis, Maryland, July 17, 1863.

⁵⁷ *DocStud*, II/2: 987-988: Seelos to Miss Mary, Annapolis, September 16, 1862;

he had chided her, and she apparently had been displeased more than once and told him so.⁵⁸ Though he was always ready to help confused, and sometimes distressed, souls by writing them, once he became aware that a new provincial, Father Helmprecht, did not wish him to give spiritual direction by mail, he dropped the correspondence immediately.⁵⁹

His letters were generally devoid of comments on the Civil War, though he did say on more than one occasion that the people of Maryland, in contrast to the state government, seemed to favor the South. As far as can be noted, once, and once only, he expressed his own views, but very secretly. He was inclined to favor the South, not that he favored slavery, but he believed on constitutional grounds the Southern states had a right to withdraw from the Union. Moreover, he disliked the principles of the "Black Republicans," who, he declared, cared less for the slaves than the slaveholders. In this his views coincided with those of Bishop Whelan of Wheeling. Seelos feared, moreover, that after winning the war, some fire-eating politicians of the North might go on to persecute the Church. "At the same time," he said, "earthly things are truly quite secondary to me and I leave all to the wise Providence of God. He only knows how to bring good out of evil."⁶⁰



7. Love of Family - His Poetic Bent - His Deep Love of Learning

He was sensible regarding love of relatives. While he took prompt action without even seeing his mother and father before he left Europe for the last time, he did not by that fact surrender his love for them. Each and every relative was dear to him. He saw nothing wrong in love of relatives, but he did not allow it to interfere with his work as a religious. His letters to his family manifest a deep interest in their concerns, hope for their spiritual advancement, and many, many prayers for them in their difficulties.⁶¹

Seelos's thoughts had a poetical cast. This may have been why Helmprecht once said that Seelos was sentimental, though one other

RABP, Seelos Letters, 1865: Seelos to "My Very Dear Child," New York, April 7, 1865. Seelos had even written poetry to Miss Mary to cheer her and encourage her.

⁵⁸ *DocStud*, II/2: 783-784: Seelos to Miss Mary, Cumberland, Maryland, August 23, 1857.

⁵⁹ RABP, Seelos Letters, 1865: Seelos to Miss Mary, Cumberland, August 2, 1865; *Summarium*, p. 109: testimony of Benedict Neithart, C.S.S.R.

⁶⁰ *DocStud*, II/2: 971-973: Seelos to Hermann Hauschel, Cumberland, September 7, 1861; 995-998: Seelos to Miss Mary, Annapolis, July 17, 1863; 1000-1004: Seelos to Sister Romualda Seelos, Annapolis, August 21, 1863.

⁶¹ CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, pp. 24, 33, 41, 87, 88, 89, 275; ZIMMER, *Leben*, pp. 94-96.

witness who lived with him five years said he was the opposite.⁶² His origin in romantic and picturesque Füssen, nestling in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps, easily conditioned him for poetry. It was a land where friends would express their appreciation in a poetic manner. Even as small children, Seelos's younger brothers and sisters looked forward to his poetical messages. He began early to express himself in poetic lines - poems to his guardian angel; poems to express his inmost thoughts on his longing for heaven, others on prayer, and on the virtues of his sister, tragically killed Margaret Kunigunda. Close to a hundred such compositions in German have been preserved. While the style and meter in them are not always most literary, the sentiments they express are genuinely heartwarming. He wrote poetry even when directing souls and sometimes when chiding someone.⁶³

Though he does not appear to have read as widely as his friend and contemporary, Bishop John Neumann, he mastered what he did read, usually books on religion and especially asceticism. Scientific books he relished only if they served to confirm revelation. He preferred theology to philosophy, once expressing his preference by saying that theology gave the light of the sun and philosophy the light of the candle. One man remarked that he did not spend much time reading newspapers. But the skimpy news sheets of that day, four or eight pages in all, hardly called for much time in perusal.⁶⁴

8. *His Qualities as a Long-time Superior*

Although during sixteen of his twenty-three years in religion he held the office of superior, no one could accuse him of "the insolence of office." More than one said that they could hardly tell that he was the superior when they first met him, for neither in his words nor in his manner of acting did he betray any sense of superiority. Once he gave a Good Shepherd nun his ideas of the qualities a religious superior should have. First, he declared, a superior should herself be permeated with a burning zeal for the Rule, an enlightened zeal; second, she should have a profound

⁶² AGHR, PAM. II, 3: Joseph Helmprecht, C.SS.R., to Nicholas Mauron, C.SS.R., Baltimore, February 20, 1866: Visitation Report on the Detroit Community; *Summarium*, p. 62, testimony of Joseph Firlé, C.SS.R.

⁶³ Seelos MSS XIII and XIV are two autograph collections of poem by Father Seelos; some of these are published in various pages of Zimmer's *Leben. DocStud*, II/1: 507-509: Seelos to "My Dear Friend," Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 9, 1854; II/2: 983-985: Seelos to Miss Mary, Annapolis, Maryland, July 17, 1862.

⁶⁴ *Summarium*, p. 107: testimony of Benedict Neithart, C.SS.R.; p. 161: testimony of Brother Hermann Graute, C.SS.R. See also RABP, Seelos Visitation Sisters Letters: Seelos to "Dearly Beloved Mother Superior," Cumberland, [July, 1858].

humility, be full of compassion for the weak, ever having before her own eyes her own weakness; third, she should have true charity for all.⁶⁵ Father Beck, one of his students, said of him, "His love for his subjects always overshadowed the dignity of his official position. He was more servant and confrere than superior. His commands were given with prudence and meekness and took into account the strength and capabilities of his individual subjects."⁶⁶ Seelos once expressed his goal as a superior - to reach that enlightened state where he could make obedience in subjects a pleasant task. For a long time he prayed and studied to gain that happy state where subjects are guided and led in such a manner that they themselves find pleasure only in the strictest regularity.

He was not the martinet type of superior. As he told his students, he well knew that it is wrong to whitewash mistakes. He regarded this as a desertion of truth and want of zeal for the honor and glory of God. On the other hand, he believed that undue severity - what he called a "rough mode of treating poor sinners" - could easily lead to discouragement and provide effects more harmful than the original state. "A sick person requires a great amount of prudence," he said. To cure him, he believed, it was necessary sometimes to conceal the greatness of the evil. He expected to be obeyed, although he did not call for a military or semi-military execution of his commands. In fact, it was his lack of sharpness in giving orders that seemed to indicate to some, particularly to Fathers Ruland, Dielemans, and Van de Braak, that he was weak in command. While he was aware of the complaints, he preferred the kindlier method. A firm supporter of authority, he also believed it should be exercised in a Christ-like manner. He said:

A long experience has taught me the great lesson that God leads men in a human manner by other men whom He has appointed to be in His place and who should be of the same kindness as He Himself was while among men.

Many a soul might be gained to the true faith and for eternal life if sometimes a little more charity, a little more self-denial would be evinced, and if persons would be treated as their personal dispositions and human nature would require it. It is true [that] it requires great virtue and experience to find always the right measure in these things, but we cannot fail much if our intention remains pure.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ RABP, Seelos Letters, undated: Seelos to a Religious Superior, [n.p. n.d.].

⁶⁶ RABP, Seelos Accounts: Conference by Bernard Beck, C.S.S.R., on the life and virtues of Father Seelos at Saint Philomena's Church, Pittsburgh, December 27, 1875.

⁶⁷ RABP, Seelos Letters, 1865: Seelos to Miss Mary, Chicago, Illinois, July 9, 1865. See also, RABP, Seelos Visitation Sisters Letters, 1858: Seelos to Mother Superior, Cum-

Though Seelos may not have had the right measure on all occasions, generally speaking he did. The bald fact was that he got more done by his method than many another by imperious command.

9. His Piety Was Not Austere and Forbidding

Piety, the firm and sincere affection that prompts one to give God the love due to Him, was a distinguishing mark of Father Seelos. To one nun he confided, "I never knew what it is to love anyone but God." And another nun testified, "He told me simply and confidentially how he felt himself drawn to God.⁶⁸ On the great festivals his spirit was in harmony with the Church." He won acclaim for his piety in every place where he labored, an attractive piety well-interwoven with his genial character. A life of complete dedication to God and to the things of God was his aim, but not a fearsome, tense dedication that froze affection in the beholder. His love of God had not insulated him from his fellow man. His was no joyless, bitter holiness. It was relaxed, not grim, always with a firm and steady will to attain sanctity.

10. He Was a Man of Solid Faith

Basic to an understanding of Seelos's piety was his deep faith, which was evident in a hundred different ways and was recognized by many people in many places. His younger sister, Anna, declared that Seelos as a youth was penetrated by a lively faith; he profoundly admired the greatness and omnipotence of God as shown in his creatures and in the wonders of nature. Anthony Schirsner, his fellow student at Augsburg and Munich, likewise declared that Francis clearly outdistanced his comrades in his firm faith.⁶⁹ All his tremendous personal exertions for sinners while he was on the home missions did not spring from a natural appeal. His supernatural faith was behind them.

Indeed, as one peruses the life story of Francis Xavier Seelos, his career as a student, priest, and superior, an overwhelming conviction comes that he was a man of solid faith. By faith we mean not only the assent of the mind to all the truths proposed for our belief concerning the Church of Christ but also the ability to live out these convictions in the everyday, humdrum existence among the tedious tasks of life.

berland, August 12, 1858; ZIMMER, *Leben*, p. 80.

⁶⁸ *Summarium*, p. 156: testimony of Sister Mary Bernard, Carmelite; *DocStud*, II/1: 557: Reminiscences of Visitation Sisters.

⁶⁹ *Summarium*, pp. 36-37 33: testimony of Sister Romualda]; *DocStud*, II/2: Anton Schirsner to [Bernard Beck, C.S.S.R.], Munich, Germany, January 30, 1877.

11. At All Times He Gave Total Assent to the Teachings of the Church: Better to Believe Too Much than Not Enough

No shadow of a doubt existed in the mind of Seelos concerning the truths taught by the Church. He loved them; he defended them; he studied them to gain riches for his own spiritual life. The assent of his mind was not an enforced acceptance demanded by the Church under pain of excommunication. He believed the doctrine of the Assumption of Our Lady as well as the Infallibility of the Pope even before these were declared dogmas of faith. In 1859, as Father Zimmer relates, when one of his students expressed some doubt or hinted at a doubt concerning the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady into heaven, the prefect, who was naturally meek at all times, showed concern and corrected the young man, saying, "This is the common teaching of the Church. Do you have to wait until you are threatened with excommunication to believe it?"⁷⁰

Not only did he readily embrace the official general doctrines of the Church, but he saw with the eyes of belief the inner truths of the spiritual life. He walked in a world of faith. He discerned God's action behind the deeds of men. Because of this perception he was able to avoid pitfalls that disturb many others who look only to secondary causes in events, the part men play in them. The presence of God, the certainty of a life to come, the innate conviction that whatsoever we do to a neighbor we do to Christ, the acceptance of sufferings as a trial by God, the deep assurance that all things work together for good to one who loves God were lived out in the life of this holy man.⁷¹

12. His Reverence for the Mass and His Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament

Specifically, his faith was noted in the way he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice. People of all classes testified that he said Mass in such a devout manner that he seemed to be entirely penetrated and profoundly impressed with the mystery he was celebrating.

⁷⁰ ZIMMER, *Leben*, pp. 291-292.

⁷¹ *Summarium*, p. 105: testimony of Benedict Neithart, C.Ss.R.: "*Cito partem supernaturalem in rebus humanis detexit et accepit*"; *DocStud*, II/2: 793-810: Seelos to Sister Damiana and Sister Romualda, Cumberland, August 10, 1858 For the presence of God, cf. *Summarium*, p. 90: testimony of John Letzkus; CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, p. 90. His many poems on heaven illustrate his belief in heaven as his home; ZIMMER, *Leben*, p. 303; *DocStud*, II/1: 707-709: Seelos to Miss Mary, Baltimore, March 4, 1856; RABP, Seelos Letters, undated: Seelos to Sister Rosalia, [n.p. n.d.]. For acceptance of suffering, see CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, pp. 130, 275.

Even outside of Mass, when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed on the altar, he appeared as if his mental faculties were absorbed in concentration on his Sacramental God. This was noticed in Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and other places.⁷²

13. His Ministry of Preaching and Instructing Was Permeated with Faith

“When preaching or instructing,” said Father Ferreol Girardey, “he spoke as one perfectly persuaded of the truth of what he said.”⁷³ Once he spoke to his students these words:

Now I ask you, What can console you in times of depression of mind when seeing your own imperfections, when seeing an increase of misery [...] what alone can give you consolation? Nothing but the immediate application of the holy exercise of prayer. This exercise only knows how to cure our daily wounds [...].

A few moments are enough to make an act of self-humiliation, an act of supplication, an act of begging pardon, or of making a new resolution in order to repair the fault, to obtain God’s pardon, new graces, new light and strength [...]. By merely telling him our secrets and faults and infirmities, we are cured whilst speaking.

And again, urging his hearers to listen to the voice of conscience, he said,

Happy souls that listen to this inward voice, to the voice of the Holy Ghost with whom they live in continual union. But just that union with the divine Spirit is a union of continual aspiration and prayers [...].⁷⁴

A spirit of faith shone through his letters. Typical was his letter to Miss Mary in June, 1855:

[...] did you ever reflect: what might be the reason that our blessed Lord compares so often the kingdom of heaven with a nuptial feast, why does he call himself the spouse, why does he call his followers spouses? It is a great mystery, full of consolation for those who are in the present time under many a trial, for those who know themselves not of this world, not partakers of riches and pleasures and honors and all the fruition of that present life; for those who are crucified to the world and, knowing the de-

⁷² *Summarium*, p. 47: testimony of Peter Zimmer, C.SS.R.; p. 74: testimony of Leopoldine Gimper; p. 173: testimony of Peter Maus; p. 187: testimony of Elizabeth Arlinghaus; p. 100: testimony of Joseph Wuest, C.SS.R.; CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, p. 90; *DocStud*, II/1: 564: Reminiscences of Visitation Sisters.

⁷³ *Summarium*, p. 140.

⁷⁴ Seelos MS VI, fols. 28r-v : Sermons and Instructions, Conferences for *Ordinandi*.

ceitfulness of that imposter, aspire to a higher order of things. In the eyes of worldlings we are the greatest fools, not knowing the appreciation of things, though we really are wise and prudent if we persevere.⁷⁵

14. His Prompt and Careful Obedience Was Based on Faith

Similarly, his faith was unmistakably evident in the manner in which he received orders from his superiors. Whether he agreed with what was ordered or not, he carried out the wishes of those over him promptly, were it an order from the archbishop forbidding certain liturgical practices dear to the heart of the immigrants, but undesirable in America; or an inconvenient command to leave what he was doing to take up temporarily another task; or returning home without making unnecessary stopovers; or a surprising change of office. The order was obeyed. No wonder he wrote that a wish from his father provincial was an order for him.⁷⁶

Because he was a man of faith, he followed the Redemptorist pattern of life exactly. Father Ruland put the truth succinctly when he said of him, "He is a Redemptorist in body and soul."

15. His Firm Trust in God Prompted Him to Instill a Similar Trust in Others

From the lively faith in the heart of Francis Seelos came a firm confidence in God. He never had any doubts that he was going to heaven and that he would enjoy a happy hereafter. The virtue of hope was so ingrained in him that, like his faith, it constantly came out in his sermons and letters.

To those souls tormented by past sins, unnerved by the good they never did, discouraged by their heedlessness of God's warning and neglect of His graces, he pleaded eloquently for trust in God.⁷⁷ To his mother, still deep in sorrow seventeen months after Mang Seelos's death, Father Francis wrote words of consolation:

You are already so close to heaven; therefore, accept daily all difficulties and crosses with complete resignation and willingly. "For all things work for the best of those who love God." Yes, it's true, best of mothers, you have already put up with many hard and bitter things. Are you sorry for this? Of

⁷⁵ *DocStud*, II/1: 619-620: Seelos to Miss Mary, Baltimore, June 11, 1855.

⁷⁶ ZIMMER, *Leben*, pp. 307, 242-243; RABP, Seelos Letters, 1863: Seelos to Mrs. Sauer, Annapolis, February 20, 1863.

⁷⁷ CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, p. 103. At this point Curley has a quotation from a sermon that is not in the hand of Father Seelos and there is no indication that he is its author. We have therefore thought it wise to omit the quotation here. The German text of the sermon is found in Seelos MS XX (doubtful material): "*Von der Kleinglaubigkeit und von den Vertrauen auf Gott.*"

course not. Our consolation consists precisely in this that we have traveled the same road that our beloved Savior has chosen for himself, the narrow, the steep way of the cross. Especially since we know that every single step is written in the book of life, so that these very sufferings will be our greatest treasure. So, my dearest mother, continue to live unreservedly for heaven and to use all means of grace that are at your disposal.⁷⁸

To the couple who lost a child he wrote beautifully: "For, first of all, you have not lost your daughter, but have won an angel; not given her up but have saved her."⁷⁹

In other ways, too, deep-rooted confidence shone out. Many of the poems he wrote came back time and time again to this theme. In one on "My Home Above" he expressed the idea neatly,⁸⁰ and one of his favorite poems was "In God Alone I Seek for Rest,"⁸¹ a manifestation of his hope.

Illustrating how he could inspire others to have confidence in the hope of heaven was the letter he wrote to a nun laboring in an orphanage:

Since at present you are employed in the care of orphans, do not forget that in one sense all of us may be called orphans. This, not so much because we have left our homes and dear parents, but because we are exiled from our true home as long as we live on this earth and are surrounded by so much misery. Yes, we are at present poor orphans and at times this gives us much pain. Yet we must not lose courage for, as the Apostle said, our hope is the plenitude of immortality. We are on the straight and kingly highway which leads directly and surely to our heavenly home. We must be steadfast and walk on courageously, suffering whatever trials and difficulties we meet with on the way. These trials and difficulties at times may look to us as barriers to our progress or we think that they make our road even steeper than it actually is. Think always on the shortness of life and on the eternal happiness which we will enjoy in glory and contentment which now we cannot even imagine.

Then, to encourage the nun, he wrote a short poem, the theme of which was "Heaven, the Land of Love, the Land of Joy." This was man's true home. Enclosing the poem in the letter, he told her to read it from time to time and say a Hail Mary with it.⁸²

⁷⁸ *DocStud*, II/1: 616-617: Seelos to his mother, brothers, and sisters, Baltimore, January 29, 1855.

⁷⁹ *DocStud*, II/2: 811: Seelos Letters, 1859: Seelos to "Mr. L.," Cumberland, January 7, 1859.

⁸⁰ ZIMMER, *Leben*, p. 303.

⁸¹ *DocStud*, II/1: 709: Seelos to Miss Mary, Baltimore, March 4, 1856.

⁸² RABP, Seelos Letters, undated: Seelos to Sister M. Rosalia, [n.p.n.d.].

16. He Had Great Trust in the Power of Prayer

The virtue of confidence was in his prayers, too. In asking God to cure people of bodily disease and especially of moral defects, Seelos seemed to have no doubt that his prayer would be answered. This was quite apparent on several occasions in Pittsburgh when the people brought their sick children to him. He said a prayer over them before the altar of our Blessed Mother with such calm assurance that the bystanders were struck by it. They were more surprised when those for whom he prayed were cured of their disorders.⁸³

17. Love of Neighbor Was His Most Conspicuous Virtue

But of all the discernible virtues of Seelos, the most constantly commented upon was his love of his neighbor. He was all heart and kindness to those who came in contact with him, with a love of neighbor that went beyond any nationality or race or status in society. He loved Frenchmen and Americans just as well as the Germans. He gave his all to Negro as well as to white. If he showed preference at all in his affection, it was to the poor and downtrodden.⁸⁴ He did a great deal to bridge the ethnic gaps which seemed to exist in his day in the American Catholic Church. While one of the reasons for this success was, of course, his early training in languages, his overflowing spirit of love for his fellow human beings, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, mainly accounted for it.

Father Wissel, who lived years with Seelos, said of him:

This charity extended to all, even the poorest. As superior he was very busy, yet it was not too much for him to spend about a half hour every day with a half-demented person who received his meals in the house. He did this to cheer him up. In doing this, he put himself completely in the situation of this poor man. He did this throughout a rather long period of time.⁸⁵

18. He Was Strict with Himself - Mortification and Self-denial - Some of His Practices of Penance

Despite his outward gaiety and sanguine manner, Father Seelos was strict with himself. In a letter to his two sisters in 1858, he gave his philosophy of mortification and self-denial, saying:

Now I would like to encourage you with a few words, not merely to persevere in your holy and enviable vocation with the greatest enthusiasm and the greatest joy. For the more zealous we are, the more God and his holy Mother stand by us. Therefore, everything goes easier to the degree

⁸³ *Summarium*, p. 88: testimony of Laurence Guckert.

⁸⁴ *Summarium*, p. 108: testimony of Benedict Neithart, C.S.S.R.

⁸⁵ Wissel Fragments, 9A; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1509, no. 6.

that we exert force and embrace with a really joyful and willing heart the cross that God himself places upon us, not the one we have chosen for ourselves.⁸⁶

He did violence to himself in many ways. Perhaps the one act that was most apparent to his confreres was his mortification in the matter of sleep. Father Anwander said he heard that Seelos went to bed late, got up early, and spent many nights on the bare floor without touching the bed.⁸⁷ This testimony was confirmed by others. Father Joseph Firle declared that he was often found sleeping on the floor. Among the seminarians it was said he rarely slept in bed.⁸⁸ One student made it a point to examine whether Seelos slept in bed. He went to him late in the evening and before meditation next morning and observed that the books were lying on his bed the same way. In the old house in Cumberland, Seelos also had been observed sleeping on the floor, having taken off only his habit.⁸⁹ Brother Peter Recktenwald was informed by another laybrother that once when he had to summon Father Seelos for a sick call, he found him sleeping on the floor.⁹⁰ As soon as Seelos arrived in Detroit, he asked permission to sleep on the floor. His rector, Father Van Emstede, did not allow this, but gave him permission to place a board in his bed, adding that he should protect himself well against the cold and drafts for the sake of his health.⁹¹ From all the evidence available it is quite clear that during his life he often slept on the floor as an act of mortification.

In other ways he was hard on himself. During his whole life as a Redemptorist he never used tobacco and never looked for delicacies in food or drink.⁹² He never used salt or any seasoning in his food. At the meditation of the community he never sat down, but knelt erect, usually

⁸⁶ *DocStud*, II/2: 799: Seelos to Sister Damiana Seelos and Sister Romualda Seelos, Cumberland, August 10, 1858.

⁸⁷ Berger/Beck Correspondence, 12A: Thaddeus Anwander, C.S.S.R., to [Joseph Wuest], Rochester, New York, November 8, 1876; printed in *DocStud*, II/1: 429.

⁸⁸ *Summarium*, p. 62: testimony of Joseph Firle, C.S.S.R.

⁸⁹ Berger/Beck Correspondence, 22A: Henry Kuper, C.S.S.R., to John Berger, C.S.S.R., Ilchester, Maryland, May 20, 1883; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 845.

⁹⁰ *Summarium*, p. 76: testimony of Brother Peter Recktenwald, C.S.S.R.

⁹¹ Berger/Beck Correspondence, 56: Account of Francis Van Emstede, C.S.S.R.; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1216.

⁹² *Summarium*, p. 161: testimony of Brother Hermann Graute, C.S.S.R.; p. 109: testimony of Benedict Neithart, C.S.S.R.; p. 52: testimony of Peter Zimmer, C.S.S.R.

with his hands folded.⁹³ He always said Divine Office either kneeling or standing, never sitting.⁹⁴

This manner of praying was not an affected pose. He knelt with faith to show a humble attitude in God's presence. But he did not consider it essential to prayer as he told his students in his sermon on "Body Posture in Prayer." He pointed out what Saint John Chrysostom had said: "Even if you do not bend the knee, nor strike your breast, nor elevate your hands toward heaven, if only you bring to God an inflamed heart, nothing is wanting in your prayer." Typically, Seelos wanted his listeners not to be rude to others by passing judgment on their posture at prayer.⁹⁵

Besides the acts of mortification prescribed for all Redemptorists, he would practice many others, such as going without gloves or a hat in winter.⁹⁶

19. Severe Retreat Resolutions, 1848

While on his retreat in 1848 at Pittsburgh, he formed the following resolutions:

External Acts of Penance

1. No breakfast at all on the fast days of the Church, on Saturdays, and on the vigils of the seven feasts of the blessed Mother of God and on all retreat days.

2. Cilicium until after thanksgiving after Mass, three times a week on the arm or leg.

3. Discipline three times a week, during seven Our Fathers and Hail Marys.

4. I ask for permission often to pray five Our Fathers and Hail Marys with arms outstretched, especially during time of laziness and temptation.

5. To sleep on the floor Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. If there should be a day of recreation on the days I have chosen for fasting, I will anticipate the day of fasting.⁹⁷

How conscientiously he lived up to these resolutions we do not know, but they show the trend of his thoughts. He believed in performing

⁹³ ZIMMER, *Leben*, p. 143; *Summarium*, p. 161: testimony of Brother Hermann Graute, C.S.S.R.; p. 141: testimony of Ferreol Girardey, C.S.S.R.

⁹⁴ *Summarium*, p. 61: testimony of Joseph Firle, C.S.S.R.; p. 48: testimony of Peter Zimmer, C.S.S.R.; p. 140: testimony of Ferreol Girardey, C.S.S.R.

⁹⁵ Seelos MS IV, fol. 2r: "*Körpers-haltung beim Gebete*" ("Bodily Posture at Prayer").

⁹⁶ *Summarium*, p. 108: testimony of Benedict Neithart, C.S.S.R.

⁹⁷ *DocStud*, I I/1: 495: Retreat Notes, 1848. The superior of the community, Father Joseph Müller, in giving his permission, moderated the last resolution to: "Since the cold in winter amply gives the same opportunity for mortification, sleeping on the floor can be put off until the return of warmer weather."

penitential acts, as he said to one of his correspondents who was thinking of entering the religious life.

It is certain - if you have not experienced it yet, you will experience it someday - that on the way of a genuine following of Jesus Christ many obstacles and difficulties beset everyone who seriously enters upon this way and continues on it. O how few walk along it and just for this reason it could seem to us, now and again, that the whole undertaking is an exaggeration; in fact, it is described by corrupt nature as a veritable stupidity. It is just as if someone said to you: "How can you be so stupid! You deny yourself all innocent pleasures about which others make no scruples"; or, "Are you the only one who wants to get to heaven? What a dry and sad life that is," and so forth.

But we must not pay attention to such whisperings of the devil [...].⁹⁸

20. His Conviction That Trials and Sufferings Are from God, the Physician and Healer of Our Souls

Concerning self-denial, his ideas were similarly high-minded. In the letter mentioned above to his two sisters in religion, he said:

Dearest Sisters, if only all religious had so much faith, so much courage, so much self-denial that they could see their daily duties, the unexpected commands of their superiors, the various daily unforeseen occurrences, sadness, dejection, wretchedness of every kind, as the cross especially destined for them by God. For exactly in this lies God's deepest wisdom; that he, as the most experienced of physicians, knows how to give every individual according to his passions, circumstances, and conditions that medicine which infallibly will cure each one and will make him grow to that degree of perfection which he should have and should attain according to God's plan.

It is not confreres, nor sisters of the community, not even superiors - when the tempting thought comes that they are ill-intentioned toward us, or that they want to vex and trouble us; it is not confreres, nor sisters of the community, nor superiors but it is always our loving God who stands in the background and lets us suffer and endure only as long as we need it for our sanctification.

Is someone from those around us were actually to treat us with violence, we could still draw from it even the greatest of benefits, because it would be a kind of innocent suffering, a genuine imitation of the innocent, crucified Jesus. Nothing would be sweeter in its fruits; nothing would be more comforting in our misery; nothing would be more meritorious for

⁹⁸ *DocStud*, II/2: 968: Seelos to a Young Woman Considering a Religious Vocation, Cumberland, [1860].

eternal life. We have really committed so many thousands of mistakes for which we have not yet been punished, and for which, perhaps, a terrible Purgatory awaits us. How gladly should we not now and again be willing to suffer something innocently. Is this not so?⁹⁹

21. The Place of Prayer in His Life - Special Favors

Father Seelos said he wanted to be a spiritual man. Asking himself how this was possible, he answered, "Therefore, prayer must always be my chief source of strength."¹⁰⁰ His prayer life was carefully cultivated. He anticipated Matins and Lauds daily and told his students that he thought the priest who puts off saying his Office until late at night was not giving it his best attention. Father Zimmer testified that he knew that Seelos was a man of prayer and that he never omitted the regular exercises prescribed by the Rule. The first present at the exercises, Seelos gave example to all his students. Zimmer also declared that Seelos was forever saying the Rosary in such a manner that one would hardly notice his practice.¹⁰¹ More than one witness declared that in walking through the streets, he always seemed to have his hand in his pocket, presumably saying the Rosary. The presumption might seem without foundation, had not Father Seelos himself inculcated this to his confreres, encouraging them to say a Hail Mary or a part of the rosary while moving from one place to another.¹⁰²

In his correspondence he came back to the subject of prayer time and time again. To his mother, lonely after her husband's death and longing for heaven, he answered: "Yes, my best of mothers, live these last days completely in God, like holy Anna, who day and night did not leave the temple. [...] Prayer is the ultimate medicine that conquers all pain" [...].¹⁰³ To a young lady planning to enter religious life he wrote: "Vocation and perseverance in it are special favors from God and can be obtained by prayer only. Therefore, I advise you to pray continuously not only when in church, but also when at home and at your work. But at the sacrifice of the Mass and after Holy Communion prayers are most powerful." Young Neithart declared, too, that Seelos used to say his prayers up to midnight.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ *DocStud*, II/2: 799-800: Seelos to Sister Damiana Seelos and Sister Romualda Seelos, Cumberland, August 10, 1858.

¹⁰⁰ *DocStud*, II/1: 488: Retreat Notes, 1848.

¹⁰¹ *Summarium*, p. 49: testimony of Peter Zimmer, C.S.S.R.

¹⁰² CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, p. 91; ZIMMER, *Leben*, 187-188.

¹⁰³ *DocStud*, II/1: 213: Seelos to his mother, Baltimore, Maryland, April 2, 1854.

¹⁰⁴ *DocStud*, II/2: 995: Seelos to Mary Kane, Annapolis, May 31, 1863; II/2: 1298: Reminiscences of Benedict Neithart, C.S.S.R., November 9, 1876.

When two nuns traveled with a priest for several days, and one of them says, "The priest seemed always recollected and in prayer," she is pointing out a habit. And that is what Sister Maria Largusa, SSND, said of Father Seelos after the trip from Chicago to New Orleans in 1866.¹⁰⁵

Another witness gave even more significant testimony of his prayer habits. A young man who was a novice brother in Cumberland declared on oath that he went into the oratory one afternoon when Father Seelos was performing the afternoon spiritual exercises and saw him, in a kneeling position with his arms extended in prayer, and his whole body raised above the ground.¹⁰⁶ One thing is certain. Francis Seelos prayed a great deal. Too many people in too many places affirm this for anyone to doubt it.

22. *His Gentle Fortitude - His Detestation of Softness*

One strain in his piety stood out clearly. He pounded time and again at what the Germans called '*Weichlichkeit*.' It may be called in English "softness of character or lackadaisical spirit." Seelos himself best explained it when he told one of his ordination classes:

Here we are dealing with an evil which is very comprehensive in its scope and there is nothing specific about it. For instance, he who wastes his time in play and who desires recreation and enjoyment too eagerly is surely a soft person. Recreation in itself is not softness; neither are eating and drinking to be designated as softness. Softness is a manner of life which is opposed to the performance of a definite, serious work, which meets everything in a careless, superficial manner, which does not know what it means to be faithful, persevering in performance of duties and external obligations without, however, going over into complete lack of discipline. Softness is a mode of life where one endeavors to take all the sweetness of earth without serious thought for the salvation of one's soul.

He declared that this was really a conglomeration of many defects and aberrations, which in themselves might not be called vices. But these, he claimed, when they permeate the life of a Christian, cause it to follow the easy way out and to neglect to work for souls. Softness of character, in his view, was opposed to the spirit of Christ, was not in accordance with the Gospel, and really failed to appreciate it.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *Summarium*, p. 171: testimony of Sister M. Largusa, SSND.

¹⁰⁶ *Summarium*, p. 120: testimony of Mr. Andrew Franz.

¹⁰⁷ Seelos MS VI, fol. 59v; *Summarium*, p. 146: testimony of Timothy Enright, C.S.S.R. 110.

23. *Even His Critics Were Convinced of His Holiness of Life*

It would be entirely idle to deny that Father Seelos, besides being warmly praised, was criticized, not always fairly. Two unusual facts connected with the criticism, however, stand out sharply in his career. The first was that most of his severest critics, while voicing their complaints of his methods, went out of their way to point out his holiness. Father Van de Braak, speaking of possible provincials, reported to Rome, "It is being said that Father Seelos is too good and that he does not have enough courage to refuse what is asked of him even when he wants to refuse."¹⁰⁸ Two years later he also wrote, "Father Seelos is a very pious man. He is humble and affable. I do not think a better man could have been chosen to be superior of Cumberland."¹⁰⁹ Isaac Hecker, who called him "wretchedly weak" in the Rumpler case, in the same letter called him "pious."¹¹⁰ Father Clarence Walworth, who spoke of Seelos in the Rumpler case as "utterly irresolute, timid, easily imposed upon, and disposed to leave everyone to follow his own way in all things," in the same letter called him "an excellent religious and by no means devoid of good sense and judgment."¹¹¹

Though he still thought Seelos might not be severe enough as novice master, Father Augustine Hewit called him "a saint in spirituality and an angel in sweetness."¹¹²

24. *An Unexplained Remark about Him - Was He Ambitious?*

The provincial, George Ruland, in 1858 made a strange remark about Seelos, saying, "Formerly I thought him very perfect in his way, but recently an incident gave him an occasion to show that he is somewhat vain and ambitious, which formerly I would never have looked for in him."¹¹³ Ruland did not pinpoint the incident. It may well have been that the provincial believed Seelos was desirous of returning to Baltimore as

¹⁰⁸ AGHR, PAM, I, B: Adrian Van de Braak, C.S.S.R., to Nicholas Mauron, C.S.S.R., Cumberland, July 12, 1855; printed in *DocStud*, II/1: 679.

¹⁰⁹ AGHR, PAM., V, 3: Adrian Van de Braak, C.S.S.R., to Nicholas Mauron, C.S.S.R., Cumberland, August 26, 1857.

¹¹⁰ AGHR, PAM., I, B: Isaac Hecker, [C.S.S.R.], to Nicholas Mauron, C.S.S.R., Baltimore, June 24, 1855; printed in *DocStud*, II/1: 646.

¹¹¹ AGHR, PAM., I, B: Clarence Walworth, [C.S.S.R.], to Nicholas Mauron, C.S.S.R., Baltimore, June 21, 1855; printed in *DocStud*, II/1: 638.

¹¹² AGHR, PAM, I, B: Augustine Hewit, [C.S.S.R.], to [Edward Douglas, C.S.S.R.], New York, May 16, 1857.

¹¹³ AGHR, PAM, I: George Ruland, C.S.S.R., to Nicholas Mauron, C.S.S.R., Baltimore, November 9, 1858: "*Bemerkungen über die einzelnen Patres*," evidently an enclosure in a letter.

rector of Saint Alphonsus parish, for rumors to that effect were around, and Seelos was aware of them. It may well have been, too, that Ruland was giving credence to unconfirmed tales he had heard, for, as Seelos later said, idly gossiping tongues in Baltimore had caused him vexation. As he put it, "I never met with a greater malice than in Baltimore, only on account of a few persons on whom I really had bestowed a great many favors."¹¹⁴

In the absence of more conclusive evidence we cannot be sure of what motives lay behind the cryptic statements of both Ruland and Seelos. The ambition that Ruland thought he saw in Seelos seems strange in view of what Seelos, following Saint Francis de Sales, told a religious superior, "Ask for nothing; refuse nothing."¹¹⁵ He wrote to a Visitation superioress at this time and, after speaking of the happiness he had experienced in his recently completed annual retreat, he wrote:

I have seen in my life nothing but faults, nothing but miseries, nothing but ingratitude and nothing but sins - so much so, that a great desire forced itself upon me [that] our dearest Lord may put me in the lowest place in my beloved Congregation and make me a lay brother; and, D[ear] M[other], that was no humility but so true and heartfelt, that I would have considered such an accident as one of the greatest favors of Heaven.¹¹⁶

That does not sound like ambition; nor does the letter Seelos later wrote to his superior general and to Pope Pius IX, begging not to be named bishop of Pittsburgh, sound like ambition, but rather the very opposite.¹¹⁷

Even Father Dielemans, critical as he was of Seelos's methods, did not fail to add that he was not accusing Seelos of a moral fault.¹¹⁸

25. The Chief Criticism Leveled against Him: He Was Not Strict Enough - a Reasonable Explanation

The second consideration about the criticisms leveled at him was that practically all of the faultfinders complained that he was too easy with his subjects.

¹¹⁴ RABP, Seelos Visitation Sisters Letters, 1859: Seelos to Mother Leonard, Cumberland, April 27, 1859.

¹¹⁵ RABP, Seelos Visitation Sisters Letters, 1857: Seelos to "Reverend and Dear Mother," Cumberland, June 25, 1857.

¹¹⁶ RABP, Seelos Visitation Sisters Letters, 1858: Seelos to "Mother Superior," Cumberland, October 27, 1858.

¹¹⁷ CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, pp. 198-199.

¹¹⁸ AGHR, PAM, V, 2: Gerard Dielemans, C.SS.R., to Nicholas Mauron, C.SS.R., Annapolis, August 15, 1863; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1111.

The available evidence indicates that the provincial, Father Ruland, found Seelos not quite strict enough with some men for his taste. He had said that in 1855.¹¹⁹ He hinted at it again in 1858, when he was making proposals for the new superiors for the coming triennium. He declared that, all things considered, he wished Seelos to be retained as superior of Cumberland and prefect of students, since he was the best at hand. He added, however, that, if he had another man stricter than Seelos to be superior of Cumberland, he would keep Seelos as prefect of students alone. But no such one was available and Seelos was the best choice for the position of both superior and prefect of students. For the latter post, the provincial declared, Seelos was particularly well-suited.¹²⁰

George Ruland, Van de Braak, and Dielemans were hardworking, methodical men who did much good for the province. In the matter of keeping the Rule they were men cast in a rigid mold. They failed to realize an all-important fact that the Redemptorist Fathers came to America with a Rule measured for conditions in Europe. The Redemptorist apostolate in America in the 1850s presented circumstances that were never envisioned in the Rule they brought with them from overseas. The establishment of large missionary parish centers; the outmission work by individuals in small outlying missions, where they established new parish centers; hiring teachers and buildings for schools; temporarily assisting at neighboring parishes and the like required an adjustment by local Redemptorist superiors which very often took the Redemptorist Fathers away from the community acts in their home base or had them entering into activities quite different from those in Europe.

Every such adjustment, an adjustment forced by the circumstances of the time and place, caused a twinge in the conscience of Seelos's critics, who very often looked on them as a derogation of the common life. A study of the statement of policy Ruland made in various houses bears this out; the provincial was irritatingly insistent on minute observances. So, too, when Seelos was absent, Van de Braak's cautious conduct in not sending young John Berger to the funeral of his uncle, Bishop Neumann, because the provincial did not tell him to do so, shows a lack of common sense. Van de Braak, as acting superior, had the authority to send the young man to the funeral. Similarly, the diatribe of Dielemans against the parishes, when he had no knowledge of their necessity, showed a narrow mind. Equally devoted to observing all the prescriptions of the Rule,

¹¹⁹ CURLEY, *Cheerful Ascetic*, pp. 103-105.

¹²⁰ AGHR, PAM, I: George Ruland, C.SS.R., to Nicholas Mauron, C.SS.R., Baltimore, September 28, 1858.

Francis Seelos had a wider outlook than these men. He made a distinction between what was desirable under ideal conditions and what was practical in the existing circumstances. It was a question of judgment, which, as Seelos's critics saw it, was a defect. At least Michael Mueller attributed this to the fact that Seelos had not been trained in a regularly constituted house of formation. Not all agreed with this criticism; some regarded it as pharisaical. Father Neithart summed up their opinions in two sentences: "Many have said that F[ather] Seelos was 'too good.' This cannot be denied; but then if that be a fault, we must also charge it upon Francis of Sales, Alphonsus, and our blessed Lord himself."¹²¹ Another Father who had Seelos for two years as local superior and who spent two more years with him on the missions took up this complaint against Seelos. He declared that, when viewed in the right light, Seelos's kindness was no fault because he knew exactly how far he could and should go. This Father said:

He well knew that people blamed him for this quality. Once he complained of this openly, saying he knew how to set up barriers where obligation and duty demanded them. If the sharpest critic were now asked what damage resulted from Francis Seelos's goodness of heart, he could not point out anything. On the contrary, it will be evident that it was this very quality that enabled this Father to effect so much immeasurable good.¹²²

26. His Patience under Opposition - He Held No Grudges Toward Those Who Were against Him

Any character portrayal of Francis Seelos would be incomplete without pointing out another special trait, his patience under opposition. He never allowed opposition to provoke him to aggressive hostility. Although he well knew that Michael Mueller and, later, Gerard Dielemans were opposed to his methods, as Father Schauer remarked, he never by word or action showed his displeasure.¹²³ Nor did he permit the memory of unjust accusations to harden his mind with bitterness. One hunts in vain for any display of resentment in anything he said or did.¹²⁴

¹²¹ RABP, Benedict Neithart, C.S.S.R., Short Account of the Death of Father Seelos, Written October 15, 1867; printed in *DocStud*, II/2: 1286.

¹²² ZIMMER, *Leben*, p. 280.

¹²³ *Summarium*, p. 126: testimony of Elias Schauer, C.S.S.R.

¹²⁴ *Summarium*, p. 143: testimony of Ferreol Girardey, C.S.S.R.; p. 96: testimony of Henry Meuer, C.S.S.R.; p. 102: testimony of Joseph Wuest, C.S.S.R.

APPRAISAL III

CARL HOEGERL, C.S.S.R.

INTRODUCTION

The third appraisal is by Father Carl Hoegerl, C.S.S.R., the external collaborator of the Cause for Canonization of Father Seelos. Having had a close relationship with the life and work of Father Seelos for a number of years in preparing the *Positio super Virtutibus Heroicis*, he brings a special competency in presenting a summary appraisal of his spirituality. At the same time, his contribution provides a certain complementarity to the previous two appraisals, those of Father Michael Curley and Father Peter Zimmer, by approaching the holiness of Father Seelos from angles that bring out various important aspects of it not encompassed in their appraisals

The first appraisal of the holiness of Father Seelos, that of Father Peter Zimmer, C.S.S.R., is cast, predominantly but not exclusively, in a mold based upon the schema of virtues hallowed by the usage of tradition for ascertaining the holiness of life of any individual. This methodology has the advantage of assuring that all the essential elements that go to make up Christian holiness are present in the person under consideration. This is important, for it would not be possible to say that an individual were truly holy, with a holiness that was considered heroic, if, for example, there were lacking a profound level of Christian hope; if the individual gave evidence of being quite doubtful of the constant assistance of God's grace and of his own salvation. Some quality, essential to a full and mature Christian life, would be lacking. And the same is to be said about all the other basic Christian virtues.

On the other hand, adhering strictly and exclusively to the schema of the virtues as traditionally presented runs the risk of missing some of those qualities that are most special in the spiritual physiognomy of the person under consideration. Every virtue is practiced in a very individual and concrete circumstance; it is not practiced in general and according to a set mold. Each person comes into the world with a unique temperament and personality, with unique natural gifts of body and mind. The development of this natural endowment is fostered or hindered in the ambient of a unique family constellation, and further development depends to a large extent upon childhood experience, early schooling, and opportuni-

ties for deeper intellectual growth in more advanced centers of learning. Moreover, the life of each holy individual is influenced by the state of the Church in general of that time, as well as by the condition of the Church in his particular part of the world. These are some of the more obvious variables in the life of any person that come into play in his practice of virtue.

A further consideration in appraising the life of any person is the conviction, based on faith, that each individual whose life is observed as being of exceptional holiness has been called by God to do some particular work, to bring to the fore some special quality, to be a reminder of and a model for certain ways of perusing the Christian life. The fulfilling of this calling entails the living out of qualities and modes of the virtues that are special to that individual.

Being aware of some of these considerations, Father Curley, in *Appraisal II*, included in his presentation elements that broaden the scope of information about Father Seelos. He described aspects of his human personality and character and touched upon elements of his natural endowment. In this way he produced a portrait of Seelos that comes closer to the living religious and priest as he was known, admired, and loved by those who were in contact with him and knew him personally. While Father Zimmer in *Appraisal I* gives us a rather synthetic presentation of the holiness of Seelos, Father Curley gives us a more existential experience of Father Seelos as a holy religious and priest.

This *Appraisal III* takes as its point of departure the theological truth that God endows the Church with gifts - charisms - which are given to foster the spiritual well-being and growth of the faithful. These gifts, while given to all, are more conspicuous in certain individuals who have a more prominent role to play in the household of God. They are those whose lives give indications that they practiced the Christian virtues in a degree that can be ascertained as exceptional and heroic.

With an awareness of gifts and charisms, let us state, more precisely the perspective from which we wish to view the spiritual life and work of Father Seelos. Simply stated, we can say that we want to see Father Seelos, and have others see him, as a presence in the Church that fulfills very real and pressing current needs. Coming to appraise his life from this perspective, we are induced to ask a number of questions: What does his holy life have to teach the Church today? Does his spirituality mean anything to the Church of today? Or to put it more theologically: What is the Holy Spirit trying to tell us through the life of this holy person?

This appraisal does not intend to minimize the value of the two previous ones or to supersede them. Its purpose is to complement them

by viewing much of their content from a different point of view and in a different context. The three appraisals fit together and are meant to be considered as a whole, each making its own special contribution to a more comprehensive portrait of the spirituality of Father Seelos.

It is important to keep in mind that in approaching the holiness of Father Seelos, we want to avoid the impression that his holiness was something that he himself fashioned through his own initiative and diligence. Partially, this is true of course, of him as it is of everyone who takes the spiritual life seriously: each one has to exert effort, and persevering effort, in order attain a heroic degree of holiness. However, subsumed in all this, even if not often mentioned explicitly, is the fact that holiness, after all, is really the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of that person. Without such action of the Spirit, we cannot have an individual whose life is based, not on merely natural virtue, but supernatural virtue.

And having said this, we are also saying, of course, that the action of the Holy Spirit is purposeful, giving his gifts not so much for the good of the individual as for the good of the faithful of the Church. The Holy Spirit is always building up the Church through its members, especially those whom he gifts with special graces and charisma.

Let us come then to some practical considerations and give some answers to the question: What are some of the special gifts that the Spirit gave to Father Seelos that enriched the Church in his own lifetime and enriches it today?

TEXT

PART I THE CHARISM OF HIS PERSONALITY

Father Seelos as a Very Happy Holy Man

The first gift of the Holy Spirit to Father Seelos that we want to single out as remarkable has to do with an impression about holiness that is quite common among ordinary people: holiness and happiness do not go together. Many of the faithful see the holy person as not a happy person. Hagiographical libraries are full of biographies of saints and other holy people who do not seem to be particularly happy. In fact, they give the impression that they are quite unhappy. They are often very solemn, very serious, very burdened with the effort of always being holy and pleasing to God. They have little use for this world and things of this world; they shun the common pleasures of life in which ordinary people find their happiness, because they seem to be considered evil or, at least, to be highly suspect.

Such a perception of the holy person, harmful in itself, has the further effect of producing a negative perception of God. He does not seem to be a kindly father, but rather a hard and severe taskmaster. He is always making demands, is always finding fault, and is never satisfied. Reading the biographies of many holy individuals, one comes away with the conclusion that one cannot be very holy and at the same time be very happy. The effort to please a very demanding God takes all the joy and pleasure out of life.

And this in spite of the fact that being with God, being close to God, serving him totally, putting aside all waywardness and walking on the path of the Lord ought to make one ecstatically happy. The Scriptures, notably the psalms, are filled with expressions of the happiness that should attend anyone who is close to the Lord and does his will in everything. And yet, happy people do not seem to be in the majority in the calendar of the saints. On the contrary, sad saints seem to have taken the field. In their inner lives, of course, there was great joy, who can doubt it, but for some reason it did not seem to be proper to let this joy come forth to the exterior in ordinary contact with other people. Somberness was the order of the day for them, and this is what we usually read about in the majority of biographies. There are exceptions, of course, but we do not think to be far off the mark when we say that such exceptions constitute very much a minority in the roster of those who are conspicuous in the Church for holiness of life.

It is here that Father Seelos has a special charisms from the Holy Spirit for the Church of today, as it was a special gift to the Church of his time. His happiness was universally acclaimed. His joyfulness was remarked by everyone who came in contact with him. His cheerfulness was the object of comment by everyone. His life gives the lie to the assertion, or the perception, that the holy life is the sad life; that to take God seriously means that all the joy of life has to be abandoned; that serving God means resigning oneself to a very unhappy and dismal life. Joyfulness was evident in him even as a child, for his sister testified about him: "In his childhood he was greatly given to prayer and piety, and mother often proposed him to us as an example. But at the same time, he was always of a most joyful and happy disposition."¹²⁵

To this happy disposition, Father Seelos joined the happiness that comes from being close to God. His joyfulness was the outward expression of the inward experience that God was with him and he was with God. He was aware that what he wanted most in life was to love God with all his heart and mind and soul, and to serve him as best he could. This awareness was the source of his joy. He wanted nothing more than to bring others closer to the God to whom he himself was close. This desire of his and his efforts to make it a reality filled him with that happiness that can come only to someone who has set his own life in order and has directed it toward the well-being of others. Human experience tells us that only the selfless can be truly happy and content with themselves. A witness of the Baltimore investigation, Mr. Joseph Herzog, made this observation:

He was, however, more affable and amiable than all the priests I have ever known. He was always happy. The Spirit of Christ seemed to rule and govern his life. As far as I know all were attracted to him. He was a priest whom it was not difficult to love and to think highly of.¹²⁶

Father Seelos was joyful and cheerful in situations that by their difficult nature, would normally elicit unhappiness, sorrow, brooding, resentment, and complaining. This demonstrates that his joy was not merely the expression of his natural temperament, being a happy person by nature, or that he was not intelligent enough to realize that not everything naturally is something to laugh over, Father Zimmer in *Appraisal I* above, describing the signs of the presence of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the spirituality of Father Seelos, says under the gift of spiritual joy: "But still more wonderful was his joy in being humbled and despised, which

¹²⁵ *Summarium*, p. 36: testimony of Sister Romualda Seelos.

¹²⁶ *Summarium*, p. 115.

made him like the apostles who were joyful to suffer disdain for the name of Jesus." And, in his official testimony, Father Zimmer says:

He seemed to feel his removal from office or from place to place, but he fulfilled the orders of his superiors with a happy disposition and without difficulty or delay.

Further on in his deposition, he notes:

He was removed from the office of prefect of students because of accusations that commonly were believed to be groundless. The accusation was that he treated the students with too much kindness and affability. He accepted his dismissal with joy and after that was not disturbed about it at all.¹²⁷

Thus his reaction in adversity was not the normal one, the natural one, the expected one, but one that was totally different because its roots were sunk deep in the action of the Holy Spirit in his soul. His manner of being happy even in times of hardship was noticed by the laity as we know from the testimony of Mr. Valentine Winheim: "He was never despondent, and beset with adversities he was always happy and cheered up others."¹²⁸

With very great reason did Father Michael Curley, who was very conversant with Father Seelos in his writings and those about him, entitle his biography "Cheerful Ascetic." Father Seelos found nothing incompatible between being severe with himself and being happy. The whole purpose of his asceticism and self-discipline was to put under control those elements of his personality, character, disposition, and temperament that hindered him from being his true self, the one God intended him to be, the one that was part of the image God had of him when he gave him existence. To attain such self-mastery, or to be on the way to it, was a source of joy, because it was, in fact, experiencing the action of Jesus upon him and in his life. Every conquest was extending the realm of Jesus over him; he was becoming more and more the Kingdom of God. This was a cause of great joy for him.

We dwell on this point because Seelos, in this matter, is a wonderful example of one for whom the Good News of Jesus was really good news and a source of joy and happiness. If the Good New is really wonderful news, as it truly is, then one of the effects must be to produce happiness in those who hear the Good News and live it. No better apologetic for Jesus and his message to the world can be had than an individual

¹²⁷ *Summarium*, pp. 50, 51-52.

¹²⁸ *Summarium*, p. 134.

who radiates the joyfulness that is the very essence of being loved and redeemed and made holy by the Spirit of Jesus. In this regard, Father Joseph Firle, in his deposition, observed:

He treated those who were under his direction with the greatest affability. He made the practice of virtue easy by the joyfulness of his way of acting.¹²⁹

We are firmly convinced that one of the lasting gifts Father Seelos has to offer the world is the joy his life expresses in his striving to love God with all his heart and his neighbor as oneself. A sometimes very sad world needs joyful people; the Church, which in so many places, has lost its influence and is considered outdated needs happy, cheerful, joyful holy people like Father Seelos. Serious-minded people need to see for themselves that being close to God and trying with all their heart to serve him need not be a repulsive business, need not be oppressive, but can be filled with that joy and that happiness and that contentment which everyone is seeking. People need to be told that being holy is not a sad business, not a somber business; but the very fountainhead of exhilaration. Such holiness has the power of attraction, as Father Joseph Firle noted in his testimony:

He attracted all who were with him by his joyfulness and his happy disposition. He manifested a certain heavenly sweetness which inspired in everyone great reverence and esteem.¹³⁰

And he retained his gift of holy hilarity even on his deathbed as a number of eyewitnesses have testified.¹³¹

Lest one think that his joyfulness was merely interior, something that, in a certain sense, was itself other-worldly, although in essence based on truths other-worldly, we must make it clear that his happiness manifested itself in all the ways that people manifest their human joy. He laughed often and easily, he was fond of telling jokes and listening to them. Father Neithart testified:

Although he was of a happy disposition and therefore loved jokes, he never used an indelicate word or those with double meaning.¹³²

He was, moreover, adept at seeing the humorous side of unusual individuals and situations. It was easy for him to have an eye for the

¹²⁹ *Summarium*, p. 62.

¹³⁰ *Summarium*, p. 62.

¹³¹ *DocStud*, II/2: 1243-1305, where the edifying death of Father Seelos is described.

¹³² *Summarium*, p. 109.

incongruous in human situations. This ability, as is well known, is the basis of humor. A delightful instance of this is found in the humorous poem he sent to Father Joseph Wissel, his good friend, about his sickness in February 1867.¹³³

In a word, he had a fine sense of humor. It was not difficult for him to find something to laugh about, and it was not difficult for others to say something or do something that elicited laughter from him.

His Holiness Was Not an Enemy of His Humanness

Further, Father Seelos is a notable example of the assertion that holiness does not destroy one's humanity. Those who come in contact with many of the saints through reading about them often are given the impression that to be a saint requires an almost total suppression of one's natural humanity. Holiness is for those who can live with a great part of their human endowment suspended and left unused, if not totally destroyed. Again, this might be due to those who have handed down to us the lives of so many saints and others reputed to have lived outstandingly holy lives. But the fact that biographers felt compelled to write this way about holy people only reinforces the idea that an understanding of holiness did require the neglect of basic human traits, temperament, and personality.

Not to have done this would have indicated to the times in which the biographies were written that the holy person was, after all, not really that holy, because so much of his innate and native selfhood had not yet been destroyed but was still functioning quite well; in other words, the holy person was not other-worldly enough to be really holy. Somewhere hidden in such perceptions was the latent assumption, hardly ever actually expressed, that somehow the world and things of the world and values of the world, were all, to a greater or lesser degree, evil. There were realities that were of God and there were those that were of this world; and those of this world were not part of those that were of God. The basic goodness of God's creation was, if not explicitly denied, at least, somewhat suspect.

In Father Seelos we see an individual who did not consider hating everything in the world and its values as necessary to loving God; provided, of course, that all things were loved and treasured in relation to God. Once God had been placed as the center of one's existence then all things could be valued at their true worth and could be used as God

¹³³ *DocStud*, II/2: 1262-1267: Seelos to Joseph Wissel, C.SS.R., Natchez, Mississippi, February 25, 1867.

intended them to be used. In his retreat notes of 1848, Father Seelos does, indeed, speak of "hatred and not love," but there he is speaking of a holy hatred against "softness and love of the flesh," those realities that he perceived in himself that prevented him from giving himself totally to the service of God. This hatred had nothing to do with other values, as he clearly indicated in another passage from the same retreat: "[...] all created things *erant bona* because continually according to the determination, plan, and glory of God [...]"¹³⁴.

From his letters, many citations of which are found in the *Positio*, it is amply clear how much worth he placed on the fundamental human value of love and attachment to his family members. In order to be holy he did not consider it necessary to break asunder any bonds of affection he had for each one of them; he did not think that his love for them impeded his love and service of God. He shows, very naturally, his special attachment to his sister Antonia, who was next in age to him, the one whom from earliest years he had known the most intimately. In 1872, she wrote to Father Beck about the special relationship that existed between them.

I am only a year younger than Xavier, and so from childhood on, we were the closest to each other. Though he loved all his brothers and sisters very much, still, even as a student, he wrote to no one but me, and I entrusted to him all my secrets and matters that were close to my heart.¹³⁵

And he makes no apology for this love for her or feels any need to find some theological justification for it. It was natural and good; it was from God. He saw, however, that his letters were a means of spiritual help to those he left behind at home. In one letter, after telling them that he was thinking that he should give up writing letters to them and that "we should just pray a lot for each other," he writes:

But then right away, I think that a letter from me is for all of you an encouragement in your daily cross, and that you then carry it with renewed courage, to the honor of our divine Redeemer, and that it quickens our desire to find each other again in the next world.¹³⁶

One need not cast about far and wide to be assured of how important this family attachment is today and of what great value it is. The Church, particularly through the writings and preaching of Pope John

¹³⁴ *DocStud*, II/1: 488, 492; Retreat Notes, 1848.

¹³⁵ *DocStud*, II/1: 195; Antonia Seelos to Bernard Beck, C. SS. R, Füssen, Germany, June 6, 1872.

¹³⁶ RABP, Seelos Letters, 1859: Seelos to his mother and family, January 7-24, 1859.

Paul II, has stressed without ceasing the importance of family values, among which the most basic is the love and affection that exists among the members.

The affection that Father Seelos had for his family was not a kind of constrained and dutiful love, but one that sprang from the depths of his joyful and affectionate heart. He delights in telling them about himself and what he is doing; about his successes and failures; about many little things of no consequence to others, but things he knew would interest and delight his family at home. He was not above telling them about details that today seem insignificant to us, but which he was certain would delight those whom he knew loved him and were deeply concerned about him. He reveled, we might say, in the thought that he was loved by all the members of his family. This too is a value of human nature the enjoyment of which he did not think had to be suppressed because he was seeking to love God with all his heart. To love his family was not in competition with his love of God, but was rather a delicate and beautiful manifestation of it.

Much akin to his love of family was his love of friends. He had many friends whom he loved deeply and to whom he showed his love in word and deed. In fact, he seemed to have a special aptitude for making friends and keeping them. Friendship is, of course, a great if not the greatest human value. His friendship was marked by thoughtfulness and concern, as is evidenced by the letters he wrote to his friends and which have been preserved for us, some of which are cited in the *Positio*. Again here, Father Seelos did not consider it a sign of a divided heart to love his friends. Sharing his heart and thoughts with others whom he loved did not mean to him that he had taken back the decision to give all his love to God and to our Blessed Lord. Neither did having friends and loving them mean that he had less room to love God. Rather, he saw his love of friends, whose roots, of course, are quite natural, as a gift that God had implanted in his heart and that God wanted him to nurture. One of the finest ways of showing his love for God was precisely in loving his friends. He was also well aware that one of the ways that God showed his special love for him was through the love his friends had for him. From Baltimore, where he was then stationed, he wrote to someone close to him in Pittsburgh:

How gladly would I like, now and again, spending an hour or so in my second home, among those who are so close to me, to refresh myself in spirit and to be cheered up by God and those things that alone should occupy the human heart.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ *DocStud*, II/1: 711: Seelos to Mr. Waellisch, Baltimore, August 17, 1856.

Within the circle of his friends were a number of women. Here again, Father Seelos did not consider his close relationship with women as in some way incompatible with his love of God or with his state as a priest and a vowed religious. And in this area, we can see from his letters that his friendship with women was not superficial nor distant. As his whole personality and temperament were marked by singular warmth and respectful graciousness, so here too in his relationship with women the same warmth and graciousness is discernible. This is evident from an excerpt of one such letter.

O dear lady, how could I become indifferent to you, since on your account I have already carried about deep within me many an anxiety for some time now, and I can truly say that I am never free from worry on your account. Could I today offer up my life for you, I would do it with the greatest joy.

Further on in the letter, he writes:

O how deep is the wish of my heart, to find you again on the other side. It is a pleading prayer, constant and lifelong. The deep sighing of the heart prays and sweet hope rests in my interior depths that this wish, this living prayer, will find a responsive ear at the throne of God.¹³⁸

However, we must add quickly that his correspondence with these women shows clearly that his affection, respect, and concern for them was within the framework of his love for God and was a manifestation of his ever-present desire to lead them to the practice of a deeper inner life and a more fervent love of God. These letters are letters of spiritual direction, but are also more than that, they are letters that have all the characteristics of a deep spiritual friendship, or as is commonly said, a friendship in the Lord.

It is not difficult for us to see here that Father Seelos took it for granted that the need for friends in his life was part of being a human being and as such, was something that was good to foster. He was aware also that there was a place, if not a need, for the feminine in his life and that was also good; part of being a male human being and from God. These were human values that enhanced the quality of his life, but also played an important part in his spiritual growth and development. He was more a genuine spiritual person to the degree that he made room for these human values. From this we come to the observation that Father Seelos was not a stereotypical holy man. He was not turned out on some

¹³⁸ *DocStud*, II/2: 1147: Seelos to Mrs. Augusta Wagner, New York, April 11, 1864.

pre-formed assembly line, so that what might well be said of others could also be said of him without much change and adjustment. He was very much himself, very much his real self, quite unique, quite different. In fact, because he was this kind of spiritual person, because he let God work in him through his own disposition, his temperament, his personality, he was not infrequently misunderstood by those whose lives were more rigid and less aware of the need for human values and their place in producing an authentic spiritual personality.

Father Seelos Exemplifies the Theological Dictum: Grace Builds on Nature

To sum up what we have presented up to this point, we may say without fear of contradiction or misreading the facts that Father Seelos exemplifies to an impressive degree the dictum of the theologians: grace builds on nature. It is part of God's plan that the natural endowment of an individual is intended to be the basis upon which a supernatural structure is to be developed. God is the author of nature; God is the author of grace. God intends, moreover, both to be in harmony in every individual, even if this is not evidenced in many people; and often, not even in individuals who are seriously pursuing the inner life. With some holy people, one has the impression that there is a basic conflict within them, between the endowment of nature and that of grace. In them, inner conflict seems to be the usual climate of their spirit. Nature and grace seem to be at odds in them.

With Father Seelos matters are otherwise. He let grace increase, expand, and develop the natural endowment given to him by God. Through grace his natural joyfulness of heart developed into an almost ever-present joy of spirit so that events and situations which of their nature were prone to disturb one's peace of heart and mind left him unruffled. His natural gift for friendship developed into friendships whose deep concern was the imparting and sharing of evangelical values and truths.

In this brief and summary appraisal, we cannot dwell upon every aspect of the natural endowment upon which he allowed grace to grow. We want merely to indicate some aspects of his spirituality that are particular to him and bring out the uniqueness of his inner life. As these personal qualities were able to effect much good in his lifetime so they are still a source of enrichment for the Church today.

These particular qualities are, we believe, part of his charism as a holy person in society and in the Church. They are part of what the Spirit of God wanted to say to those who came in contact with him then and want to say to the Church today. God speaks to us through his saints and

his holy men and women. Through them he has something important and necessary to say. We believe that what we indicated above about his joyfulness, his use of his natural endowment and his letting grace build upon it, are a message of significant importance to the contemporary world in which we are asked to put into practice the truths that our Blessed Lord came into the world to teach us.

Father Seelos Had Two Extraordinary Awarenesses

For the completeness of this first part of the appraisal, there remains the pleasant obligation to mention two elements of the spiritual endowment of Father Seelos that stand out in bold relief. The first is his appreciation for the virtue of chastity and the glory of the virginal life. Father Zimmer in his testimony says this:

As far as preserving purity is concerned he was enthusiastic. His whole external way of acting was an expression of his purity. As far as I know, persons who were very severely tempted against chastity experienced great relief in his presence. Some instances of this are known to me.¹³⁹

This following citation from one of his letters to a layman gives evidence that in directing others to holiness of life he often writes of the value of chastity.

Similarly, your attitude makes me happy, that you yourself would like to leave the world and serve God in solitude. O such an attitude is like a beautiful blossom which, even if it never ripens, pleases God and heaven by its beauty and fragrance. Jesus gives this attitude in the reception of the sacraments, where he gives the basis for that life where one is not given in marriage, nor enters it, but where all will be like the angels of God in heaven. If, therefore, you cannot see at all how you can carry out higher desires and wishes like these, cultivate them nevertheless, for they enable the heart and soul to make you, even in the married state, more chaste and more virtuous, which is of great profit and brings a blessing upon the whole family.¹⁴⁰

In a letter of spiritual direction, he has these frank and beautiful words to say that bring out most emphatically his special appreciation of the virtue of chastity and the trials necessary to preserve it.

Ah my Dear and Respected Lady, is it not with You a particular favor from Heaven, even in the world to life [sic] an angelical life? Is purity not Your delight? Is innocence from childhood not Your greatest treasure? Are you not like a lily among thorns? But just these thorns will preserve the in-

¹³⁹ *Summarium*, p. 51.

¹⁴⁰ *DocStud*, II/2: 1270: Seelos to Mr. [Ambos], New Orleans, July 1, 1867.

tegrity of that delicate virtue. Yes, we must be as the gold in the furnace and get out of it with greater purity, integrity and brightness.¹⁴¹

In his conferences to the students, he spoke often of the special beauty of the chaste life, of its special power to beautify the soul, of its particular way of imitation of Jesus, and the special love that Mary has for the chaste heart and mind. In Appraisal I we have seen a poem that reveals his fervent appreciation of the beauty of innocence of life.¹⁴²

In this, he stands in sharp contrast to the contemporary world, which has gone quite insane with its preoccupation with sexuality and its wild search for new and ever more exciting experiments in this field. Father Seelos, therefore, in this aspect, becomes for those of our times who still heed the Catholic message about sexuality and its proper uses a model to imitate and an exemplar to emulate.

Secondly, Father Seelos had a keen sense of the eternal. In almost everyone of his letters, he mentions something about heaven and the eternal life that awaits us all. He speaks with joy to his family about the time when they will all be reunited in heaven. We notice this theme in the first extant letter that he wrote from the United States:

And so, when I think of home, my ever-remembered parents and brothers and sisters, and other people who are dear to me, I offer them all up to God and recommend them to his love, and desire only that all of us will meet again in heaven.¹⁴³

This tells us both the deep suffering he endured in being separated from them but also of the joy that he believed would be theirs when they met again in eternity.

A year before his death, in writing to a nun, he admonishes her to "be a very good child who thinks only of her sanctification, so that we may meet each other again in eternal life and can then be happy together throughout a whole eternity."¹⁴⁴ These two examples are typical of his correspondence in general. In her deposition in New Orleans, Mrs. Elizabeth Arlinghaus recalled this about Father Seelos: "Toward the end of his

¹⁴¹ *DocStud*, II/1: 620: Seelos to Miss Mary, Baltimore, June 11, 1855, where the peculiarities of the original English have been retained.

¹⁴² A second poem of similar theme may be found in: *DocStud*, II/2: 808-809: Seelos to Sister Damiana and Sister Romualda, Cumberland, August 10, 1858.

¹⁴³ *DocStud*, II/1: 415: Seelos to His Family, Baltimore, August, 1845.

¹⁴⁴ *DocStud*, II/2: 1170: Seelos to Sister Mary Magdalen, Detroit, Michigan, February 20, 1866.

life, he gave the women many conferences on heaven. He spoke about heaven as if he were himself in heaven."¹⁴⁵

Moreover, he had, in this context, a keen expectation of the resurrection of the body. One of the incentives for virtuous living was that his body would one day share in the glory that would be his. Among the notes he made during his retreat in 1848, he wrote this:

A basic idea must now go through all my meditations, prayers, and thoughts; that is, through a holy discipline to make this body very beautiful for the day of resurrection. [...] This body is to be beautiful and proper on my deathbed, beautiful upon its bier. [...] I want to make use of everything for this. It is to be a lust of the spirit; a holy lust for the eternal and the true. Only one life is for me the true one: the life on the day of resurrection! Toward that will I aim; toward that will I strive, toward that will I lust with body and soul.¹⁴⁶

The pascal mystery in its fullness and completeness was part of his outlook on life and the spiritual life in particular. There was a destiny for him in his complete reality, not merely in his soul, his spiritual reality, but in himself as soul and body. Eternity was very real to him; the future life was as certain to him as anything that he could see and touch. That his body would one day share in all the glory that is the fruit of the redemption that Jesus won for all was also as certain as anything else in his life. One of the motivations of his constant striving for holiness was that he must make himself worthy of that great reward. The eternal was contained in the temporal for him; that which was to be in the future abided with him and was part of him then and there. The transcendent dimension of human existence was something that was the foundation of all he did, desired, or thought.

The modern world has, to a large extent, lost its sense of eternity and of the immortal life to which every human being is destined. Even more remote from modern thought is the resurrection of the body and its future entrance into the full glory of the Lord. Father Seelos stands as an example of how an awareness of this reality can permeate a life and mold it toward virtue. His example shows how the conviction of reunion with separated loved ones can be a solace for lonely hearts and can serve as a motivation for a deep hope in the promises of the Lord.

¹⁴⁵ *Summarium*, p. 187.

¹⁴⁶ *DocStud*, II/1: 488: Retreat Notes, 1848.

PART II THE CHARISM OF HIS APOSTOLIC WORK

Father Seelos Spent Most of His Priestly Years in Serving the Faithful in Ordinary Parochial Ministry

For all of his priestly life, Father Seelos was engaged in some direct apostolic ministry of the Church. Of his almost twenty-three years as a priest, he spent the greater part of these, fifteen years, in parish ministry. He was, therefore engaged predominantly in that work which can be called the grassroots action of the Church, ministering to the ordinary, everyday members of the faithful. Although nominated by Bishop O'Connor for the episcopal see of Pittsburgh, he was not chosen for this position, and so, he spent his entire ministry, as a simple priest, among the people of God. The *Documented Study* has examined his active years almost one by one: his nine years as a parish priest in Pittsburgh; his three years as a parish priest in Baltimore; his five years with Redemptorist students at Cumberland and Annapolis, where, in addition to his work with the students, he also was involved in the parishes attached to these two Redemptorist foundations; his three years as superior of the Redemptorist parish mission band, and his two final years in the parish ministry, one year in Detroit, and his final one in New Orleans.

We, therefore, again ask ourselves some questions: Was there anything special that he brought to his ministry? Did he have some special charism that makes his work with the people memorable and informative for today's faithful, as well as for priests who are engaged in the same work? What was the Holy Spirit intending to say through him for those times, and then for ours today? What was the message that the Spirit gave through him in his apostolic ministry and gives us today? We believe an answer can be found in three areas: Father Seelos as confessor and spiritual direction; Father Seelos as catechist of the young; and Father Seelos and his love and concern for the poor and disadvantaged.

Father Seelos as a Gifted Confessor

One of the special characteristics of the pastoral ministry of Father Seelos was his gift in administering the sacrament of reconciliation, his success in hearing confessions. Almost everyone who came in contact with him in every place that he was stationed, as well as those who attended one of his preached missions, is unanimous in stating that he was a most exceptional confessor. Remarks such as these were common: anyone who went to confession to him once always returned; he could read your heart; he knew what you were going to say before you had a chance to say it; his confessional was always the one besieged by penitents; he was always the

last to leave his confessional - to mention but a few of the observations that were made about his work as a confessor.

Of course, we cannot go into much detail about this, because the remarks of the penitents were made in general terms and not in detail, as one would expect from people talking about their own confessions. But the feeling was universal that Father Seelos was the one to go to confession to in a parish and on the missions. He was the one who understood the sinner best and the one who could give the most consoling satisfaction. Mrs. Regina Hierholzer, in her deposition about his early ministry in Pittsburgh, recalls this: "He had the greatest number of penitents; he had such zeal in hearing confessions that crowds came to his confessional."¹⁴⁷

And Father Neihart, who had been on the missions with Father Seelos, notes in his deposition:

On a mission his confessional was usually surrounded by a crowd, while his companions had only those who could not get to Father Seelos. He wanted to be a confessor who was severe with himself but mild with his penitents. He had great compassion toward penitent sinners; in the confessional he was never impatient.

Father Neihart then goes on to relate how during a mission excommunicated Fenians, those who had joined a forbidden Irish society, went to Father Seelos to be absolved rather than to Father Bradley a fellow Irishman.¹⁴⁸

This gift, for such it was - a gift of the Holy Spirit - made going to confession, not something to be feared, but almost a pleasure, something to which one could look forward. Mr. Robert Blakewell, an attorney in St. Louis, Missouri, hinted at something like this when he testified about Father Seelos during his Pittsburgh ministry:

I hardly had any conversation with the Servant of God except in the confessional; perhaps once or twice in the rectory. But in the confessional he made a certain extraordinary impression upon me. When I knelt in the confessional I was pervaded by a singular force, which I cannot explain. He told me about some things in the interior life that I have never heard from any other priest. He explained the connection between one sin and the other.¹⁴⁹

In confessing to Father Seelos, one felt that one was confessing to the gentle Savior himself, that one was treated there by Father Seelos as one could imagine oneself being treated by Jesus. Father Seelos was able,

¹⁴⁷ *Summarium*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁸ *Summarium*, p. 106.

¹⁴⁹ *Summarium*, p. 153.

through his gentle personality and manner in hearing confessions, to make the penitent almost palpably aware of the mercy of God. The sacrament of penance was for the sinner through his special ministry where the loving-kindness of the Father was to be obtained and even emotionally felt. The image that Father Seelos conjured up in the minds of the people was not that of an angry and vengeful God, but one of love, of mercy, one who was really and truly their Father in heaven. Father Joseph Firlé in his deposition says: "He had the ability to inspire in all the greatest confidence in God, especially in the confessional."¹⁵⁰

The confessional was for the sinner the place where he could partake of the Good News that our Lord came to bring to all, but more especially to those who were most in need of it, to those from whose life God had been expelled by sin. Father Seelos, so to speak, was the Good News come in person to the sinner in the confessional in much the same way that Jesus himself was and is the Good News for saint and sinner alike, but more especially for the sinner. In his deposition about his ministry in Baltimore, Mr. Joseph Herzog, said:

I found Father Seelos to be a patient, affable, and charity-filled confessor. I never left the confessional without being consoled. I wanted to go to confession to him rather than to anyone else. Sometimes he scolded me, but his scolding never depressed me but rather fortified and consoled me.¹⁵¹

This gift made the practice of the Catholic faith for so many not a tremendous burden but a source of joy and happiness. This was no small gift when one considers that Redemptorists at that time were not especially known for their gentleness and suavity, but rather, for their 'fire and brimstone' preaching. This, no doubt, repelled many from the confessional. It was said that any mission that Father Seelos was on was a success, and one has to remember that the success of a mission was measured by the number of those who went to confession, not those who attended the mission. It was in the confessional that the sinner was reconciled to God; the purpose of the mission was to bring the wayward back into the fold of the Lord. Father Neithart, a companion on many missions with Father Seelos, remembers this:

Yet, though he preached but seldom, everybody flocked to him for confession, instruction, and consolation. He usually occupied the last and hardest confessional in the church, and God alone knows how much he suffered, and how many stray sheep he brought back to the Divine Shepherd.

¹⁵⁰ *Summarium*, p. 62.

¹⁵¹ *Summarium*, p. 114.

He was always the first to enter and the last to leave the tribunal of penance, and when others were backward in this holy work he would scold them well. Everywhere he was revered by priest and people as the Saint of the band. His usual name was: "The saintly looking father."¹⁵²

And there is no evidence to suggest that Father Seelos was what has come to be called in ecclesiastical circles a "*refugium peccatorum*," that is a confessor who asks no questions, does nothing to ascertain the true nature of the sin and its attendant circumstance in those cases where such information is necessary for a confessor in order to help the penitent undertake a true change of heart and life. Evidence rather indicates that Father Seelos took his threefold role as a confessor seriously: judge, teacher, and physician. These offices entailed much more than merely being there and hearing what was said without any dialogue with the person who had fallen into some sinful way of life. Mr. John Letzkus in his testimony points this out:

In the confessional he was exact, but gentle. And whoever was sent away by him without absolution willingly returned to him at the stipulated time because of his gentleness.¹⁵³

The manner in which Father Seelos exercised his threefold role is noteworthy and special. There was a gentleness in understanding the embarrassment of the penitent, a way of showing his deep and personal concern for the state of the individual's soul, and the kindly advice toward a change of life for the future. Father Dusold as a young man heard Father Seelos in a sermon on confession encourage sinners to come to confession in a rather unusual way.

Now it was in one of these sermons that he addressed himself especially to those who, either out of fear or shame, did not want to go to confession. He made an eloquent effort to give them courage. Then, all of a sudden, filled with burning love, he stretches his arms out wide and says in a loud voice. "O sinners, if you don't have the courage to confess your sins, because they are too many, or too great, or too shameful - then, please, come to me. I promise you that I am ready to treat you with the greatest kindness. And if I don't keep my promise I publicly give you permission to accuse me of it in the confessional and point out to me my lie."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² *DocStud*, II/2: 1211: Reminiscences of Benedict Neithart, C.SS.R., November 9, 1876.

¹⁵³ *Summarium*, p. 90.

¹⁵⁴ *DocStud*, II/2: 1215: George Dusold, C.SS.R., to John Berger, C.SS.R., Ilchester, Maryland, May 20, 1883.

It is not difficult to see how important the figure of a kindly and understanding confessor was then and is especially today. There is no secret about the fact that in many parts of the Church, the practice of receiving the sacrament of reconciliation has declined noticeably in recent years. What the causes of this are is not germane to this appraisal; however, one can say, with some assurance of correctness, that part of the decline might be due to the qualification or lack of it among priests as confessors. There is no indication that the members of the Church are less sinful than at any other period in the history of the Church; that sinners are less in need of reconciliation than at other times; that individuals who have fallen into grave sin are not looking for some kindly and understanding priest to help them find a way out of the torments of their conscience.

At such a juncture in the life of the Church, it is important that the charism proper to the confessor receive more than usual attention and highlighting. It is important that priests in general realize, as once they did in the past, the supreme importance of the sacrament of reconciliation in the life of the Church. One of the places where the Good News is not only talked about but felt is the confessional. Father Seelos, as a simple parish priest, involved in all the activities that make up the life of a parish priest, made special place in his life for hearing confession. He is a model for every parish priest who takes his calling seriously according to the mind of the Church today. He is an exemplar of all those ministers of the sacrament of reconciliation who realize the importance, the value, and the need for the expert and kindly dispensation of this sacrament.

Father Seelos as Spiritual Director

Closely connected with his gift of being a good confessor was his gift of spiritual direction. Father Timothy Enright, who knew him well, said that many agreed with him that Father Seelos was a spiritual director without parallel: "In spiritual direction I have never found anyone like him; and others say the same thing about him [...]."¹⁵⁵

He exercised this ministry among the students while he was their prefect and did so admirably in their estimation. A former student, Joseph Firlé, enunciates a basic principle of Father Seelos in his spiritual guidance: "In directing souls he directed each one according to his character and disposition."¹⁵⁶ He did not, therefore, force anything on the one he was directing but followed the bent of nature in that individual. All

¹⁵⁵ *Summarium*, p. 144.

¹⁵⁶ *Summarium*, p. 63.

through his life, in whatever ministry to which obedience assigned him, he exercised the ministry of spiritual direction, either in connection with the confessional, as has been traditional in the Church, or through written correspondence. Fortunately, some of his letters have come down to us and many of these letters are letters of spiritual direction.

We cannot pursue every facet of his method of directing individuals, men and women, who were seeking a closer union with God, but we will give several of the salient elements of his method of guiding penitents in the ways of the spiritual life. We have selected three themes that recur often in his letters of interior guidance; and then we will add some general observations about Father Seelos as a spiritual director.

First, he saw his role not so much as directing as following; that is, following the lead of the Holy Spirit. For him, God himself was the best and wisest spiritual director. He saw his work merely as discerning where God was leading the individual who was seeking his advice. Father Enright in his deposition has this to say in this regard:

As far as prudence is concerned, and especially prudence in directing souls, he gave me this advice as his guiding principle: "I let the Holy Spirit guide. I simply follow and try to preserve the soul from inclining either to the right or to the left."¹⁵⁷

He was, therefore, not an aggressive spiritual director, but one who quietly looked for indications of the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of his penitent and then encouraged faithfulness to where the Spirit seemed to be leading him or her.

Secondly, he stressed the maturing value of suffering in the spiritual life. He was convinced that without suffering it was not possible to grow in holiness because without suffering there was no likeness to the suffering Savior. His work was to convince his penitents not to resist suffering, not to fight and complain about it, but to accept it as coming from God who sent it for the purpose of helping them grow in that holiness which made them more like Jesus. Typical is this section of his letter to a layman, February 7, 1867:

My dear and good countryman, our loving God is giving you trials, and I only hope that you are making very good use of this visitation. It does really hurt when the hour of suffering breaks dismally over a whole family, but the consequences are extremely blessed, for you personally and for the children who only in this way can obtain a proper understanding of this vale of tears. Just keep on showing the children, by word and deed, how

¹⁵⁷ *Summarium*, p. 146.

they can become blessed in time and eternity.¹⁵⁸

Thirdly, he tried to have his penitents see that everything that happened to them in life was under the special Providence of God. Father Wuest in his deposition notes this. "From my own experience I know of his great confidence in Providence. I know this especially from his advice given me while exercising the office of director."¹⁵⁹

There was nothing that happened to his penitents that was outside the care and love of God. In today's language we would say that Father Seelos wanted to help them "read the signs of the times." He wanted them to be attentive to see where God was leading them. He saw his function as helping his penitents discern to what aspect of holiness God was inviting them through the events of their lives, through what was taking place, either in outward circumstances or in their inner dispositions and sentiments. As was mentioned above, quoting Father Firle, he did not, therefore, try to mold everyone into his own pattern, but directed each one very personally "according to his own character and disposition."¹⁶⁰

When reviewing his correspondence that is devoted to spiritual direction, one is struck by the fact that most of it is with members of the laity. Some, of course, is with religious women, but the greater part is with individuals in secular walks in life. The greater part of this correspondence of spiritual direction is with women, married and single.

This tells us much about him. First that he was convinced that everyone is called to holiness. Father Seelos was not one of those who thought that holiness was the special province of clergy and religious, a notion that during certain eras of the Church seemed to prevail. In this, he was following closely the example of Saint Alphonsus, his spiritual Father, who wrote many of his books for the spiritual nourishment of the laity. Father Seelos knew that holiness was not a closed garden for anyone. Everyone gifted with God's grace was called to holiness of life and to a deeper relationship of love with him. The content of his letters of spiritual direction are a clear indication that he was aware that his correspondents were being called by God to a deeper intimacy with him and that it was his office to help them attain that deeper intimacy.

In the wake of the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, in particular chapter 5, "The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness" (nos. 39-42), a healthy renewal of spiritual direction is discernible among clergy and laity. Much is being written on

¹⁵⁸ *DocStud*, II/2: 1262: Seelos to Mr. [Ambos], New Orleans, February 7, 1867.

¹⁵⁹ *Summarium*, p. 101.

¹⁶⁰ *Summarium*, p. 63.

the topic and many aspects of the 'ars artium,' as it is called, have been delved into. Courses of instruction and periods of time in houses of retreat offer clergy, religious, and others the opportunity to learn about spiritual direction both for their own spiritual advancement and as an aid in helping others. While there are many models in the long tradition of spiritual direction in the Church, still there is always room for new models and more recent experts in this area of pastoral care. It is not amiss, therefore, to harbor the thought that Father Seelos be one of the models upon whom today's spiritual guides can pattern their own ministry in this field.

The three aspects of his spiritual direction cited above, among other elements that might have been mentioned, can serve as minimal guidelines for directors of the interior life: the Holy Spirit is the first and last best guide in the life of the soul with God; sufferings are necessarily essential elements in the process of purification and, as such, are to be welcomed and not shunned; and every incident in life must be viewed as having a place in God's plan for the individual and as being a salutary component of spiritual maturity, that is, becoming more and more like our Blessed Lord.

Father Seelos As Catechist to the Young

Many of the witnesses to his apostolic ministry attest to his ability to teach Christian Doctrine to the young. Father Zimmer in his testimony stated:

As a priest, and especially as rector he taught catechism to the boys and girls in school several times each week notwithstanding many other affairs he was burdened with; and he did this also every Sunday for the boys of more mature age. While he was rector, prefect, and professor in Cumberland, he still found time to teach catechism to the boys. And he did this with such simplicity and in such a gentle manner that he won over all hearts to himself.¹⁶¹

This was a work that he loved to do and in which he was eminently successful. He had a way with children. He was able to keep their attention and they rejoiced when he came to teach them. Possibly it was his own childlike disposition that enabled him to understand how a child thinks and what will be attractive to him. The aura of reverence that his presence exuded when he spoke of spiritual things must have made unavoidable an awed reception of his words in the very sensitive and impressionable young children. A witness at the New Orleans investigation, Mrs. Caroline Cestac, has this to say about Father Seelos as catechist.

¹⁶¹ *Summarium*, pp. 47-48.

Three times a week he came to teach catechism. His explanations were so simple that all the children could easily understand everything; and at the same time, they were so filled with unction that what he said penetrated the heart. He showed the greatest patience with certain boys who were very unruly to whom he had to teach catechism; he never showed the least anger or impatience¹⁶²

Old people, after many decades, could recall clearly his teaching them their catechism. After some fifty years, Mrs. Cecilia Hohenhort recalled the classes of Father Seelos in these words: "His manner of teaching catechism made a profound impression on me, as did his sermons."¹⁶³ And Mrs. Carlotta Keupers also after fifty years, noted: "When I was fifteen-years-old, I attended his instructions, which made a greater impression on me than those of the other priests."¹⁶⁴

Vividly, they could remember, if not almost relive, the delight they felt when he came to them in school or in church, and also, the visible pleasure that he took in teaching them. It was a great joy for him to expound for young minds the truths of the faith that were so dear to him, to prepare the children for First Holy Communion, to teach them how to pray, and to have great devotion to the Mother of God. Father Joseph Wuest in his deposition in Baltimore made these observations:

He took special delight in instructing the ignorant poor and the children, and especially those children who could not go to Catholic schools and whom it was necessary to prepare for Holy Communion. Even adults were attracted to his catechetical instructions because of their simplicity and seriousness.¹⁶⁵

He loved to be with the innocent ones, who reflected in a minor key, his own tremendous innocence of life. They were not yet tarnished by sin, they were not yet corrupted by the ways and wiles of the world. They were still, in their simple and unassuming way close to God. This is what he found so attractive in them, and to these he wanted to impart the most important truths of his life and, hopefully, of their later lives too. That he spoke to them in their own language and according to their understanding is attested to by the fact that the children behaved during his catechetical instructions and were never a disciplinary problem.

Here before him, in classroom and church, was the future generation of the Catholic Church; to these children, it was important to impart

¹⁶² *Summarium*, p. 176.

¹⁶³ *Summarium*, p. 70.

¹⁶⁴ *Summarium*, p. 82.

¹⁶⁵ *Summarium*, p. 100.

a love of the spiritual world, a love of God and Jesus, and a love for the Church. All this could best be done by having the children love the Church in its minister, in its priest. Father Seelos knew that what he was to them in their younger years, God and the Church would be for many in their later, more mature years. It was important that their experience of spiritual and ecclesiastical things be pleasant and joyful; not harsh and unpleasant.

He was so successful in this work, so beloved by the children, that we can conclude that he had a special gifting of the Holy Spirit for this work. This gifting of the Spirit was something that made him like the Master, who in an infinitely higher degree, loved to be with children, to have them come to him, and by his mere presence to leave an indelible mark upon their minds and hearts, upon their entire lives.

In a significant way, the future of the Church is dependant upon the nature and quality of the catechesis of the young. Not a very pleasant outlook is in prospect for the Church, if the young are not taught, from early years, to have a respect for the Church and to begin to interiorize its teaching; above all, to find in their teachers someone they can love and reverence. This love and reverence will be an unseen deposit left upon them by their teachers which will be with them for life. For catechists, loveable and understanding models are necessary. And again, here, we feel not to have gone beyond the facts to state that Father Seelos was a model for catechists in his day, and is a viable model in our own.

Father Seelos and the Unfortunate and Poor

Witnesses to his life are unanimous in stating that he had a special care and concern for the poor and the unfortunate. It would not be difficult to put together an anthology of incidents of this nature, where he went out of his way to be helpful and kindly to someone in dire need: giving his gloves to a freezing man in winter, doing the wash of a bedridden mother, dispersing financial help where and when he could. These are but a few of the more visible and concrete examples of his attention to the needs of the poor. Father Joseph Firlé in his testimony remarks: "His generosity toward the poor was admirable. He was suspected of being excessively liberal; the provincial, however, approved his actions."¹⁶⁶

But, equally important, but less visible, was the respect that he gave to all; especially to those who are usually looked down upon by others. Father Seelos knew that the unfortunate need not only material help and assistance, but they need also to be thought well of, to be respected, and

¹⁶⁶ *Summarium*, p. 62.

to be treated like other human beings. It is these things that are most often denied them in society.

The poor have always been considered the patrimony of the Church; Father Seelos saw them as his special patrimony, as his special object of affection and care. There was nothing spectacular about the ways he manifested his concern; he did not start immense projects to alleviate the misery of the poor; that was not the manner of his kindness and he did not have that particular gift of the Spirit to organize such programs. Such projects he lefts others, giving them his wholehearted support and encouragement. His help was more modest and humble; it was something of everyday; it helped those who came to him in time of trouble and need looking for someone to give them words of consolation and understanding, and for whatever little material help he was then able to provide for them.

Sometimes his attention to the needs of others was limited almost entirely merely to giving them time. The busy world often has no time for those who are not blessed with material things; those who are poor and ragged and come begging. And that was true, no doubt, in his days as it is in ours. But he managed to find time, busy as he was as pastor of a numerous and growing parish, to be with someone in need. He could not do much materially, but he gave what he could at the moment: some of his time to listen and to be present. Father Niethart in his deposition recalls this incident:

Father Seelos was especially filled with charity toward everyone without exception. On a certain occasion at New Orleans during recreation when I was present one of the confreres scolded Father Seelos severely because he gave time to and treated kindly a certain woman who was pious and filled with zeal but was rather inclined to be eccentric. This confrere actually accused Father Seelos of giving scandal because he lost time with this person. Father Seelos answered quietly and gently that he could not understand how he had done wrong because he had received all with equal affability and patience who happened to come to him and this without distinction. And Father Seelos added that it was wrong to receive some kindly and others rudely, but he could not see that any harm could come from the way he was acting.¹⁶⁷

It takes a compassionate heart to do this. It takes a heart modeled on the heart of Jesus, who had time for everyone, to do this. There was not something more important to be done just then, leaving no time for

¹⁶⁷ *Summarium*, p. 106.

the needy. Their needs were the important thing that had to be taken care of at that moment.

Possibly the people of our troubled and sinful world need nothing more than those who have time to be with them and to listen to them. To find someone like that in our too busy and bustling world is a treasure whose price cannot be estimated. Father Seelos is a model for those who are always thinking that the only help that others need and want is to have something done for them, or to have something given to them. In actuality, what many of them want, and possibly the most troubled of them all, is someone who will just be with them and hear them out and offer them an understanding mind and a more understanding heart.

Summary

This appraisal sees the holiness of Father Seelos from the viewpoint of charisms. It is, therefore, an appreciation of the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church as manifesting itself in the personality and apostolate of Father Seelos. Through his joyfulness and humanness, the Holy Spirit brings to our attention that holiness is eminently compatible with happiness and humanity. Further, his special esteem for the virtue of chastity is a gift of the Spirit to a society that has lost its way in its unbounded pursuit of sexual pleasure. His constant eye on eternity, on the blessed life with God, on the resurrection of the body is a Spirit-filled message to a world that has become quite blind to anything beyond its present existence.

The Holy Spirit gifted Father Seelos in special ways in his apostolic ministry. It was a gift of particular grace that he labored so fruitfully in the ordinary parish ministry, the grassroots of the Church, where, among the average person of Catholic faith, it makes its greatest and most important impact. He had a special gift for reconciling penitent sinners to God in the sacrament of penance and for making them experience his Fatherly forgiveness. This same gift enabled him to guide more serious individuals toward a closer union with God as a spiritual director. He was gifted for teaching the young the rudiments of the faith as a catechist. For the downtrodden, the poor, the forgotten he was graced to bring help, consolation, and understanding. These gifts of the Holy Spirit graced Father Seelos during lifetime; they are gifts that still grace the Church today and make present the Spirit's living and continued activity among us.



ÁLVARO CÓRDOBA CHAVES, CSSR

VIAJES MISIONEROS
EL ECUADOR, BASE DE LAS FUNDACIONES REDENTORISTAS
EN EL PACÍFICO SURAMERICANO

INTRODUCCIÓN

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INTRODUCCIÓN

«Yo creo realmente que Dios nos llama y que la divina Providencia nos ha preparado en España para ir a misionar el Ecuador y Suramérica. El Padre Grisar me escribe que también nos llaman de Santa Marta en la Nueva Granada, pero no es posible... Estoy resuelto a no aceptar más fundaciones hasta que no hayamos consolidado lo que acabamos de iniciar».¹ Así se expresaba Nicolás Mauron, superior General de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor -CSSR- doce días después de que los primeros redentoristas habían pisado tierra ecuatoriana.

En estas páginas se pretende describir el establecimiento de los redentoristas en Ecuador, desde el momento en que los prelados de

¹ Nicolás MAURON, carta a Pierre Didier, Roma, 25 mayo 1870, en Roma, Archivo General Histórico de los Redentoristas -AGHR-, 30040201,0005. Los documentos citados con el número 300400 corresponden a la Provincia Galohelvetica CSSR. Las traducciones son del autor.

Cuenca y Riobamba hicieron la petición en Roma, hasta la aceptación, viaje y primeros meses en ese país. Sobre este tema se ha escrito en diversos lugares, pero los documentos ofrecen nuevos elementos que enriquecen la historia redentorista en la región.

El Concilio Vaticano I (1869-1870) sirvió para que algunos obispos buscaran religiosos para sus iglesias particulares. Este hecho coincidía con que en el siglo XIX, la vida consagrada floreció particularmente en Francia y en Italia,² mientras que Hispanoamérica sufría la crisis que siguió a su independencia. Algunos gobiernos le impusieron a la Iglesia católica una serie de fardos tan pesados como: el patronato llamado republicano, la edad avanzada para ingresar a los conventos, el control de documentos y comunicación con Roma, el matrimonio civil, la educación laica, los diezmos y el nombramiento de obispos; más aún: facilitaron la expansión de la masonería, de las sociedades bíblicas protestantes y de la literatura antirreligiosa. Por no plegarse a tantas arbitrariedades, fueron expulsados muchos obispos y sacerdotes.

La revolución liberal, que en septiembre de 1868 derrocó la monarquía y desató la persecución en España, incidió en el establecimiento de los redentoristas en Ecuador. ¿De qué manera? En 1868, la junta revolucionaria comunicó al obispo de Cuenca: «Esta Junta, en sesión del 4 del corriente, después de maduro examen, ha acordado: Primero: *la supresión de todos los establecimientos religiosos de hombres* de cualquier clase y condición que sean, previniéndose a los individuos que los componen, que salgan de la provincia los no naturales de ella en el término perentorio de tres días, encargándose a los presidentes de las Juntas respectivas se incauten de los edificios que ocupan aquellos».³ Los redentoristas fueron expulsados de España en octubre,⁴ y tuvieron que refugiarse en los países vecinos, sobre todo en

² AA.VV., «Il prodigioso sviluppo delle congregazioni religiose», in *100 punti caldi della storia della Chiesa*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1986, 288.

³ Miguel PAYÁ Y RICO, carta a C. Étienne, Cuenca, 7 octubre 1868, en AGHR, 30150001,214; cf. Antoine JENGER, Départ des Pères d'Alhama et de Huete, en AGHR, 30150001,0232, s.l., s.f.,: relata la supresión de la CSSR en España.

⁴ Víctor LOJODICE, carta a Mauron, Alhama, 3 octubre 1868, en AGHR, 30150001,213: comienzan los disturbios en España; Célestin ÉTIENNE, carta a Mauron, Huete, 1 octubre 1868, en AGHR, 30150001,212: pide orientaciones, en caso de ser suprimidos; E[douard] GAUTRON, *La Croix sur les Andes. Les Rédemptoristes français en Amérique du Sud*, Dillen, Paris 1938, 26: 16 padres y 8 hermanos formaban las comunidades de Huete y Alhama. Tanto GAUTRON en esta obra, como Joseph QUIGNARD en la *Vie du T. R. P. Didier, Rédemptoriste, fondateur et premier visiteur*

Francia.⁵ Meses antes, fueron pedidos para Cuba y Félix Grisar se ofreció; los superiores le dijeron que había que esperar.⁶

Tres grupos de redentoristas ya habían pisado tierra suramericana: uno viajó de Nápoles a Colombia (1859-1861), otro de Bélgica a Chile (1860-1861) y el tercero de Holanda a Surinam (1866). En Ecuador tuvieron mayor estabilidad y expansión. «Por este aspecto a las fundaciones ecuatorianas hay que señalarlas con piedra blanca, por cuanto fueron la célula que se desarrolló en el cuerpo completo [...] y dieron ejemplo y confianza a las provincias europeas para desembarcar misioneros en Suramérica».⁷

Las Provincias transalpinas CSSR pasaron a depender de la Santa Sede en 1853. Con la reunificación del 24 de septiembre de 1869, quedó Roma como única casa general y la Congregación con un solo superior.

des Missions du Pacifique, P. Téqui, Paris 1904, describen detalladamente el contexto de la fundación ecuatoriana.

⁵ Giuseppe M. BIVONA, carta a Mauron, Avon, 30 octubre 1868, en AGHR, 30150001,0215; cf. V. LOJODICE – Egidio ZANONI, *Chronica domus Huetensis a primis foundationum temporibus in Hispania usque ad rerum publicarum eversionem 1863-1868 dictata à P. Vit. Lojodice ac scripta à P. Aeg. Zanoni, Matriti 1868*, Madrid, 12 enero 1869, 83-85, in AGHR, 30150001,0233; Achille DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Mulhouse, 8 abril 1869, y Avon, 13 noviembre 1869, en AGHR, 300400; E. GAUTRON, *La Croix...*, 26-27: Celestino Étienne, belga, nacido en 1832, podía predicar en español, francés y alemán; Félix Grisar era maestro de novicios; el joven Luis López fue cura de Talavera y se preparaba a la profesión; Pedro López también fue cura y emitió los votos en la casa general de Roma el 15 octubre 1866; Francisco Javier Machín Mina, navarro, fue cura y profesó el 2 de agosto de 1867; José María Bivona, siciliano, nacido en 1836 fue obligado a salir de Sicilia por la persecución de Garibaldi; Mauron lo envió a España y aprendió pronto el español; Juan Pedro Didier, luxemburgués, ordenado en 1866, al salir de España acompañó a Grisar a St. Nicolas-du Port; según el autor, p. 27: «Mientras España expulsaba sus primeros religiosos Redentoristas, Francia, por el contrario, les brindaba amplia hospitalidad. La Provincia galohelvetica, en plena prosperidad, contaba con 130 misioneros, 50 hermanos coadjutores, 70 u 80 estudiantes y novicios. Era la más floreciente del Instituto. En Roma, su antiguo provincial, el Reverendísimo Padre Mauron, miraba complacido este magnífico desarrollo»; Álvaro CÓRDOBA, *Los Redentoristas en Colombia: origen, establecimiento y primeras actividades*, dactiloscrito, Roma 1988, 34-35.

⁶ Célestin ÉTIENNE, carta a Mauron, Huete, 30 septiembre 1867, en AGHR, 30150001,0163: Grisar es demasiado alemán (“il est un peu trop Allemand”) y tiene prejuicios contra los italianos; cf. ID. a Id., en el mismo archivo, cartas desde Huete el 23 diciembre 1867, 7 febrero 1868 y 2 mayo 1868; desde Madrid, 7 junio 1868; N. MAURON, carta a C. Étienne, Roma, 3 mayo 1868, en AGHR, 30150001,0200.

⁷ [Gonzalo GIRALDO], *Ochenta Años de Apostolado Redentorista en el Ecuador*, s.e., s.l., s.a., 21.

1. DOS OBISPOS VIAJAN AL CONCILIO VATICANO I

1.1 DIÁLOGOS EN VILLA CASERTA

El Concilio Vaticano I comenzó el 8 de diciembre de 1869. Para los hijos de San Alfonso sirvió para darse a conocer y pedir apoyo para el doctorado de su fundador.⁸ En Villa Caserta, casa general de los redentoristas en Roma, se reunieron algunos obispos partidarios de la infalibilidad pontificia, dirigidos por Henry Edward Manning, arzobispo de Westminster (Gran Bretaña), y por Víctor Augusto Dechamps, redentorista, arzobispo de Malinas (Bélgica); de allí salió el postulado presentado al Concilio el 28 de enero de 1870. El superior General, Nicolás Mauron, basándose en la autoridad de San Alfonso, apoyó dicho postulado, acrecentando así su prestigio y el del Instituto ante el papa y los obispos.⁹

1.2 PETICIÓN DE REDENTORISTAS

Diez días antes de iniciarse el Concilio, Mauron aclara a Desurmont: «En cuanto a solicitud de fundaciones que me harán de todas partes durante la permanencia de los obispos en Roma, seré muy sobrio en consentir. Lo importante no es extendernos tanto, sino consolidarnos».¹⁰ Pero dos días después de iniciarse el Concilio, escribe de nuevo a Desurmont solicitándole que ocupe a Félix Grisar¹¹ en misiones sólo durante el invierno, pues «es posible que más tarde lo necesite, lo mismo que a otros Padres, para una fundación proyectada en Suramérica. No podré rechazar esta fundación, ya que las propuestas

⁸ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 11 agosto 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

⁹ Cf. Andreas SAMPERS, «Congregatio Sanctissimi Redemptoris et Concilium Vaticanum I, an. 1869-1870», in *SHCSR* 10 (1962) 437-439; Á. CÓRDOBA, *Los Redentoristas en Colombia...*, 17-20; FRANCISCO MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ, *La Iglesia en la historia*, II, = Síntesis 7, Sociedad de Educación Atenas, Madrid 1984, 266-269.

¹⁰ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 27 noviembre 1869, en AGHR, 300400.

¹¹ «Adm. R. P. Felix Maria Grisar», in *Annales Provinciae Hispanicae C. SS. R.*, fasc. II, El Perpetuo Socorro, Madrid 1927, 217-223: lo autorizaron para ir a ayudar al padre Buggenoms a la isla de Santo Domingo; pero debía aprender primero el idioma en España; en 1868 fue el primer maestro de novicios en España; en Ecuador estuvo de 1870 a 1882; Cornelio CRESPO TORAL, «A la memoria del R. P. Félix María Grisar, de la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor, 1831-1895», en *El Progreso*, Cuenca, 22 julio 1920.

me parecen muy aceptables. Así podremos también emplear nuestros estudiantes españoles, aunque España siga cerrada para nosotros». ¹² Más tarde insiste: «Las circunstancias de esta fundación son tales, que creo que Dios nos llama a esa lejana región». ¹³

José Ignacio Ordóñez (obispo de Riobamba) y Remigio Estévez de Toral (obispo de Cuenca); prometen a Mauron respaldar las misiones redentoristas y ofrecen iglesia, casa, estipendios de misas, ofrendas, rentas suficientes y vocaciones; garantizan el apoyo del presidente Gabriel García Moreno a las nuevas comunidades religiosas que venían a ser como la linfa espiritual y apostólica, frente al descrédito de algunas Órdenes religiosas antiguas que habían causado mucho mal; ¹⁴ los obispos preferían que se ocuparan los conventos semi-vacíos y sus bienes raíces.

Para tener redentoristas en ambas ciudades, Ordóñez le dijo a Toral que llevara los primeros a Cuenca, haciendo creer a Mauron que éstos iban para Riobamba; Ordóñez fue de nuevo a Mauron y le pidió los de Riobamba; por su parte, el de Cuenca decía que el papa le había permitido ausentarse antes de terminar el Concilio, pero que no podía viajar sin 'sus' misioneros. Mauron consultó al papa y éste consintió

¹² N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 10 diciembre 1868, en AGHR, 300400; cf. E. GAUTRON, *La Croix...*, 28: según éste, los dos obispos hacen la petición a Mauron en enero de 1870.

¹³ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 9 febrero 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

¹⁴ N. MAURON, carta a Lojodice, Roma, 9 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 30150001,0259; N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 11 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 300400; cf. Serafino VANNUTELLI, informe a Giacomo Antonelli, Quito, 15 octubre 1869, en Ciudad del Vaticano, Archivo Secreto Vaticano -ASV-, rúbrica 251, fascículo 2, folios 193-196: los religiosos en Ecuador tienen toda clase de vicios, pero el pueblo bajo respeta mucho el hábito; Pío IX, Breve apostólico para Gabriel García Moreno, Presidente del Ecuador, Roma, 21 marzo 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0143: en reconocimiento a su trabajo en favor de la religión y su devoción filial a la Santa Sede, lo absuelve de cualquier pena canónica y lo constituye caballero de la Orden Piana de primera clase; J. QUIGNARD, *Vie du T. R. P. Didier...*, 39-40: la vida relajada de muchos religiosos hizo que García Moreno los obligara a abandonar los conventos, principalmente a los que no se amoldaban a la reforma. Los obispos buscaban religiosos más dignos en Europa; Francisco MORENO RIBADENEIRA, «La comunidad eclesial en la república del Ecuador», en *Manual de Historia de la Iglesia, X: La Iglesia en el siglo XX en España, Portugal y América Latina*, dir. por Quintín Aldea y Eduardo Cárdenas, Herder, Barcelona 1987, 1163: «El problema de la renovación interna y apostólica de las Comunidades Religiosas se resuelve *principalmente* por la venida de religiosos extranjeros destinados a la inserción pastoral, educativa y asistencial».

que se hicieran las dos fundaciones.¹⁵ Los preladados combinan algo de astucia con exageración, a lo que Mauron añade un poco de ingenuidad.

1.3 ACEPTACIÓN Y PREPARATIVOS

Mauron organiza

Así las cosas, Mauron se convierte en el garante principal de esta empresa y satisface a los dos obispos, enviándoles cinco redentoristas a cada uno: los primeros viajan el 8 de abril de 1870 a Cuenca,¹⁶ y los otros en junio del mismo año a Riobamba.¹⁷ Ocho de los diez viajeros habían estado en España.

Primer grupo

Para el primer grupo, Mauron proponía a Félix M. Grisar,¹⁸ el cual iría como superior y debería reunirse con el obispo Estévez en Pa-

¹⁵ [G. GIRALDO], *Ochenta Años...*, 22- 23; cf. «Josephus Antonius Remigius Estévez de Toral», in *Hierarchia Catholica Medii et Recensioris Aevi*, VIII, "Il Messaggero di S. Antonio", Patavii 1978, 221: nació en Quito en 1814, obispo en 1861, murió en 1883; «Josephus Ignatius Ordóñez», in *Hierarchia...*, 483: nació en Cuenca en 1829, obispo en 1866, murió en 1893.

¹⁶ Cf. Remigio CRESPO TORAL, «Cincuenta años de gloria para Dios», en *El Progreso*, Cuenca, 22 julio 1920: en 1870, «llegaron a Cuenca junto con el Ilmo Sr. Toral, que regresaba del Concilio, los Fundadores de la Casa de esta ciudad: P. Félix Grisar, P. Pedro López y P. Francisco Mina [...]. A ellos se debe la transformación de Cuenca, de sus usos y costumbres y la total evangelización de los habitantes de los campos. [...] Los indios, adoctrinados en su propio idioma, han conocido y sentido la verdad católica, mejorado grandemente su estado social y ocupado un puesto de legítima libertad de que carecen en otros lugares. [...] Los Padres han enseñado prácticamente la arquitectura, los métodos agrícolas, la horticultura, han contribuido a incrementar industrias y oficios. Desde sus claustros se dirigió la construcción de la suntuosa Catedral de esta ciudad, cuyo arquitecto fue el eminente profesional H. Juan Stiehle».

¹⁷ Este grupo procedía de cinco partes diferentes: Didier era de Luxemburgo, Étienne de Bélgica, Bivona de Sicilia, Teófilo de Alsacia y Álvaro de España; Ernesto GALLOIS, «75 ans d'apostolat en Amérique du Sud», dans *La Sainte Famille* 75 (1950) 90: «Los primeros que llegaron, unos eran españoles exiliados, otros franceses que habían vivido algunos años en España y conocían suficientemente la sonora y armoniosa lengua de 'Miguel de Cervantes'».

¹⁸ José Félix Martín Grisar: nació en Ehrenbreitstein, diócesis de Tréveris, en la Prusia Renana. De niño perdió a su padre y a los trece años a su madre;

rís; lo acompañarían dos sacerdotes que habían sido curas diocesanos antes de hacerse redentoristas: Pedro López¹⁹ y Francisco Machín Mina,²⁰ y los aspirantes a hermanos coadjutores Pío (Enrique) Plietzsch,²¹ protestante convertido, y Antonio Ortiz,²² viudo. Sugiere Mauron que lleven ornamentos, libros y un icono de la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro a la que nombra 'protectora de esta grande empresa'; pide a Desurmont que coordine la primera expedición; los obispos pagarán el viaje y el de Cuenca los acompañará e introducirá personalmente en su diócesis; siendo el clima del Ecuador de los más agradables, los misioneros vivirán cómodamente.²³

López, Machín Mina y el hermano Antonio llegan a Francia procedentes de España el 28 de marzo. Avon fue el lugar de encuentro de los dos grupos. López expresa así su regocijo: «Me siento muy contento desde el día en que dejé mi patria terrena, y anhelo el momento de dejar Europa y ver la muy querida América, de la que ya no quiero regresar».²⁴ Mientras tanto, se hacen los trámites del viaje; los cinco bo-

noviciado en 1849, profesión en St. Trond en 1850; estudiantado en Wittem; sacerdote en Ratisbona en 1856. Trabajó en Baviera, Luxemburgo y España; en febrero de 1872 es trasladado a Riobamba, pero regresa al morir Glaudel en 1875; en 1882 es enviado como fundador a Arequipa y después a Lima; estuvo en Argentina; fue trasladado a Puerto Rico, donde murió en 1895; cf. *Recuerdos y Glorias de las Bodas de Oro de la Archicofradía de la Sagrada Familia en Cuenca 1872-1922*, Talleres "El Progreso", s.l., s.a., 24-28; [A. KREBS], *Kurze Lebensbilder der verstorbenen Redemptoristen der Ordensprovinz von Nieder-Deutschland*, I, Dülmen 1896, 290-300; Henricus M. HAMEZ, *Elogia defunctorum Provinciae Gallico-Helveticae SS. Redemptoris (1894-1899)*, Romae s.d., 36-57.

¹⁹ Cf. «R. P. Coelestinus Lopez», in *Annales Provinciae Hispanicae C. SS. R.*, fasc. I, El Perpetuo Socorro, Matriti 1925, 144-145; en Ecuador estuvo hasta 1879; enviado a Perú y Chile en 1877; regresó a España en 1879; en 1886 viajó con Didier a Puerto Rico; volvió a España y murió en 1919.

²⁰ Cf. «R. P. Franciscus Xaverius Machín Mina», in *Annales...*, I, 145; muere en 1879 en Cuenca (Ecuador); Néstor RIVERA, «Redentoristas españoles en Cuenca, Ecuador», en *Icono Perpetuo Socorro* 100 (1999) 25-27.

²¹ Cf. «F. Henricus (Pius) Plietzsch», in *Annales...*, I, 142. Pío no profesó; Antonio y Álvaro hicieron su profesión religiosa en Riobamba en 1874, los superiores los llaman ya hermanos, aunque no hayan emitido sus votos.

²² Cf. «F. Antonius Ortiz», in *Annales...*, I, 149-150; viudo; regresó a Francia y después a España; [G. GIRALDO], *Ochenta Años...*, 26; Antonio Ortiz: granadino; casado; muertos su esposa y sus dos hijos, entró a la CSSR; en 1876 fue destinado a la fundación de Santiago de Chile; en 1879 volvió a España, donde murió en 1900.

²³ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 23 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

²⁴ Pedro LÓPEZ, carta a Mauron, Avon, 1 abril 1870, en AGHR, 300400,09.

letos cuestan hasta Guayaquil, 7.633,50 francos. Grisar se entrevista con el obispo de Cuenca, y todo queda listo para hacerse a la mar.²⁵

Desurmont entrega a Grisar un diploma y dos órdenes perentorias: primera: no tomar decisiones importantes sin el consentimiento de López y Machín Mina, y segunda: no innovar nada sin consultar a los superiores mayores.²⁶

El 8 de abril, dos días antes del domingo de Ramos, se embarcan los cinco hijos de San Alfonso en el puerto francés de San Nazario.

Segundo grupo

Para formar el segundo grupo, Mauron toca las puertas de España, Inglaterra, Francia y Bélgica, delegando a Desurmont para que lo organice; apela a su 'buen corazón' y le advierte que quiere confiarle la dirección de esta hermosa misión y vincular a ella a toda la Provincia Galohelvéctica.²⁷

Y, aunque le pedían misioneros de otras naciones de América, Mauron prefirió el Ecuador,²⁸ y más cuando Ordóñez lo visitó otra vez a comienzos de mayo de 1870. Le decía el obispo que había recibido cartas de García Moreno, quien aprobaba con muchísimo gusto el ingreso de los redentoristas al Ecuador y la decisión del papa de traspasarles los conventos y bienes de los antiguos religiosos. Una vez más afloró la malicia indígena del prelado, quien apremiaba para que los misioneros viajaran cuanto antes dizque para evitar cualquier despilfarro de los muchos bienes que ofrecía y porque todos esperaban alegremente a los redentoristas; cuantos más fueran, mejor. Con voces tan autorizadas como la del papa, la del presidente ecuatoriano y la

²⁵ J. HUMARQUE, carta a Mauron, Avon, 31 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 300400; N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 6 abril 1870, en AGHR, 300400: los gastos se cargan a las casas del Ecuador.

²⁶ A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Avon, 5 abril 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

²⁷ V. LOJODICE, carta a Mauron, Madrid, 3 abril 1870, en AGHR, 300100: pregunta si el hermano Álvaro debe viajar; A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Avon, 13 abril 1870, en AGHR, 300400; N. MAURON, carta a Lojodice, Roma, 28 abril 1870, en AGHR, 30150001,0265; ID., carta a Desurmont, Roma, 30 abril, en AGHR, 300400: si necesita un hermano español, Lojodice pone a su disposición al hermano Álvaro; ID., carta a Kockerols, Roma, 12 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 300600: le pide al provincial de Bélgica que permita a Étienne ir a Ecuador.

²⁸ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 20 abril 1870, en AGHR, 300400. Desde la década de los '40 ya estaban pidiendo misioneros desde Brasil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Perú...; cf. A. SAMPERS, «I primi inviti ai Redentoristi per l'America Meridionale», in *SHCSR* 21 (1973) 9-27.

del prelado 'infalibilista', Mauron se sentía obligado a aceptar.²⁹ Eso sí, quería que en la segunda expedición viajaran también tres padres y dos hermanos, y para ello escribe a Lojodice, a Desurmont y a Kocke-rols el 11 de mayo.³⁰

Respuestas rápidas y disponibilidad

La disponibilidad de los invitados a la nueva Misión es excelente. José Bivona responde al momento.³¹ Antonio Jenger estaba entre los disponibles.³² El aspirante a hermano coadjutor, Álvaro, se mostraba contentísimo; sabía cocinar y tocar el armonio discretamente; Lojodice lo envía a Avon.³³ Desurmont obtuvo tres boletos libres para otros que irían un poco más tarde.³⁴

Hay que reconocer la rapidez del correo en esta circunstancia. Cinco días después responde Desurmont y asegura que Didier y Jenger están listos; y en junio, cuando hagan su profesión, lo estarán los jóvenes sacerdotes Ramón Gandía³⁵ y Luis López.³⁶ En el segundo grupo

²⁹ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 6 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 300400; *Id.*, carta a *Id.*, Roma, 11 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 30150001,0267.

³⁰ A Lojodice (30150001,0267), a Desurmont (300400) y a Kockerols (300600).

³¹ G. M. BIVONA, carta a Mauron, Clapham, 10 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 300400,09. Cuando Tirino, Lojodice y D'Elia viajaron al Casanare (Colombia) en 1859, José Bivona, siendo aún estudiante, hizo voto de ir a las misiones extranjeras. Le recuerda el hecho a Mauron y asegura que está listo para ir al Ecuador y que comprende el castellano: *Id.*, carta a *Id.*, Huete, 30 septiembre 1867, en AGHR, 300400: «Ebbene, io allora mi obligai con voto, scritto e firmato col proprio sangue, di andare alle dette Missioni, qualora me lo permettessero i Superiori»; *Id.* carta a *Id.*, Huete, 1 octubre 1868: «Di già il Governo di Isabella II ha lasciato di esistere, ed é stato sostituito per il Governo Rivoluzionario»; disponibilidad para ir a donde quiera; cf. «Josephus Bivona», in *Annales...*, I, 124: tuvo que huir a Malta; pasó luego a la Provincia Romana CSSR; de Roma fue a España, Inglaterra, Ecuador y Perú, donde murió en 1902.

³² N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 17 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

³³ V. LOJODICE, carta a Mauron, Madrid, 17 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 30150001,0268; *Id.*, carta a *Id.*, Madrid, 15 junio 1870: el hermano Álvaro no pudo llevar el cuadro del Perpetuo Socorro que estaba en Alhama; Cf. «F. Alvarus Tornero», in *Annales...*, I, 149: murió en Buga (Colombia) en 1916.

³⁴ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 1 junio 1870 y 14 julio 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

³⁵ Cf. «R. P. Raymundus Gandia», in *Annales...*, I, 147: dispensado de los votos en Ecuador, viajó a Puerto Rico y ejerció como cura.

³⁶ Cf. «R. P. Ludovicus Lopez», in *Annales...*, I, 146: murió en Ecuador en 1874.

pueden ir Cagiano, Bivona y Étienne, y como superior de las dos nuevas casas Desurmont sugiere a 'un hombre' con autoridad delegada que sepa dirigir las dos nuevas misiones, pero que no sea Grisar.³⁷

Lojodice, que conocía muy bien los trámites y peripecias para ir a Suramérica, prepara lo necesario para sus compañeros,³⁸ precisamente cuando el superior General definía las dos fundaciones ecuatorianas. Mauron, que pareciera centrar en estos días toda su preocupación en el Ecuador, escribe a Lojodice para informarle que el primer grupo saldría dentro de un mes; le pide que envíe a López, a Machín, al hermano que le prometió, y algunos objetos de culto.

Lojodice contesta inmediatamente y se ofrece para ir a América. ¡Cuántos recuerdos le había dejado el Casanare colombiano! Avisa que Pedro López, Machín Mina y el hermano Antonio viajarán el 27 a Francia, y que llevarán libros, ornamentos, ropa, un cáliz, un misal y el cuadro del Perpetuo Socorro. Mauron le agradece y el hecho le da más confianza al obispo Estévez que ya se encontraba en París esperando a los religiosos prometidos.³⁹ Lojodice quedaba solo en Madrid con el hermano Álvaro.

Seguimos en marzo y recalcando la velocidad de las comunicaciones. Mauron escribe una carta y Lojodice un telegrama a Desurmont, anunciándole que los padres y el hermano saldrán el 25 de Madrid para llegar el 27 a París.⁴⁰

³⁷ A. DESURMONT a Mauron, Teterchen, 16 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 300400; N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 30 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

³⁸ V. LOJODICE, carta a Mauron, Madrid, 8 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 30150001,0258.

³⁹ N. MAURON, carta a Lojodice, Roma, 9 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 30150001,0259; Busque el dinero necesario y me avisa; V. LOJODICE, carta a Mauron, Madrid, 17 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 30150001,0261; Remigio ESTÉVEZ DE TORAL, carta a Mauron, París, 22 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0002; N. MAURON, cartas a Lojodice, Roma, 26 y 29 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 30150001,0263 y 30150001,0264.

⁴⁰ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 23 marzo 1870...; V. LOJODICE, telegrama a Desurmont, Madrid, 23 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 30150001,0262.

Dirección de la nueva Misión

El superior General madura la idea de confiar la dirección de la nueva Misión a Desurmont. Al fin y al cabo, era la Provincia con mayor número de personal.⁴¹ Una vez atados todos los hilos y asegurado el viaje del primer grupo, emite una declaración por la que la Provincia Galohelvéica asume la Misión en Ecuador.⁴² Las circunstancias favorecieron; un General ejecutivo y un provincial calculador tomaban las riendas de la obra naciente.

Didier fue considerado el más apto para superior de las nuevas fundaciones. Se acepta con gusto al hermano Álvaro;⁴³ Desurmont escribe a Inglaterra para que venga Bivona y a Bélgica para que venga Étienne.⁴⁴

Revistiendo el cargo de superior una notable responsabilidad y en el siglo XIX una alta dosis de autoridad, Didier confiesa que el nombramiento lo hizo llorar, porque se sentía indigno e incapaz; no preveía que pasaría toda su vida desempeñando esta función. Colorea el hecho con un poco de ascetismo: «Dios mediante, me dedicaré a la gloria de Dios, a la salvación de las almas, a nuestra querida y santa Congregación; por ellas sacrificaré mi tiempo, mi salud, y si es necesario mil y mil veces mi vida».⁴⁵ El superior General, recordando tal vez

⁴¹ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 31 marzo 1870, en AGHR, 300400: «Le comunico que en este momento estoy resuelto a confiarle la dirección inmediata de las nuevas fundaciones en el Ecuador; a tal efecto, le enviaré una pequeña acta».

⁴² N. MAURON, declaración enviada a Desurmont, Roma, 8 abril 1870: «Pro majori vero ejusdem bono et incremento, opportunum judicavimus hanc Missionem in Republica Aequatoris Provinciae Gallico-Helveticae adnectere et adscribere...» (Ver DOCUMENTO 1); A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Avon, 5 abril 1870, 300400: agradece el honor de confiar a la Provincia la Misión del Ecuador; propone a Didier como cabeza y a Jenger en vez de Cagiano.

⁴³ A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Avon, 24 abril 1870 y Boulogne, 5 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 300400; cf. «Pl. R. P. Joannes Petrus Didier», in *Annales...*, I, 127: en 1868 estuvo en España; de 1870-1882 en Riobamba; la biografía más amplia sobre Didier la escribió en 1904 Joseph QUIGNARD, *Vie du T. R. P. Didier...*, passim: Juan Pedro Didier Barena era hijo de Carlos Didier y de Catalina Barena; nació el 27 de septiembre de 1837 en Dipach, Luxemburgo; huérfano de padre y madre, cuando fue aceptado como hermano coadjutor CSSR y después como corista. Tenía 33 años cuando fue nombrado Visitador y superior de la CSSR en Ecuador; fue candidato al episcopado en este país; en 1882 fue nombrado Visitador en España y en 1887 en Argentina con el mismo cargo, que conservó hasta su muerte en 1896.

⁴⁴ A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Boulogne, 9 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

⁴⁵ Pierre DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Teterchen, 13 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0004: «Durante más de una hora no hice más que llorar, no por el viaje ni

el ejemplo negativo de Philippe Noël en Chile,⁴⁶ le reitera que es la voluntad de Dios y que acepte con humildad; le señala los criterios y estrategias que debe aplicar: informar de todo lo importante al provincial, proceder con prudente lentitud, no introducir cosas que más tarde serán difíciles de extirpar y tener buenas relaciones con los obispos.⁴⁷

Desurmont, que no quería quedarse atrás en avisos y advertencias, le adjunta al diploma firmado el 30 de mayo, un decálogo de recomendaciones que manifiestan cómo concebía su autoridad y cómo quería manejar todo desde Francia. Entre otras cosas, le ordena no introducir ninguna innovación contraria a las costumbres europeas; no sacrificar ninguno de nuestros derechos; moderar el celo de los padres en la dirección de mujeres devotas, especialmente las ricas; eliminar en las fundaciones "la peste de los recibidores y de las visitas"; profesar el más grande respeto al clero; y considerar las misiones como la base más sólida de las dos fundaciones. Le concede algunas facultades para admitir novicios para hermanos coadjutores, hacer gastos, hacer la visita canónica y tener jurisdicción sobre las personas.⁴⁸

porque iba a dejar para siempre mi patria, mis parientes, mis queridos cohermanos de Francia, etc. Todo esto no me cuesta nada; sino por mi nombramiento de Superior».

⁴⁶ Cf. Á. CÓRDOBA CHAVES, «Viajes misioneros. Chile, segunda etapa de los misioneros en Latinoamérica», in *SHCSR* 47 (1999) 355-442.

⁴⁷ N. MAURON, carta a Pierre Didier, Roma, 25 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0005.

⁴⁸ A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Teterchen, 31 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 300400; N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 14 junio 1870, en AGHR, 300400: están bien las facultades, pero la de admitir novicios es inútil, porque sólo se permite noviciado para legos. – Por lo visto, había consenso en cuanto a locutorios, como se puede ver en N. MAURON, «Paterna quaedam monita, eaque maxime utilia, circa sacrum Ministerium et necessarium cum saecularibus commercium» (Romae, 25 Junii 1865), in *Litterae Circulares Reverendissimi Patris Nicolai Mauron*, ex Typographia a Pace, Romae 1896, 175: «Oro igitur atque obtestor omnes vos, ut quantum fieri potest, locutorium devitetis. Illud anima infixum habeamus, locutorium parum aptum esse locum ad verum animarum emolumentum, imo etiam esse periculosum, maxime si, uti plerumque fit, colloquendum est cum mulieribus».

2. VIAJE AL ECUADOR

2.1 RECORRIDO DEL PRIMER GRUPO

Salida de San Nazario (Francia): 8 abril 1870.

Llegada a Cuenca (Ecuador): 13 mayo 1870.

Integrantes: sacerdotes: Félix M. Grisar (superior), Pedro López, Francisco Machín Mina; hermanos: Pío (Enrique) Plietzsch, Antonio Ortiz.

Escribir desde un barco resulta a veces más espontáneo que desde un aislado escritorio. El lugar de remite puesto por Grisar es bien sugestivo: "Océano Atlántico, a bordo del vapor Emperatriz Eugenia, 22 de abril de 1870".⁴⁹ Desde allí lanza al aire sus sentimientos y dibuja algunas escenas de su grato recorrido: «De noche saludamos por última vez a la vieja Europa, a nuestra patria, la tierra donde dejamos a tantos queridos hermanos con los cuales habíamos hecho el noviciado, estudiado, trabajado, sudado, para no verlos más, hasta volvernos a reunir en el cielo; y a las siete de la noche comenzó la máquina a llevarnos a nuestra patria desconocida, sin saber la suerte que la Divina Providencia nos tenía destinada en el porvenir».⁵⁰

Cien pasajeros abordaron el barco, de los cuales: cinco redentoristas, siete hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas que iban para Quito, seis religiosas, los obispos de Guayaquil y de Cuenca, y dos canónigos de Cuenca. Todos se mostraron muy afables con los misioneros. Los primeros cinco días hubo mareos. El 17 de abril, día de Pascua se improvisó una capilla para celebrar la eucaristía y le pidieron a Grisar que la presidiera; lo hizo con gusto y predicó en francés.

En sus largas conversaciones con el obispo Estévez, éste les indica qué religiosos trabajan en Cuenca: jesuitas, mercedarios, agustinos, dominicos, franciscanos, hermanos de las escuelas cristianas, monjas carmelitas y franciscanas. Siete jesuitas dirigen el seminario mayor y

⁴⁹ Félix M. GRISAR, carta a Mauron, Océano Atlántico, a bordo del vapor Emperatriz Eugenia, 22 abril 1870, en Roma, AGHR, 30040201,0125; E. GAUTRON, *La Croix...*, 28.

⁵⁰ *Crónica de la Fundación de Cuenca*, I, 1870, 3, citada por Néstor RIVERA, «Provincia de Quito - Ecuador», en *Historia de los misioneros redentoristas en Hispanoamérica*, I: *Cono Sur*, El Gráfico, Asunción 1995, 55-56; cf. ID., *Los Redentoristas en el Ecuador. Primer centenario, 1870-1970*, dactilografiado, Quito 1970; ID., *Presencia Redentorista en el Ecuador, 1870-1990*, dactilografiado, Quito 1990.

predican misiones y retiros; otros siete hijos de San Ignacio se dedican a la conversión de los infieles en el oriente ecuatoriano. También hay cuatro hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas, un convento de monjas carmelitas y otro de franciscanas. Los conventos de los mercedarios, agustinos, dominicos y franciscanos están en ruinas; el prelado puede disponer de ellos, pero se prevén dificultades al comienzo, porque aún hay algunos religiosos.

Evidentemente, los redentoristas no conocían las dificultades entre obispos y religiosos surgidas desde hacía varios años. En 1867 el obispo de Riobamba informa sobre los bienes de los mercedarios en Riobamba y la relación de éstos con los otros conventos de la Orden en Ecuador. Del obispo Ordóñez es la siguiente información para Roma: «El estado del convento de Mercedarios en Riobamba, considerado en su estado físico i material, no es otra cosa que un montón de escombros por la sucesiva ruina que va sufriendo cada día, por la incuria de los Religiosos; de modo que hoy, en toda la [el] área del terreno perteneciente a los Religiosos, que es una manzana o cuadra completa, no existe más edificio que la Iglesia, una malísima Sacristía, una celda estrecha con su pequeño gabinete para habitación de los Comendadores y un cuarto para alojar a algún religioso huésped. Esto es lo que constituye todo el edificio; lo demás se encuentra completamente a descubierto y sin esperanza de edificarse. [...] Ahora, si la parte material del Convento se encuentra en tanto deterioro, la moral de los conventuales, se halla peor todavía». Sólo vive un religioso en Riobamba; los otros tres o cuatro viven en diferentes pueblos en mal estado. Uno de ellos cometió un rapto. La vida religiosa es la de un burdel; cuando se procede contra ellos alegan inmunidades y privilegios, en vez de poner remedio. Lo mismo los religiosos de las otras Órdenes. Esto ha despertado la idea de pedir en el próximo Congreso que los conventillos de la República se conviertan en locales de enseñanza primaria y se adjudiquen sus bienes a los seminarios y a otros institutos de regulares de estricta observancia. «No teniendo Riobamba un Seminario, ni recursos para crearlo, sería conveniente adjudicar, siquiera el convento de la Merced, con su Iglesia, paramentos, i escasas temporalidades, a la creación de este Seminario: sin este recurso el progreso de la Diócesis es casi imposible».⁵¹

⁵¹ José Ignacio ORDÓÑEZ, Informe a Francisco Tavani, Riobamba, 19 junio 1867, en Città del Vaticano, Archivio della Sacra Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari - AA.EE.SS.- Ecuador, posición 152, fascículo 435.

Tampoco sabían los redentoristas que el arzobispo de Quito estaba tras el convento máximo de los Agustinos en Quito.⁵²

En el mismo barco viajaba Manuel José Anaya, deán de la catedral de Bogotá, el cual manifiesta deseos de que los redentoristas vayan a la Guajira colombiana y que Grisar abogue ante sus superiores para que se logre.⁵³

Catorce días habían navegado desde las costas francesas hasta el Caribe. De Guadalupe pasaron a Santa Marta, a Colón y a ciudad de Panamá. A Guayaquil llegaron el 5 de mayo; acá le dijo Grisar al obis-

⁵² José Ignacio [CHECA], Nota a Mariano Marini, Roma, 12 marzo 1870, en *Ibid.*, fascículo 438, posición 182: «El Santo Padre me tiene ofrecido el Convento Máximo de San Agustín de Quito con todos sus bienes, para que se establezca un Seminario Mayor en mi Arquidiócesis, i sólo espero al P. Concetti Agustino, para ver si hai [sic] esperanza pronta de reforma, i sinó [sic], aprovechar de la promesa del Santo Padre»; Giuseppe CONCETTI, Comunicación a [Giacomo Antonelli], Quito, 16 diciembre 1873, en AA.EE.SS., posición 225, fascículo 443: «el 1870 fue un año fatal para los religiosos en el Ecuador, cuando los obispos resolvieron suprimir los conventos de Loja, Cuenca y Riobamba; después los de Guayaquil y Quito. Lo llamativo son las circunstancias. El obispo de Riobamba pidió la supresión de los conventos de Santo Domingo y La Merced, porque no había religiosos hijos. De mi convento de San Agustín, puedo afirmar que el rescripto es nulo, por las falsas razones que da el obispo; había un prior muy apreciado hasta por el presidente de la república; había clausura, coro y mesa común; si hubiera querido más religiosos los hubiera podido pedir de acá o haber hablado al padre General en Roma durante el Concilio. Es injusto que el obispo hubiera tomado las posesiones que eran de ese convento; bastaba sólo exigir que este convento de Quito pagara la cuota anual»; Enrique MESA – Benjamin RENCORET – Pietro MORO – Giuseppe CONCETTI, Reclamos al papa, en AA.EE.SS., posición 225, fascículo 443: se han enterado que el arzobispo Checa quiere suprimir los conventos de Latacunga y Ambato; se sienten adoloridos; no es que se opongan a las congregaciones modernas, pero no hay que hacer caso a la petición del arzobispo; Benjamin RENCORET, Comunicación al Secretario de la Congregación para los Negocios eclesiásticos extraordinarios de la Sagrada Congregación de Obispos y Regulares, Quito, 8 diciembre 1873, en AA.EE.SS., posición 225, fascículo 443: la expropiación de conventos hecha por los mismos protectores (los obispos): doctrina de funestísimas consecuencias; pide que no se les haga caso; G. CONCETTI, Reclamo enviado a Giacomo Antonelli y al Secretario de la Congregación para los Negocios eclesiásticos extraordinarios, Quito, 16 diciembre 1873, en AA.EE.SS., posición 225, fascículo 443: se ha adelantado la reforma de los religiosos; es una ilusión lo poco que hacen los nuevos religiosos; Pietro MORO, Réclamo enviado a Giacomo Antonelli, en *Ibid.*, Quito, 18 diciembre 1873, fascículo 443, posición 225: nos han dado una bofetada; la venida de nuevas congregaciones cuesta dinero; no tendrán novicios; cuando termine García Moreno su mandato no habrá ni unos ni otros; además, es injusto que nos quiten los conventos.

⁵³ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Mauron, 22 abril 1870...; cf. la carta del 28 de ID. a id., ID., carta a Desurmont, s.l., 22 abril 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0124: Anaya había buscado inútilmente lazaristas y pasionistas en Roma.

po que sólo le quedaban quinientos francos, porque la aduana les había cobrado demasiado en Panamá. El obispo no tuvo dificultad en pagarles el hotel y los transportes. Antes de seguir para Cuenca tuvieron que distribuir lo que llevaban en maletas más pequeñas y envolverlas en una especie de tela impermeable llamada 'encerado'.⁵⁴

Al tomar la ruta de Naranjal y Pechinchal, comienzan a experimentar las dificultades de transporte y de comida propias de esas regiones; para viajar, o montaban a caballo o iban a pie; y para alimentarse, o llevaban provisiones o se conformaban con la mala comida, y eso cuando se encontraba. Pero como van con el obispo... las cosas se hacen más fáciles. 'El que a buen árbol se arrima, buena sombra lo cobija', dice el proverbio. Recorren pacientemente el camino hasta Cuenca, capital del Azuay. La entrada es apoteósica: clero, personalidades civiles y militares, 200 hombres a caballo cubiertos de ponchos... forman el cortejo para recibir al obispo y a los redentoristas. Era el 13 de mayo de 1870. Al son del himno nacional, bajo arcos de flores, con casas adornadas y banderas al viento, pasan al palacio episcopal, donde se alojarán inicialmente.⁵⁵

Después de tres semanas, los misioneros dejan el palacio episcopal a cambio de un Belén. Efectivamente, el 31 de mayo, fray Alejandro Espinel, religioso agustino, les entrega las llaves del convento. Pero no es lo mismo recibir un regalo nuevo que uno viejo... Sólo había una habitación en buen estado, dos sillas, tres bancas viejas, dos mesas y un catre. Los arrieros solían dejar allí sus mulas y caballos. ¿Qué hacer? Comenzar por blanquear las paredes, lavar el piso, asear todo... Y, sin embargo, sentían más gusto así, independientes: «Qué contentos estábamos al poder vivir solos. Aquella noche dormimos por primera vez en el convento y comenzamos a observar el orden del día con mayor regularidad».⁵⁶

«El 26 de junio fue el día más dichoso y digno de eterna memoria, cuando el hermano Antonio cocinó para nosotros por primera vez;

⁵⁴ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Desurmont, Cuenca, 26 mayo 1870, en Roma, AGHR, 30040201,0127; cf. ver la carta del 10 de mayo de Id. a id.

⁵⁵ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Mauron, Cuenca, 28 mayo 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0129: se refiere a lo bien que les fue en el viaje de Colón a Cuenca, a las costumbres de los indios y a los religiosos que hay en Cuenca; elogia a sus compañeros que se portaron bien durante el viaje, menos el hermano Pío, al que regañó varias veces; no dice el porqué. (Ver DOCUMENTO 2).

⁵⁶ *Crónica de la Fundación de Cuenca*, 17 junio 1870, citada por N. RIVERA, «Provincia de Quito - Ecuador»..., 60.

no era muy exquisito, por supuesto, este convite; pero nos gustó más que las mejores viandas del emperador Napoleón». ⁵⁷

¿Y las promesas de los prelados en Roma? Grisar las considera falsas y se pone nervioso. Ello explica el tono derrotista con que escribe a Didier que está por llegar a Guayaquil: «¡Dios mío! ¡Qué diferencia con lo que nos habían prometido! Así es el carácter de la gente de por acá: prometer mucho en todo y no cumplir nada». ⁵⁸

2.2 RECORRIDO DEL SEGUNDO GRUPO

Salida de San Nazario (Francia): 8 junio 1870.

Llegada a Riobamba (Ecuador): 15 y 30 julio 1870.

Integrantes: sacerdotes: Juan Pedro Didier (superior de la casa y Visitador), José Bivona, Celestino Étienne; hermanos: Teófilo Richert, Álvaro Tornero.

Grupo A: Didier y Teófilo

En ausencia de Desurmont, el padre Lorthioit organiza una fraterna despedida a los integrantes del segundo grupo.

El nuevo superior de la Misión aporta datos que ayudan a conocer las condiciones de viaje entre Europa y Suramérica. ⁵⁹ Un día antes de zarpar de San Nazario, sale de Avon con el hermano Teófilo, para pagar los boletos y organizar el equipaje. Los otros tres compañeros se irían al día siguiente para estar en el puerto un poco antes de la salida. Pero, ¿por qué tenía que presentarse un contratiempo precisamente en ese momento? El hecho es que al llegar al puerto le avisan a Didier que el transatlántico *La Martinica* no saldría a las diez de la noche, sino que por las condiciones del mar, se adelantaba a las once de la mañana. Pero, ¿cómo? ¡Si aún no habían llegado todos los pasajeros...! Didier se movía desesperadamente de acá para allá y de allá para acá, explicando que los otros compañeros llegarían en las horas de la tarde. Todo inútil. Lo único que pudo hacer fue dejarles pagos

⁵⁷ *Crónica de la Fundación...*, citada por N. RIVERA, «Provincia de Quito - Ecuador»..., 61.

⁵⁸ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Desurmont, Cuenca, 10 junio 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0130.

⁵⁹ J. P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 16 agosto 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0008.

los boletos. Y el miércoles 8 de junio al mediodía, el barco se fue adentrando en el mar, cuando Bivona, Étienne y Álvaro apenas se encaminaban al puerto. No tuvieron más remedio que esperar en San Nazario y embarcarse ocho días más tarde.⁰⁰

Didier y Teófilo tuvieron un viaje muy sosegado. El 22 fondearon en la isla Martinica. La sensación era similar a la de tantos viajeros que durante casi cuatrocientos años tocaban suelo americano. ¡Un nuevo continente con tantas cosas nuevas y exóticas! Los negros que rodeaban el barco mendigando cualquier cosa y lanzándose al fondo del mar para rescatar las monedas que les tiraban los viajeros; la forma como subían el carbón al barco: «Cuando comienza la carga del carbón, ¡qué espectáculo, Dios mío! Unas 150 negras se encargan de esta tarea. Semidesnudas, con un enorme cigarro en la boca, una cesta llena de carbón en la cabeza, van gritando y danzando desde el desembarcadero hasta el buque. Todo, al son de una música ensordecedora que consiste en que tres negros golpean continuamente con el puño unos viejos cubos. Cuando las cargueras están cansadas, entonan los tres músicos y entonces comienza la verdadera danza. Fort de France es una ciudad que se puede llamar hermosa en América, sobre todo el templo que es de belleza excepcional, cosa rara en estos países donde muchas catedrales no son sino sucias caballerizas».⁰¹

El 23 de junio siguieron hacia Santa Marta (Colombia); el calor y la humedad eran insoportables, incluso durante la celebración eucarística. El 29 llegaron a Colón, puerto caribeño de Panamá, que perteneció a Colombia hasta 1903. Era un centro comercial donde muchos norteamericanos se enriquecieron. Los dos misioneros dejaron dinero y algunos objetos con el cónsul francés para los tres compañeros que venían atrás. Ese mismo día pasaron en tren el istmo de Panamá hacia la ciudad del mismo nombre en el océano Pacífico; el recorrido duraba unas cuatro horas. El bolsillo se resintió, porque en la aduana tuvieron que desembolsar 700 francos por 18 fardos. Para completar, pasaron la noche en un hotelucho de mala muerte tan inseguro, que a la media noche un ladrón entró a robarlos; por lo visto Didier estaba prevenido, porque afirma que sacó su revólver y puso en fuga al ratero. Afirma que nunca en su vida había visto una ciudad tan miserable como Panamá y que sus habitantes «europeos, negros, indígenas, todos son un montón de holgazanes que sólo piensan en vaciar los bolsillos de los

⁰⁰ Jean KOCKEROLS, carta a Mauron, Bruxelles, 13 agosto 1870, en AGHR, 300600: da ornamentos, cálices y copones para Ecuador.

⁰¹ J. P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 16 agosto 1870.

viajeros, unos de una manera, otros de otra. Imagínese que un vaso con agua fresca se vende a diez céntimos. Para transportar nuestras maletas de la estación al hotel, y de éste al puerto, tuve que pagar iochenta francos! Hay que pasarlas, porque no las reciben en consignación; al menos a nosotros no nos las aceptaron. En el hotel quince francos por día y por persona; y nosotros tuvimos que pagar por tres días en este detestable agujero».⁶²

El primero de julio se embarcan para Guayaquil en *La Limeña*, buque de bandera inglesa, costoso y con pésima alimentación. Uno de los marineros declaraba: «En el mundo hay dos grandes ladrones: primero Prusia y segundo nuestra Compañía».⁶³ Afortunadamente, las aguas del Pacífico respondían a su nombre, y entre sueños y ensueños, mascullando plegarias, llegan a Guayaquil el 5 de julio. Un mes sobre las aguas de dos gigantescos océanos para llegar al Ecuador. Los brazos extendidos y el corazón hospitalario de los hijos de San Ignacio de Loyola estuvieron prontos para recibirlos. «Estos buenos y respetables Padres hicieron de todo por nosotros – indica Didier -. Hubo dos días de fiesta en la comunidad. El Rector, Padre Segura, especialmente, no podía mostrarse más generoso. Un padre y un hermano coadjutor estaban continuamente a nuestra disposición para ayudarnos a preparar el viaje [para Riobamba]».⁶⁴

El vapor *Bolívar* los condujo por el Babahoyo hasta Bodegas, pueblo de unos mil habitantes. Fue el recorrido que más agradó a Didier. El río Babahoyo, la soberbia vegetación, los caimanes hasta de cuatro metros, la caza de la iguana... todo les resultaba inusitado.⁶⁵

El gobernador civil les colaboró para proseguir el viaje, conseguir bestias y transportar parte del equipaje. Viajaron en compañía de tres hermanas de la caridad. Mar, ferrocarril, río y ahora... un camino pésimo con árboles atravesados, torrentes y precipicios. Y sucedió lo que tenía que suceder: atascos, caídas, peligros, dolencias. Las religiosas cayeron varias veces de la bestia; Didier sólo una, cuando miraba distraído a un lado y de pronto chocó con un árbol que casi le vuela la cabeza; el golpe fue muy duro y el sombrero fue a parar lejos. Más adelante cometió la imprudencia de mojarse los pies y de masticar una caña de azúcar. Esta vez sí que perdió la cabeza con una fiebre que lo abrasaba y fuertes cólicos que lo hacían apearse constantemente. En

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

estas condiciones tuvo que aguantar durante cuatro días sin comer nada ni encontrar un remedio. Pero todo pasó, y al mes siguiente se hallaba en perfectas condiciones. El 15 de julio llegaban a Riobamba.

El vicario general de la diócesis y párroco de la catedral, doctor Lorenzo Enrique Navarrete, colombiano, les brindó toda su atención y los alojó en el palacio episcopal.⁶⁶ En los días siguientes recibieron la visita del gobernador civil y de muchas personas que se congratulaban por su presencia. Los jesuitas pusieron todo a su disposición y para la fiesta de San Alfonso organizaron en la iglesia de San Agustín el 4 de agosto una misa solemne con orquesta.⁶⁷

Cuando llega una persona desconocida a cualquier lugar, comienzan a difundirse los comentarios; en el presente caso, algunos se preguntaban por qué estos misioneros habían dejado Europa para ir a Ecuador. ¿Querrían enriquecerse? Didier aclara la razón de la presencia de los redentoristas y explica su misión.⁶⁸

Muy pronto visitan el convento de la Merced. Quizás habían soñado en una de esas construcciones coloniales grandiosas. Pero, nada... castillos en el aire... Encuentran, sí, un convento, pero tan pequeño, en ruinas y tan lleno de pulgas, que Didier lo rechaza de inmediato. El convento de San Agustín también estaba en ruinas, pero se hallaba mejor ubicado y tenía buena iglesia. De acuerdo con monseñor Navarrete, estarían allí mientras regresaba el obispo Ordóñez (el 11 de octubre), quien tenía que dar la última palabra.⁶⁹ ¡Qué trabajo para cocinar! «El primer día, – testimonia Didier – toda la comunidad estaba allá soplando y ni así. Yo me quemé dos dedos y quedé negro con el carbón. Después tuve que hacer algunas veces de cocinero. ¡Es una galera! Sin embargo, no podríamos estar más alegres y contentos. Aún no tenemos ventanas, ni sillas, ni mesas; los padres jesuitas nos han prestado estos muebles. El 6 de este mes entramos en San Agustín».⁷⁰

Cerca de Riobamba, capital de la provincia del Chimborazo, sobresale imponente la cordillera de los Andes con sus famosos volcanes

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; cf. C. ÉTIENNE, carta a Desurmont, transcrita en [PROVINCIA BELGICA], *Chronica Provinciae et Collegiorum* [Se citará: CPC], VII, in Roma, AGHR, P7BS 1/7, p. 360; E. GAUTRON, *La Croix...*, 32: «El gobernador, las autoridades eclesiásticas, civiles y militares dieron realce a la fiesta; el provincial de los jesuitas, P. Hernáez pronunció el panegírico del santo Doctor. Por lo demás, sus religiosos fueron más que hermanos y ángeles en estos decisivos días».

⁶⁸ J. P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 16 agosto 1870.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

como el Chimborazo, el Tunguragua, el Altar... Los recién llegados encuentran frío el ambiente físico y el moral, lo que se agrava con el desconocimiento de la lengua española por parte de los indígenas. La condición humana aparecía muy empobrecida, y los indígenas, con o sin razón, se mostraban aún muy desconfiados. Pero había que dar el primer paso. 'Alguno de nosotros tendrá que aprender el quechua al menos para confesarlos', pensaba el superior. Inicialmente crea la cofradía de las almas del purgatorio y pide al padre Queloz que le envíe el acta de agregación a la archicofradía de Monterone en Roma, con todos los privilegios e indulgencias: «Estoy seguro que hará tanto bien a los vivos como a los muertos».⁷¹

Grupo B: Bivona, Étienne, y Álvaro

Los otros tres misioneros se embarcaron sin equipaje ni dinero el 16 de junio de 1870. Gracias a Dios, la nave *Nuevo Mundo* era muy cómoda. Étienne cuenta que con ellos viajaba un jesuita español, visitador de las casas del Ecuador, dos lazaristas y diez hermanas de la Caridad que iban para Guayaquil. Durante quince días sólo vieron agua y cielo. Llegaron a Santo Tomás el 30 de junio, donde aprovecharon para visitar a los redentoristas que, desde luego, se mostraron muy contentos.

Mientras la *Nuevo Mundo* continuaba hacia México, nuestros misioneros se enrumbaron en *La Carovette* hacia Panamá, pasando por Puerto Rico, Haití, Santiago de Cuba, y Kingston (Jamaica). Una vuelta que alargaba el viaje, pero que era normal para las compañías navieras que acomodaban los recorridos según sus conveniencias. El 9 llegaron a Colón y ese mismo día cruzaron el Istmo en ferrocarril. Contemplaron ensimismados el magnífico paisaje adornado con árboles gigantescos, flores y pájaros de variadas especies. Todo era espectacular: los pequeños poblados con cabañas de indios de baja estatura; los niños entre 12 y 14 años en traje de Adán fumando largos cigarros. Llegaron a Panamá, ciudad caliente y que salieron a conocer en las horas de la tarde: sus iglesias estaban abandonadas y a su paso por las

⁷¹ *Ibid.*; cf. N. MAURON, carta a Didier, Roma, 8 noviembre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0010: le envió el diploma de agregación a la archicofradía de las almas del purgatorio de Monterone; las pequeñas devociones son ventajosas, pero breves y bien seleccionadas, porque una vez que comienzan, es difícil cambiar; que no sean algo puramente externo, sino verdadero acto de piedad y útil a las almas.

calles los soldados los saludaban marcialmente y los indios les pedían la bendición.⁷²

El domingo 10 salieron rumbo al sur en *El Chile*, grande navío de la Compañía inglesa que los llevó a Paita (Perú); de allí regresaron en *El Inca* a Guayaquil. Los jesuitas los alojaron amigablemente y les hablaron muy bien de los habitantes de esta ciudad. Navegando por el río Babahoyo avistaron por lo menos doscientos caimanes. Después de ocho horas llegaron a Bodegas, donde comenzaba su recorrido por tierra. Tuvieron que alojarse en la parroquia, porque nadie los esperaba para continuar el viaje. Sólo después de seis días llegaron los guías enviados de Riobamba: un señor con su criado y tres indios con las bestias para el transporte.⁷³

Los viajes tienen su gusto particular cuando comienzan y terminan. Para nuestros inexpertos jinetes los cinco días entre Bodegas y Riobamba son una especie de catecumenado o iniciación a los medios de transporte más usuales en aquel tiempo en Suramérica. Estrenando un sombrero de paja, montan en la bestia, se encomiendan al ángel de la guarda y al Perpetuo Socorro y empiezan a cabalgar. El primer día transcurrió tranquilamente: un indio encabezaba la caravana y los demás lo seguían en 'fila india' por extensas llanuras. Al atardecer, llegaron a una pequeña población donde la casa que servía de hotel sólo disponía de una cama para todos. ¿Solución forzada? Cada cual, como pudo, acomodó sus abrigos y los aperos de la bestia.

Al día siguiente entraron en un bosque por el que tendrían que viajar durante dos días. «¡Qué caminos horriblos! – exclama Étienne –. Acá hay que bajar la cabeza y acostarse sobre el caballo para evitar las ramas de los árboles que se inclinan en el sendero que llevamos; allá hay un tronco enorme que nos cierra el paso y que hay que escalar; más lejos el sendero se transforma en un horroroso barranco donde sólo hay espacio para los estribos de nuestras monturas; tenemos que retirar las piernas y meternos de rodillas sobre nuestros caballos; más lejos tenemos que montar y bajar por caminos que no es posible imaginar; no es sólo el lodo que estorba, son también las enormes piedras, pedazos de roca; el caballo apenas si puede encontrar un lugar para poner las patas; muchas veces tiene que saltar por encima de enormes bloques de piedra y esto en pendientes muy rápidas. Los mismos indios dicen que estos caminos están hechos más para

⁷² Cf. C. ÉTIENNE, *CPC*, VII, 362-365.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 365-367.

las cabras que para los hombres. No menos espantosos y peligrosos son los torrentes que debemos atravesar; tuvimos que cruzar uno hasta cinco veces, debido a las numerosas vueltas del camino. Estos riachuelos van llenos de troncos y de piedras enormes que hacen el paso muy peligroso y demasiado difícil. Un día tuvimos que subir durante un buen tiempo el curso de un torrente, pues el camino por el bosque se había vuelto intransitable. Hasta aquí todo iba bien; yo había escapado de todos los peligros, cuando llegamos a un sitio peligroso. Me encomendé a la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro y le recé el Ave María. Atravesamos una llanura cenagosa donde había unos árboles al borde del camino; yo miraba para todos los lados, sin prestar atención a mi caballo; de repente, se mete entre las ramas de los árboles, tropieza y cae de rodillas en un charco de agua; yo, a la velocidad del relámpago, vuelo por encima de la cabeza del animal y caigo extendido como una rana en ese asqueroso charco; me levanto inmediatamente, pero ¡cómo estaban la sotana, el cuello blanco, el sombrero blanco, la cara, y mi pobre persona toda cubierta de barro! Sin embargo, no me hice ningún daño. Desde entonces, le juré odio eterno a mi yegua blanca y confié mi lamentable persona a un modesto mulo». ⁷⁴

En medio del bosque se detuvieron en una casa sencilla; en ella se encontraba un viajero enfermo que se quejó hasta la una de la mañana; seis horas después, dos hombres lo metían en un ataúd y lo enterraban al pie de un árbol. Por el camino encontraron muchas caravanas de indígenas que iban a Bodegas a traer mercancías; al ver a los misioneros, se arrodillaban para pedirles la bendición para que les fuera bien en el viaje.

Finalmente salieron del bosque y quedaron al pie de la cordillera que debían subir y bajar durante otros dos días y medio; el viento soplabá con violencia; la neblina cubría el camino. Descendieron poco a poco y el 28 de julio se presentaron en el palacio episcopal donde los esperaban el padre Didier y el hermano Teófilo. ⁷⁵

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 367-369.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 369-370.

3. COMIENZA LA NUEVA MISIÓN

Ecuador: aspecto físico

En 1902, cuando los límites no estaban aún bien definidos con Perú, Brasil y Colombia, Ecuador tenía una superficie aproximada de 800.000 kms. cuadrados, con tres regiones: la costa, la montaña y la región amazónica, y un millón y medio de habitantes. Quito (80.000 habitantes), Guayaquil (50.000), Cuenca (25.000) y Riobamba (8.000) son las ciudades principales. Existía un arzobispado en Quito con seis sufragáneas: Cuenca, Riobamba, Guayaquil, Loja, Ibarra y Portoviejo; el vicariato apostólico del Napo para toda la región oriental. Luego de la independencia formó con Colombia y Venezuela la Gran Colombia hasta 1830. Desde esta fecha hasta 1860 fueron presidentes: Flores, Rocafuerte, Roca, y Noboa.⁷⁶

Grisar describe al Ecuador como un país muy bello y montañoso. Cuenca se encuentra en un valle muy fértil, entre dos cordilleras, a 2.300 metros de altura; es húmeda y fría; siempre hay nubes; hay que llevar siempre el abrigo durante todo el año; el sol sale a las seis de la mañana y se oculta a las seis de la tarde. A 18 leguas de Cuenca se encuentran indios salvajes, que son muy feroces. Los viajes son muy peligrosos, porque no hay caminos ni carreteras; sólo ahora la administración de García Moreno comenzó a construirlos.⁷⁷

3.1 GARCÍA MORENO Y LOS REDENTORISTAS

Gabriel García Moreno fue presidente del Ecuador de 1861 a 1865 y de 1869 a 1875. Desde que comenzó a gobernar, impulsó la industria, las obras públicas, la cultura y la moralización del país. Se interesó por la religión, la renovación de la vida cristiana y la obra misionera de la iglesia. Es verdad que los dos prelados ecuatorianos pidieron misioneros redentoristas en la Ciudad Eterna, pero con el consenso de García Moreno. También es verdad que la gente acogía con mucho afecto a los sacerdotes que llegaran, sin distinguir si eran religiosos o diocesanos, si llegaban de España, de Francia o de Italia...; lo que les importaba era que los 'padrecitos' fueran buenos. Se compren-

⁷⁶ Es lo que escribe J. QUIGNARD, *Vie du T. R. P. Didier...*, 47-51.

⁷⁷ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Pablo Reymers, *CPC*, VII, 375-376.

de por qué se muestran tan contentos con la llegada de los redentoristas y por qué García Moreno le escribe a Didier en estos términos: «Como Magistrado i como ciudadano, felicito a Usted, porque su viaje haya sido sin novedad desagradable; i felicito a mi Patria por el establecimiento tan benéfico como el de que Usted es miembro. Quiera el Cielo oír mis humildes súplicas, i hacer que los Padres Redentoristas encuentren en este país abundante mies donde ejercer su humanitario instituto». ⁷⁸

Los redentoristas apreciaron al mandatario y lo encontraron en diversas oportunidades; con su mediación se lograron auxilios gubernamentales modestos pero oportunos, para construir los templos en Cuenca y Riobamba. ⁷⁹

El 6 de agosto de 1875 cayó asesinado García Moreno en Quito. El hecho causó tremenda conmoción y repulsa en toda la república;

⁷⁸ Gabriel GARCÍA MORENO, carta a Didier, Quito, 16 julio 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

⁷⁹ P. DIDIER, carta a Desurmont, Riobamba, 1 octubre 1873, en AGHR, 30040201,0042: el obispo de acá es miembro del senado y consejero del presidente; le contó nuestras maravillas, de modo que éste se convirtió en lo que es el obispo para nosotros: un amigo. García Moreno protege la religión; ama a su pueblo y le quiere dar buenos misioneros. Nos quiere ayudar. Fui a Quito y me entrevisté con el presidente. Reflexiones sobre italianos y prusianos. Propone más redentoristas para Esmeraldas donde sólo hay un sacerdote y los hombres nacen y mueren como animales. Reconoce hasta el último céntimo y queda la posibilidad de regresar a Europa. Da rentas y tierras para construcciones. Desde el próximo enero nos dará 1.600 francos para la construcción de la iglesia; ingreso libre de libros, paños, etc. Tendríamos inmediatamente casa en Quito para un noviciado. Hablé largamente con el Delegado y piensa lo mismo. El arzobispo quiere de todos modos que prediquemos la misión en Quito. Tuve que aceptarle para la próxima cuaresma. El obispo de Guayaquil, jesuita, desea tenernos en su diócesis a como dé lugar; nos ofrece una bella iglesia y renta. Decida con el Rmo. Padre. Yo soy indiferente. Podríamos condescender en parte a los deseos del presidente: Cf. «Missions dans la République de l'Equateur. Lettre du Rév. Père Grisar, missionnaire rédemptoriste à son supérieur, en France», dans *La Sainte Famille* 2 (1876) 184: Tan pronto llega García Moreno a Riobamba comienza a eliminar los escándalos públicos. «Pide al comisario de policía la lista de los que viven en concubinato, los hace arrestar y les dará la libertad sólo cuando estén dispuestos a renunciar a sus desórdenes, ya por la huída de las ocasiones o por la vía del legítimo matrimonio. [...] Cuando está en presencia de un sacerdote, el Presidente no se cubre sin su permiso. [...] El Ecuador prospera bajo su dirección de manera asombrosa. ¡Oh, si vuestros países de Europa tuvieran hombres parecidos que los dirigieran, todo iría bien!».

muchos detalles se conocen por las cartas de redentoristas que trabajaban en el Ecuador. Sus últimas palabras fueron: «Dios no muere».⁸⁰

Es conocida la biografía escrita por el redentorista Agustín Berthe en 1887, el cual, sirviéndose de informaciones y documentos que le enviaron del Ecuador, escribió dos volúmenes que suman más de 800 páginas.⁸¹ La obra se difundió mucho; fue traducida al español, al inglés y al italiano;⁸² recibió elogios⁸³ y críticas. «García Moreno – es-

⁸⁰ Cf. «Don García Moreno, président de la République de L'Équateur», dans *La Sainte Famille* 1 (1875) 469-473; P. DIDIER, carta a Desurmont, Riobamba, 11 agosto 1875, dans *La Sainte Famille* 1 (1875) 512-514; José GLAUDEL, carta a Desurmont, Cuenca, 12 agosto 1875, en AGHR, 300400; F. MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ, *La Iglesia en la historia*, II..., 245.

⁸¹ Cf. ALPHONSE, *Le R. P. Auguste Berthe, rédemptoriste*, Pierre Téqui, Paris 1927, 160-184: cómo escribió la vida de García Moreno y quiénes le colaboraron; hizo una edición abreviada de 400 páginas; muy leído por los jóvenes en Francia; 165: el editor Víctor Retaux-Bray decía: «Su libro es arrebatado como los pequeños pasteles; agradezco a Dios que me ha enviado en poco tiempo este libro y una hijita».

⁸² Cf. Augustin BERTHE, carta a Mauron, Boulogne sur mer, 30 abril 1888, en AGHR, 301400,09: adelanto la reimpresión de mi obra sobre García Moreno en la cartuja de Monteuil; A[ugustin] BERTHE, *García Moreno président de l'Équateur, vengeur et martyr du droit chrétien (1821-1875)*, Retaux-Bray, Paris 1892^o, I: 418 p.; II: 422 p.; en p. 221-222: los redentoristas predicaban en Quito una misión en la que participa el presidente llevando la cruz en procesión; Agustín BERTHE, *García Moreno, Président de la République del Ecuador* (trad. del fr. por Francisco Navarro Villoslada), Retaux-Bray, Paris 1892, I: 470 p.; II: 468 p., con el lema en la portada: «Libertad para todo y para todos, menos para el mal y los malhechores»; Agostino BERTHE, *García Moreno vindice e martire del diritto cristiano* (trad. dal fr. di Eusebio Velasco), Pia Società San Paolo, Alba 1940, 724 p.; «García Moreno», dans *La Sainte Famille* 13 (1887) 806-808; 14 (1888) 51-55: García Moreno: virtudes, principios, horario y actividades; N. MAURON, carta a Rose, Roma, 6 noviembre 1887, en AGHR, 300400: traducción española del libro de Berthe; susceptibilidades políticas.

⁸³ «García Moreno, président de l'Équateur, vengeur et martyr du droit chrétien (1821-1875), par le R. P. A. Berthe, de la Congrégation du T. S. Rédempteur», dans *La Sainte Famille* 13 (1887) 374-377; Florian DESPREZ - Amand Joseph FAVA, «García Moreno», dans *La Sainte Famille* 13 (1887) 609-612: el cardenal Desprez y el obispo Fava felicitan a Berthe por la obra sobre García Moreno; N. MAURON, carta a Gavillet, Roma, 19 noviembre 1890, en AGHR, 300400: éxito de la obra de Berthe; François DUMORTIER, «Le T. R. P. Berthe, rédemptoriste», dans *La Sainte Famille* 34 (1908) 23-29: Berthe muere en Roma el 22 de noviembre; bien documentado sobre García Moreno; VARIOS, «García Moreno», en *El Perpetuo Socorro* 22 (1920) 415: Vida de García Moreno de Berthe, traducida al español por Francisco Navarro Villoslada; se le sugirieron varias correcciones. En menos de cinco años se vendieron más de 40.000 ejemplares del original francés; [Donatianus] VILLAINÉ, «Les grands Serviteurs de Marie aux XIXe et XXe siècles: García Moreno (1821-1875)», dans *La Sainte Famille* 62 (1936) 333-335, 373-375; Emilio PIOVESAN, Prefazione, in A. BERTHE, *García Moreno vindice...*, 6: Berthe honra la memoria del fervoroso cristiano y del político, cuando en

cribía Ramón Illarramendi – fue un tirano y fanático que hizo «del Estado una curia y de la sociedad una congregación de religiosos»; Berthe escribe una obra apologética; exagera en elogios y panegíricos referidos al héroe, al mártir.⁸⁴

3.2 AMBIENTE SOCIO-RELIGIOSO

En el Ecuador, como en los países circundantes, faltaba una mayor presencia de religiosos y educadores que ampliaran el radio de la evangelización, sobre todo entre la población indígena.

3.2.1 Concordato con la Santa Sede

García Moreno anhelaba la libertad de la Iglesia ecuatoriana. Se requería un Concordato para suprimir las trabas del patronato, mantener la libre comunicación con Roma, reformar y conceder el derecho de propiedad a los institutos eclesiásticos. Para actuarlo, García Moreno se valió de José Ignacio Ordóñez, sacerdote de 31 años, oriundo de Cuenca, que estudió en el seminario San Sulpicio de París. El Concordato fue firmado el 26 de septiembre de 1862 por el cardenal Antonelli y proclamado solemnemente en Quito el 19 de abril de 1863. Como resultado, algunos religiosos se reunieron en los conventos de Quito, otros se secularizaron, muchos se expatriaron; se permitió la venida de religiosos extranjeros destinados a la actividad pastoral, misionera,

Ecuador reinaban el escepticismo, el materialismo, el ateísmo y el liberalismo; García Moreno da libertad a la Iglesia, conciliando las leyes civiles y las eclesiásticas; A. SAMPERS, «Sette lettere originali di Pio IX al presidente ecuatoriano G. García Moreno», in *SHCSR* 26 (1978) 218-233.

⁸⁴ Gilberto (Ramón ILLARRAMENDI), *García Moreno y el Padre Berthe*, Tipografía de los Ecos del Zulia, Maracaibo 1894, 11: según Berthe, «todos los atentados de este hombre están justificados con el derecho de haber sido ejecutados contra el liberalismo y en nombre de la religión del Crucificado»; p. 12: García Moreno «contra lo que dice su biógrafo, no ha sido ni cristiano, ni patriota, ni estadista, sino más bien el azote de su patria»; p. 71: «La obra que nos ocupa, escrita adrede para hacer mentir la historia, disfrazando de Santo a un déspota abominable, está hecha con esa habilidad de leguleyo defensor de malas causas, que se ve precisado a tergiversar los hechos, aducir falsas doctrinas para explicarlas y pintar situaciones incompletas, procurando desorientar al lector del camino de la verdad...»; Felipe JIMÉNEZ, carta a Berthe, Maracaibo, 17 septiembre 1895, en AGHR, 300400: El cubano Illarramendi se dio a la tarea de desmentir lo escrito por Ud. La Sagrada Congregación del Índice condenó el libro de Illarramendi.

educativa y asistencial, como: las religiosas del Sagrado Corazón (Picpus) en 1862, hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas en 1863, religiosas de la Providencia en 1870, hermanas de la Caridad en 1870 y misioneros redentoristas en 1870. La instrucción tenía que ser católica y la religión católica la oficial del Estado. Por eso, acusaban a García Moreno de haber convertido al Ecuador en un Estado teocrático.⁸⁵

3.2.2 Clero y religiosos

Cuenta Grisar que, al llegar los redentoristas a Cuenca, había unos 50 sacerdotes diocesanos, dominicos, jesuitas, franciscanos, hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas, hermanas del Picpus, carmelitas y franciscanas. Buen número de sacerdotes trabajaba con celo, pero se predicaba poco; si las novenas eran pagadas, entonces sí se predicaba. La mitad de los hombres y la cuarta parte de las mujeres no cumplían con la Pascua; los hombres y los jóvenes casi no asistían a los sermones, y eran muy indiferentes e ignorantes; unas mil mujeres frecuentaban los sacramentos. Según él, había más inmoralidad que en las grandes ciudades europeas.⁸⁶

Los obispos que llevaron a los redentoristas se mostraron leales amigos; pero como veían su gran capacidad de trabajo y de acercamiento al pueblo, quisieron que les colaboraran también en las parroquias y visitas pastorales. Los redentoristas no cayeron en esta trampa, que les hubiera anulado su trabajo propio de misiones itinerantes; además, sus reglas se lo impedían. Si aceptaron colaborar algunas veces fue por excepción y para no desairar a los prelados.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Cf. «Concordato fra Pio IX e la Repubblica dell'Equatore», in *Raccolta di Concordati su materie ecclesiastiche tra la Santa Sede e le autorità civili*, compilatore Angelo Mercati, Tip. Poliglota Vaticana, Roma 1919, 983-999 (texto); Gabriel CEBALLOS GARCÍA, *El Concordato Garciano en la Iglesia y el Estado en el Ecuador*, Quito 1976, 103-114; F. MORENO RIBADENEIRA, «La Comunidad eclesial...», 1162-1165; José María VARGAS, «La reorganización de la Iglesia ante el Estado liberal del Ecuador», en *Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina*, VIII: *Perú, Bolivia y Ecuador*, = Cehila, Salamanca 1987, 325-329.

⁸⁶ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Pablo Reymers, en *CPC*, VII, 376-377.

⁸⁷ P. DIDIER, carta a Desurmont, Riobamba, 28 marzo 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0015: para cedernos San Agustín, nos exigen estar a disposición del obispo para las visitas pastorales, cuaresma, la catedral...; F. M. GRISAR, «Lettre à son supérieur, en France», dans *La Sainte Famille* 2 (1876) 130-133: visita pastoral del obispo de Riobamba durante más de un mes. La preparan Grisar y López por medio de confesiones, predicaciones, catecismo y asistencia a los enfermos. Visitan Guanujo, Solimas, San Lorenzo, Chimbo, Bilobán y Balsabamba; E. GAUTRON, *La Croix...*, 34: en las visi-

El *clero* apoyaba a los redentoristas, aunque hubo curas ambiciosos que los acusaron ante las autoridades civiles de ser extranjeros y acaparadores; la verdad era que se sentían molestos por la buena conducta y la vida regular de los nuevos religiosos.⁸⁸ El padre Pedro López predicó un retiro a 38 sacerdotes con mucho éxito.⁸⁹

Los jesuitas, que conocían la trayectoria y obras de los hijos de San Alfonso, estaban a su favor. Los agustinos, en cambio, no entendían por qué sus bienes pasaban a unos religiosos recién llegados que no habían hecho nada en Suramérica. Comienza así la 'causa agustiniana' que hará correr tinta en abundancia y que será tratada a nivel local, nacional e internacional; al final, la Santa Sede tendrá que dar su veredicto en Roma en 1888.⁹⁰

En cuanto a las comunidades religiosas femeninas en Ecuador y su relación con los redentoristas, sucede como en otros países. Algunos misioneros, creyéndose sus redentores, prefieren sus capellanías a las misiones populares o a otras actividades propias de la CSSR y se dejan atrapar con el halago de que no hay mejores confesores.⁹¹

tas pastorales el obispo ataca la borrachera, impureza, uniones ilegítimas y mala educación de los niños. Los redentoristas se dedican desde la mañana hasta la noche a la instrucción y a las confesiones. Muchos adultos no se han confesado desde hace cincuenta años; algunos, por primera vez; N. RIVERA, «Provincia de Quito - Ecuador»..., 71: Ordóñez pidió a Didier un padre para Yaruquíes. El superior alegó que ello impedía el ministerio de las misiones, pero para no contrariarlo, asignó a Bivona para que cuidara un tiempo la parroquia; a los pocos días éste regresó (*Crónica de Riobamba*).

⁸⁸ J. QUIGNARD, *Vie du T. R. P. Didier...*, 76-78: un cura de la arquidiócesis de Quito los acusaba de sacrilegio y un italiano traído de Roma quería indisponerlos contra Ordóñez.

⁸⁹ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Pablo Reymers, en *CPC*, VII, 377.

⁹⁰ A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, St. Nicolas, 28 julio 1870, en AGHR, 300400: las granjas son bienes eclesiásticos y creo que es demasiado pronto para vender; P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 10 noviembre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0011: pide autorización para vender las haciendas y formar un capital de 40.000 pesos en Riobamba y de 30.000 en Cuenca; el delegado apostólico pide que se consulte a la Santa Sede; Id., a Id., Riobamba, 15 enero 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0013: si estalla una revolución, tenemos que irnos a un país vecino... La Nueva Granada y Venezuela no nos ofrecen seguridad; serían mejor Perú o Chile; N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 17 enero 1871, en AGHR, 300400: para vender las propiedades hay que consultar a la Santa Sede y el asunto irá en regla.

⁹¹ J. QUIGNARD, *Vie du T. R. P. Didier...*, 69-70.

3.2.3 Grupos sociales

Condiciones de vida

La población ecuatoriana estaba formada por blancos (8-10 %) que pertenecían a la clase dirigente y detentaban el saber y la fortuna; los mestizos (40-42 %) eran pequeños propietarios, comerciantes, artesanos, soldados; y los más bajos en la escala social: los indígenas (48-50 %).⁹²

«La vida material es muy sencilla – escribe Étienne –; la comida no cuesta mucho; aquí hacen unos panes pequeños muy baratos. En casi todas las casas, se cocina al aire libre; acá no se ve ni una chimenea sobre los techos». ⁹³ El clima del Ecuador es templado y no se encuentra el desorden de costumbres tan común en los países cálidos. ⁹⁴

«En Europa es muy difícil hacerse una idea clara sobre la situación en estas repúblicas españolas. Hay que verlas con los propios ojos. Los mismos ecuatorianos confiesan que esta nación es la más atrasada de todas las del Pacífico». ⁹⁵ La gente es muy pobre. Dos tercios de la población son indios de piel oscura, y un tercio son blancos. Los indios conservan sus costumbres; la mitad es salvaje y habla su lengua propia, muy difícil de aprender. La tercera parte de la nación (300-400.000) se llama civilizada; los restantes dos tercios son aún salvajes e idólatras y el gobierno no puede influir sobre ellos. La gente de acá es muy apática, sensual, infiel y perezosa, pero no son maliciosos ni incrédulos. Los indios, sobre todo, son de un carácter humilde y suave, pero falso. Tenemos que desconfiar de casi todos. Sólo el Gobierno puede obligar a trabajar; las revoluciones están a la orden del día. La gente vive de la agricultura. Hay algo de comercio, pero nada de industria. Todos los artículos industriales llegan de Estados Unidos o de Europa; por eso, todo es caro. Hasta el hilo y los fósforos, tinta, papel, paño, algodón, alfileres, plumas..., todo viene del extranjero. Una sotana nos costaría acá 250 francos. También las patatas son muy costosas; un quintal vale diez pesos (= 40 francos), una botella de vino un peso. ⁹⁶

⁹² E. GAUTRON, *La Croix...*, 33.

⁹³ C. ÉTIENNE, *CPC*, VII, 370-371.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Pablo Reymers (provincial de Alemania Inferior), Cuenca, 16 diciembre 1870, en *CPC*, VII, 372-373.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 375.

El superior de Cuenca, recién llegado, se lamentaba: «¡Cuántas cosas por hacer! No digo en cuanto a la condición material de nuestras casas [...], sino sobre el estado moral. ¡Pobre pueblo y, sobre todo, pobres indígenas!. ¡No se imagina el estado de ignorancia religiosa y de abandono espiritual en el que se halla este pueblo y qué falta de vergüenza!».⁹⁷ Y el visitador aseguraba: «Los pobres indios están llenos de fe, pero más llenos aún de estupidez, ignorancia, pasiones de toda clase, supersticiones, etc. etc. No se hace nada por ellos; son despreciados y tratados como las bestias de carga del país; así se los mira y se los trata. ¡Pobre gente! ¡Qué inmenso bien podríamos hacer acá si fuéramos más numerosos y conociéramos la lengua! Con la ayuda de Dios lograremos ambos propósitos». ⁹⁸

Para Gautron, el habitante de Cuenca es bueno, franco y cordial; buena vida familiar; ciudad piadosa. En Riobamba son menos religiosos; algunos son masones. La octava del Corpus en Cuenca es celebrada con mucha pompa: por la mañana tocan música en la iglesia, pero pasan la tarde y la noche en borracheras y desorden. En Riobamba, la Navidad es ocasión de enormes abusos. Las pasiones políticas son endémicas. Los redentoristas trataron de mantenerse lejos de este ambiente agitado.⁹⁹

3.3 LA MISIÓN SE PONE EN MARCHA

3.3.1 Situación de los redentoristas en Europa

En 1870, el firmamento italiano, francés y alemán se va oscureciendo y esto preocupa a nuestros misioneros en Ecuador. Estalló la guerra franco-prusiana y durante ella los prusianos interceptaban la correspondencia.¹⁰⁰ Caen los Estados Pontificios. El martes 20 de sep-

⁹⁷ J. GLAUDEL, carta a Mauron, Cuenca, 18 noviembre 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0146.

⁹⁸ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 10 noviembre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0011.

⁹⁹ E. GAUTRON, *La Croix...*, 33; N. RIVERA, *Presencia Redentorista...*, 162: se percibe la repulsa de los franceses; Gautron recarga las tintas al describir la situación del campesino ecuatoriano en el siglo XIX. Los misioneros no entendieron todas las causas de abandono ni su falta de cultura.

¹⁰⁰ N. MAURON, carta a Didier, Roma, 7 octubre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0012: en Francia y Alemania las cosas van muy mal; ID., a ID.: Roma, 8

tiembre a las cinco y media de la mañana comenzaron los cañonazos en Roma; varias bombas cayeron en el jardín de Villa Caserta, aunque sobre la casa ondeaba la bandera inglesa. El papa se declaró prisionero.¹⁰¹ Escribía Mauron: «Acá estamos en peligro de perder toda la huerta y quizá también una parte del noviciado nuevo, pues el municipio decretó construir todo el Esquilino. Además, dentro de poco seremos suprimidos del todo, si Dios no nos ayuda oportunamente».¹⁰²

Los redentoristas buscaron todos los medios para salvar lo más posible de la propiedad. Mauron visita al papa, mientras varios cardenales van a respirar el aire fresco a Villa Caserta y a poner al tanto a los redentoristas de cuanto pasaba en el Vaticano y en el mundo.¹⁰³ Sobra añadir que el Concilio Vaticano I, por fuerza tuvo que ser suspendido.

3.3.2 Promesas y realidades

Los hijos de San Alfonso fueron muy bien recibidos en Ecuador. Llegaban con ideas, ánimo, juventud... Pero ¿dónde estaban los recursos materiales? Primero tenían que pensar de qué vivir. Por eso, el vicario general de Riobamba no comprendía cómo el obispo Ordóñez les había prometido un templo y un convento tan pequeños.¹⁰⁴ Mientras éste regresaba de Roma, pasaron a vivir al convento de San Agustín. Todo estaba por hacer. Los jesuitas les regalaron elementos de prime-

noviembre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0010: Francia va mal; ID., carta a Grisar, Roma, 28 octubre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0139.

¹⁰¹ N. MAURON, carta a Kockerols, Roma, 25 agosto 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0139; ID., carta a Grisar, Roma, 28 octubre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0139; ID., carta a Lojodice, Roma, noviembre 1870, en AGHR: «Acá las cosas se encuentran en el mismo estado lamentable. Del gobierno pontificio no queda ninguna señal: lo demás se puede imaginar. Nosotros no sufrimos ninguna desgracia; se dice que dentro de poco se publicarán los terribles decretos, pero el señor Douglas hará valer sus derechos...»; ID., carta a Didier, Roma, abril 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0016: aún estamos en Villa Caserta; la expropiación de los conventos ya comenzó por los más grandes y mejores; F. MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ, *La Iglesia en la historia*, II...: ante las continuas intimidaciones que le hacen a Pío IX, responde: *Non possumus*.

¹⁰² N. MAURON, carta a Lojodice, Roma, 11 noviembre 1871, en AGHR, 30150001,0298.

¹⁰³ N. MAURON, carta a Kockerols, Roma, 24 octubre 1870; ID., carta a Didier, Roma, 8 noviembre 1870, AGHR, 30040201,0010: «El Santo Padre sigue prisionero en el Vaticano y de su gobierno no hay más indicio. ¡Pobre Iglesia! ¡Pobre Europa!».

¹⁰⁴ P. DIDIER, carta a Desurmont, Riobamba, 16 julio 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0007.

ra necesidad, como la comida y algunos muebles. Preferían organizarse con su vida interna independiente, con un programa regular y una distribución de trabajos como en el resto del Instituto.¹⁰⁵

Mauron aprueba el cambio de La Merced por San Agustín y anima a sus misioneros a seguir el ejemplo de Alfonso. «Comprendo las dificultades y todo lo que se tiene que sufrir al principio de una nueva fundación y más en un país que no conocemos bien. Los obispos, sobre todo el de Riobamba, me pintaron todo favorablemente, pero veo que la realidad no es tan halagadora».¹⁰⁶ Considera que el superior provincial no debe preocuparse por el cambio de la Merced por San Agustín, pues el obispo aceptará fácilmente, y si la fundación en Cuenca no resulta, queda la de Riobamba.¹⁰⁷

3.3.3 Inculturación y vida

La inculturación expresa el movimiento mediante el cual la fe penetra en los diversos aspectos del individuo y de la cultura. La relación entre fe y cultura es estrecha. La Biblia siempre es Palabra de Dios en la palabra humana.¹⁰⁸ Uno de los muros que más separaba al misionero del indígena era la lengua. Buena parte de la población aborigen no entendía el idioma español; el misionero, por fuerza, tenía que saber español y quechua.¹⁰⁹

Los redentoristas se sienten cada vez más contentos,¹¹⁰ y poco a poco se produce el encuentro con el pueblo; en pocos meses, muchas

¹⁰⁵ J. P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 16 agosto 1870...

¹⁰⁶ N. MAURON, carta a Didier, Roma, 7 octubre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0012; cf. ID., a Id., Roma, 8 noviembre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0010.

¹⁰⁷ N. MAURON, carta a E. Schwindenhammer, Roma, 11 octubre 1870, en AGHR, 300400.

¹⁰⁸ Andrés TORRES QUEIRUGA, «Inculturazione della fede», in *Concetti fondamentali del cristianesimo* [trad. dallo spagnolo di Carlo Chierici e Marco Cappella], II, a cura di Casiano Floristán e José Tamayo, Borla, Roma 1998, 581-588.

¹⁰⁹ P. DIDIER, carta a Desurmont, Riobamba, 16 julio 1870 y 16 agosto 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0007 y 30040201,0009; N. MAURON, carta a Lojodice, Roma, noviembre 1870, en AGHR: importancia de la lengua española para los que van a América; P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 15 enero 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0013: Bivona pide aprender el quechua; Ordóñez da clases a los misioneros; en Navidad, Bivona fue a Guano, a dos leguas de Riobamba, con 18.000 habitantes; N. MAURON, carta a Didier, Roma, abril 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0016: confesar en Guano, pero no aceptar parroquia.

¹¹⁰ F. MACHÍN, carta a Desurmont, Cuenca, 16 julio 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0136. (Ver DOCUMENTO 3).

personas acuden a ellos para el servicio de misas, confesiones, predicaciones y atención a los enfermos. El visitador, viendo la necesidad de más refuerzos, escribe al superior General coloreando más de la cuenta la realidad. Sostiene, por ejemplo, que los indígenas no entienden el castellano, que los ricos son indiferentes, que unos y otros viven como en Sodoma y Gomorra, que no hay vocaciones, que Grisar se compromete a todo y no sirve para superior, que conviene vender las tierras recibidas, pero que el obispo prefiere consultar antes con la Santa Sede...¹¹¹

Desurmont se muestra satisfecho por las normas que él mismo diseñó para el Ecuador; las considera excelentes, como la de no poner locutorios, excepto uno para hombres, «medida de oro para América meridional!»,¹¹²

Mauron sí pensaba en los próximos refuerzos, pero recomendaba a Didier avanzar lentamente, haciendo lo que fuese útil, necesario y prudente.¹¹³

Episodios curiosos

- Los ingresos de la iglesia eran tan escasos en Cuenca, que Grisar designó a San José su tesorero y administrador; nunca les falló.¹¹⁴

- En septiembre de 1870 regresaba Didier de la primera visita a Cuenca, de repente, en medio de dos rocas, la mula se espantó y el visitador cayó al suelo cuan largo era; y lo peor fue que quedó con un pie engarzado en el estribo. Sin embargo, la acémila se detuvo man-

¹¹¹ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 10 noviembre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0011; ID., a Id., Riobamba, 23 febrero 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0014: siete meses después de haber llegado, la iglesia de los redentoristas era la más visitada de Riobamba; ID., carta a Desurmont, Riobamba, 28 marzo 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0015: los niños de 8-9 años ya conocen las pasiones; y no son raros los de 19 años que han tenido relaciones con 6-8 personas; dicen que no necesitan la misa; los retiros van bien.

¹¹² A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Dunkerque, 29 diciembre 1870, en AGHR, 300400,09; ID. a Id., Dunkerque, 31 diciembre 1870, en AGHR, 300400: el próximo año irán Jenger, Gandía y López; cf. A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Teterchen, 31 mayo 1870, en AGHR. (Ver DOCUMENTO 4).

¹¹³ N. MAURON, carta a Kockerols, Roma, 23 agosto 1870: López y Gandía, destinados para el Ecuador, están estudiando la moral alfonsiana; ID., carta a Didier, Roma, 1 abril 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0016: en mayo serán enviados Jenger y tres padres españoles.

¹¹⁴ J. QUIGNARD, *Vie du T. R. P. Didier...*, 62.

samente y esperó que su compañero de viaje se levantara; quien lo relata atribuye éste y otros favores a la Providencia.¹¹⁵

- Al hermano Álvaro Tornero casi le sucede una desgracia en Riobamba el 4 de mayo de 1871, día de santa Mónica. Se estaba solemnizando el mes con actos especiales en honor de la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro, para hacerla conocer. Álvaro ensayaba los cantos de siempre en el armonio, cuando a las 2.15 se le ocurrió ir a arreglar unas flores en el altar de la Virgen. De repente, se desplomó la iglesia y hasta el armonio quedó aplastado. ¿Y el hermano Álvaro? Todos volaron hacia la sacristía y lo llamaban con todas las fuerzas. Nadie respondía. ¡Qué desesperación! Lo único que se veía era la polvareda... Muchas personas ayudaron a remover los escombros. De un momento a otro, como Lázaro de la tumba, nuestro hermano va saliendo sano y salvo. Su superior y padre (Didier) lloraba de emoción porque se había salvado un templo vivo. «Imagínese, – escribe al provincial – ¡qué felicidad estrecharlo vivo entre mis brazos. Me olvidé todo lo demás!». A lo mejor fue una venganza de santa Mónica y de san Agustín, pero también un prodigio del Perpetuo Socorro.¹¹⁶ Didier quema los ornamentos viejos de esta iglesia y pide permiso para enviar a Francia plata labrada para comprar artículos y para la construcción del nuevo templo.¹¹⁷

- El mismo día y año (4 mayo 1871), pero en Cuenca, se retiraba el hermano Pío de la Congregación, para casarse en esa misma ciudad.

¹¹⁵ J. QUIGNARD, *Vie du T. R. P. Didier...*, 62. Hizo la visita del 30 de agosto al 10 de septiembre.

¹¹⁶ P. DIDIER, carta a Desurmont, Riobamba, 12 mayo 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0020; cf. ID., carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 15 enero 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0013: la iglesia está en mal estado; cae con un temblor. El obispo promete que nos ayudará a construir el convento; «Ce sont des promesses américaines, il ne faut pas trop y compter»; J. BIVONA, carta a su tío Luis Bivona, Riobamba, 19 octubre 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0145: clima, orografía y fauna ecuatorianos; el día de la caída del templo de Riobamba será memorable; S. VANNUTELLI, informe a Giacomo Antonelli, Lima, 12 agosto 1871, en ASV, rúbrica 251, fascículo 7, folios 96-97: «Il bisogno di riedificare la Chiesa è tanto più urgente, in quanto che grandissima è l'utilità che ritrae la popolazione cattolica di Riobamba dall'opera e dallo zelo dei Padri Redentoristi, di fresco stabiliti in quella città»; cf. «Anales de los Misioneros Redentoristas en Riobamba», en *El Bicentenario Redentorista en Riobamba – Ecuador, 1732-1932*, tip. Salesiana, Riobamba s.a., 4: en 1872 se comienza la construcción del nuevo templo; bendecido en 1880 y consagrado en 1881.

¹¹⁷ N. RIVERA, «Provincia de Quito – Ecuador»..., 74.

dad. El hecho causó descrédito entre la gente, pero se acabó el dolor de cabeza que padecían Grisar y Didier por este asunto.¹¹⁸

3.3.4 Impronta misionera y vida consagrada

Misiones parroquiales

Los redentoristas estaban impacientes por aplicar su sistema de misiones itinerantes. El primer obstáculo era el de la comunicación. El territorio de las diócesis de Cuenca y de Riobamba era extensísimo y las comunidades rurales se encontraban dispersas. Los hijos de Alfonso se armaron como mejor pudieron de la austeridad, de elocuencia misionera y dinamismo apostólico para entrar a este nuevo campo de batalla. El segundo obstáculo, ¡quién lo creyera!, eran los prejuicios de los curas. Pero desde su llegada, los redentoristas comenzaron a desvirtuarlos, predicando ejercicios al clero y misiones al pueblo; los mismos sacerdotes difundieron la voz sobre la buena calidad de los nuevos misioneros. A pocos meses de su llegada, López y Machín ya habían predicado cuatro misiones y se mostraban muy entusiasmados. Rechazan los sesenta pesos que el cura les ofrece. Se ganan la simpatía y admiración. La misión de Cuenca en la cuaresma de 1871, con López, Grisar, Étienne y Mina, fue decisiva. El golpe de gracia lo dieron el 12 de marzo con la procesión de la cruz. Nunca se había visto tanta gente. López predicó un sermón encendido. «Fue el comienzo de la conversión, un verdadero camino de Damasco, porque, como resultado final, 500 hombres entraron en ejercicios: las autoridades de la ciudad, los nobles y magistrados, el ex-presidente Jerónimo Carrión,

¹¹⁸ N. MAURON, carta a Didier, Roma, 2 julio 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0022: la forma de actuar de los hermanos en Cuenca me escandaliza. Si desobedecen, despídalos. Si Pío se queda, impóngale una penitencia; P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 14 agosto 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0023: Pío salió de la CSSR; Grisar no sirve para superior; hasta López ha tenido tentaciones contra su vocación; gracias por el envío de Glauzel; hice la visita a Cuenca y pedí a Grisar que enviara informe; el obispo de Cuenca prometió 20.000 francos para la construcción de la casa; envié a Álvaro a Cuenca y recibí a Antonio acá; Étienne critica mi severidad y algo de razón tiene; lo enviaré a Cuenca y traeré a Grisar; Bivona afirma que hizo mucho bien en la visita pastoral; la construcción de la iglesia avanza lentamente; hicimos los planos con el H. Teófilo para una iglesia romana simple, para 2000 personas, a un costo de 80.000 francos; ya reuní 35.000; hace poco fui por primera vez a una de nuestras fincas. ¡Qué desorden! Indios y blancos entran a las piezas, los antiguos priores pidieron rentas por adelantado...

doctores y caballeros de nota, con grandes muestras de sincera conversión».¹¹⁹

Esta misión le costó el superiorato a Grisar, porque al visitador no le agradó que se hubiera comprometido para una ciudad tan grande y sin contar con misioneros; no obstante, le envió a Étienne para que colaborara. Para demostrar que el trabajo en grupo era importante, Didier organizó al año siguiente otra misión en Riobamba con la colaboración de Grisar, López, Jenger, Bivona y Étienne. Las misiones se multiplicaron.¹²⁰

Los misioneros se preguntan qué hacer frente a la postración de los indios. Éstos quisieron enfrentar la fuerza dominadora del blanco, pero no tenían armas ni jefes, y siempre terminaron por ceder. Los misioneros muchas veces fueron rechazados por los terratenientes, que con el pretexto de trabajos en los días de cosecha, no permitían que

¹¹⁹ *Crónica de Cuenca*, I, p. 14, 33, 46, citada por N. RIVERA, *Presencia Redentorista...*, 174-176; cf. N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 31 octubre 1870, en AGHR, 300400: los retiros que López predicó al clero produjeron buen efecto. El obispo se interesa. Comienzan a pedir misiones; F. MACHÍN, carta a Mauron, Cuenca, 31 diciembre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0141, postdata de López; [G. GIRALDO], *Ochenta Años...*, 28, 31: La primera misión fue predicada en Cumbe por López y Mina en octubre de 1870; de ahí pasaron a Nabón, Oña y Girón.

¹²⁰ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 10 noviembre 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0011: la casa de Cuenca; demasiado trabajo; Grisar acepta la misión; imposible cederle dos padres; se compromete con el obispo, con los jesuitas, con los dominicos...; ID., carta a Id., Riobamba, 15 enero 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0013: el jesuita García asegura que si los redentoristas no predicamos la misión de Cuenca, ellos sí; tuve que confirmarle que nosotros podíamos; ID., carta a Desurmont, Riobamba, 28 marzo 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0015: A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Dunkerque, 24 enero 1871, in AGHR, 300400: Ecuador necesita un "segundo hombre", que sea el brazo derecho de Didier: Mergès es de los mejores misioneros y quiere ir. Sería superior en Cuenca, muy unido a los superiores de Europa y muy de acuerdo con Didier. En ese caso, viajaría con Jenger, López y Gandía; N. MAURON, carta a Didier, Roma, 6 abril 1871: Glaudel reemplazará a Grisar; N. MAURON, carta a Didier, Roma, abril 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0016: espero que la misión de Cuenca produzca muchos frutos. Hubieran podido esperar a los de Europa, "car vous savez par expérience qu'on ne les transporte pas par Télégraphe... 'Ne quid nimis', disait St. Alphonse en de semblables circonstances. En général je vous recommande d'aller bien lentement: vous connaissez le proverbe, 'chi va piano va sano', et Rome ne pas été bâtie en un jour. C'est surtout au bon P. Grisar qu'il faut inculquer ces choses"; A. DESURMONT, Propositions pour les nominations d. 1871, St. Nicolas, 6 abril 1871, en AGHR, 300400: «Et le P. Glaudel! Post longas meditationes et multas preces, je le propose pour second du P. Didier et Supérieur de Cuenca. Il désire beaucoup y aller»; cf. J. QUIGNARD, *Vie du T. R. P. Didier...*, 81-82, 113-114: Grisar fue cambiado por Glaudel en 1871; parece que Glaudel era amigo de hacer planes, pero no de realizarlos; murió muy pronto y Grisar fue repuesto en su cargo.

sus peones acudieran a la misión por temor a que los cambiaran. A medida que avanzan, encuentran miserias humanas: robos, borracheras, supersticiones... y poco a poco transforman el ambiente. «Estas dificultades socio-económicas, la lengua, la idiosincrasia propia del suramericano, eran motivos más que suficientes para desanimar a más de uno».¹²¹

Entre 1871-1874 se adelantan cinco o seis giras misionales brillantes, una de éstas en Cuenca y otra en Riobamba. Arcos de triunfo se levantan por todas partes. Se multiplican los discursos de bienvenida. Se introduce el viacrucis. La plantación de la cruz despierta delirio en la multitud. Las autoridades participan. Se revive la fe. Los templos son insuficientes; se celebra en la plaza. Los indígenas conmueven a los misioneros cuando les declaran: «Padres, hemos vivido como salvajes, como animales. Téngannos paciencia... abandonamos nuestras almas en sus manos, para que nos salven». Los misioneros regresan a Cuenca acompañados de una imponente cabalgata.¹²²

Los misioneros conocen mejor que nadie las luces y sombras de su trabajo, lo que explica las primeras impresiones de Bivona en la diócesis de Cuenca: «Son las primeras misiones que se dan en esta provincia o diócesis; hemos tenido que explorar, por así decirlo, nuevas tierras y hacer nuevos ensayos sobre la manera de obtener mejores resultados en este santo ministerio. Para que resulten bien estas misiones hay que vencer muchas dificultades. El carácter de la gente es demasiado frío y se traduce en indiferencia y apatía por los asuntos religiosos. La ubicación de las casas no puede ser peor: en un pueblo de dos mil personas no habrá trescientas que vivan juntas; las otras se encuentran distribuidas a enorme distancia; de trecho en trecho se encuentra un miserable tugurio y la gente no se comunica [...]; además, sus tugurios no tienen llave, y por eso no pueden alejarse por temor a que los roben».¹²³

¹²¹ N. RIVERA, *Presencia Redentorista...*, 165-166.

¹²² E. GAUTRON, *La Croix...*, 35-36.

¹²³ G. M. BIVONA, carta a Luis Bivona, Riobamba, 27 diciembre 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0148; Luis era redentorista y trabajaba en la casa general de Roma.

Ministerio interno

El ministerio interno también se incrementaba: en Riobamba, los padres atendían de cinco a seis horas diarias de confesión y predicaban triduos, novenas, octavas y fiestas. Necesitaban refuerzos.¹²⁴

La veneración de la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro se inició muy pronto. Ese impulso inicial se difundirá por toda América, respondiendo a la propuesta de Pío IX (1866) de "hacerla conocer por todo el mundo".¹²⁵

Otra devoción difundida por los redentoristas fue la de la Sagrada Familia; Grisar la establece en Cuenca: para empezar, pide la carta de afiliación y 800 medallas.¹²⁶

San Alfonso también comenzaba a ser más conocido en Suramérica; su proclamación como Doctor de la Iglesia universal el 23 de marzo de 1871, sirvió para difundir su santidad y su ciencia.¹²⁷

En 1872 se presenta la erupción del Sangay y se produce un fuerte temblor. Varias poblaciones quedaron destruidas. Los redentoristas de Riobamba testimonian cómo es posible solidarizarse con el dolor humano; predicán y consuelan a los supervivientes, llegando hasta más de 4000 metros de altura. «Nuestros Padres son toda nuestra esperanza y el futuro les dará la razón. [...] caminos escarpados o

¹²⁴ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 15 enero 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0013: los jesuitas tienen todo acaparado: apostolado del Sagrado Corazón, hijas de María, artesanos y señores. Nosotros tenemos dos confraternidades: la del Cinto y la de las Almas; viacrucis los viernes, visitas al Santísimo, salves...; ID., a Id., Riobamba, 23 febrero 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0014: nuestra iglesia es la más concurrida; la confraternidad del Cinto tiene más de mil socios; A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, Teterchen, 4 mayo 1871, en AGHR, 300400: Didier pide dos hermanos coadjutores, «Pero, ¡Dios mío, no los tengo!». Los gastos son enormes; P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 14 agosto 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0023: envíenos buenos hermanos coadjutores. La gente de acá no hace más que prometer y mentir; cf. J. QUIGNARD, *Vie du T. R. P. Didier...*, 65-66: visitas al Santísimo, almas del purgatorio, triduos, etc. son como semillas de religiosidad CSSR que se van plantando en el alma del pueblo ecuatoriano; N. RIVERA, *Presencia Redentorista...*, 125: Didier estableció la catequesis de niños indígenas en Riobamba, dividiéndolos en coros con sus respectivos inspectores y corriendo lista todos los domingos.

¹²⁵ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 3 mayo 1871, en AGHR, 300400: el mes de mayo fue la ocasión para exponer a veneración pública la Virgen del Perpetuo Socorro; ID., carta a Id., Riobamba, 14 agosto 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0023: necesito 2.000 estampas pequeñas del Perpetuo Socorro.

¹²⁶ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Pablo Reymers, en *CPC*, VII, 373; cf. *Recuerdos y Glorias...*, 24-28.

¹²⁷ N. MAURON, carta a Didier, Roma, abril 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0016.

abismos infranqueables no los detienen. Pronto se sabe en todas partes que los Redentoristas, *esos Cristos de la tierra* como se los llama, trabajan con éxito y sin descanso por el bien del pueblo y de las almas más abandonadas». ¹²⁸

«Por los Padres Redentoristas supieron los descendientes de los aborígenes que Jesucristo les pertenecía como a todos, y que su santa religión los tenía por exactamente iguales no sólo en el nivel material, sino y especialmente en la altura de lo espiritual». ¹²⁹

Como si se tratase de una criatura recién nacida, el superior General seguía de cerca la vida de la nueva Misión y le prometía a Didier que pronto irían Antonio Jenger, Luis López y Ramón Gandía; a condición de que aceptara novicios con buenos informes y que no hiciera como Grisar en España, que con tal de llegar a cuarenta aceptaba cualquier clase de jóvenes. No debía formarse en América "una miseria" de Congregación. ¹³⁰

Vida consagrada

El superior de Cuenca, P. Grisar, presenta a su provincial Desurmout una reseña de 24 páginas sobre las posibilidades de los redentoristas en Ecuador, que se compendian en estas ideas: se siente contento, pero afirma que las promesas que hicieron los obispos no corresponden y que, en el futuro, antes de aceptar una fundación, se debería enviar antes a un padre al lugar. «Quién creería que un prelado pueda engañar al General de una Orden en un asunto tan importante como la fundación de un convento, y sin embargo, es así. La realidad es totalmente diversa y opuesta a lo que se había hecho creer al Reverendísimo Padre. [...] No hacemos falta para Cuenca». Ya hay jesuitas, dominicos y suficiente clero. Los indios y toda la gente de acá son muy apáticos y flemáticos. Los caminos son horribles. Existe mucha superstición, ignorancia y pobreza; hay salvajes feroces e idólatras

¹²⁸ E. GAUTRON, *La Croix...*, 37.

¹²⁹ LUIS CORDERO CRESPO, «Palabras al margen», en [G. GIRALDO], *Ochenta Años...*, 5.

¹³⁰ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmout, Roma, 17 enero 1871 y 6 febrero 1871; ID., carta a Lojodice, Roma, 31 enero 1871; ID., carta a Lojodice, Roma, 12 mayo 1871, en AGHR, 30150001,0286: viajaron al Ecuador Jenger, López, Gandía, y Bartolomé; N. RIVERA, *Presencia Redentorista...*, 259: después de la misión en Cuenca en 1871, varios jóvenes y un sacerdote pidieron ser admitidos en la CSSR, pero nada se concretó. ¿Por qué? Los europeos creían que los suramericanos no estaban capacitados para la vida religiosa.

(los jbaros); los curas son adinerados y fuman; los jóvenes son fríos y corruptos, perezosos y falsos; las mujeres son muy ligeras; no se visten bien; hay que tomar precauciones con ellas; ni las devotas inspiran confianza. El convento está en ruinas, con tres habitaciones miserables. Las limosnas son pocas y los gastos muchos. Poca esperanza de misiones, pues las cuatro quintas partes de la gente es indígena y habla el quechua. Estamos desesperados; no hay nada para la cocina. El Ecuador y Bolivia son las repúblicas más atrasadas de América. Comenzamos algunos trabajos y tenemos proyectos. Nos levantamos a las 4.30 de la mañana y observamos la Regla. Los padres y hermanos se portan bien, aunque ha entrado un poco el espíritu de libertad. Pedimos nos dispense la abstinencia de los sábados, pues no tenemos pescado, ni vino, ni cerveza, ni 'chicha'; solamente agua, huevos y legumbres. Las cosas son tres veces más caras.¹³¹

Pedro López y Machín Mina leyeron la carta anterior y estuvieron de acuerdo; además, tuvieron que cambiar la parroquia que funcionaba en nuestra iglesia y esto disgustó mucho a la gente. Para completar, el agustino exclaustro tenía muchos amigos. Reafirman que el obispo es muy bueno con los redentoristas y los atiende en todas sus necesidades. Algunos sacerdotes no los ven bien; se necesita dinero, pero no hay que mostrar demasiado apego, sino pedirlo simplemente a los que quieran darlo; en esto el padre Lojodice era un modelo. Hay que saber tratar a la gente. Hay que confiar más en Dios que en las criaturas, porque si es obra suya, durará.¹³²

A medida que transcurre el tiempo, más asuntos se acumulan en la agenda. Uno de los ejes de la vida consagrada es el vivir en común, lo que implica una serie de compromisos y responsabilidades para quien se incorpora a ella. El visitador del Pacífico es fiel en informar de todo a su General en Roma y a su Provincial en Francia. Después

¹³¹ F. M. GRISAR, carta a Desurmont, Cuenca, 12 julio 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0133; N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 30 agosto 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0137: Grisar escribe muchas y largas cartas; se contradice; uno no sabe qué pensar ni cómo responder; ministerio, haciendas, recibidores de mujeres...; ID., carta a Mauron, Cuenca, 30 diciembre 1870, en AGHR, 300402,0140; N. MAURON, carta a Grisar, en AGHR, 30040201,0142: contento, porque las cosas van mejorando en Cuenca.

¹³² P. LÓPEZ, carta a DESURMONT, Cuenca, 14 julio 1870, en AGHR, 30040201,0134; F. M. GRISAR, carta a Pablo Reymers, en *CPC*, VII, 372-373: nos dieron una iglesia y un convento en ruinas; nos asignaron trescientos pesos al año; las cosas cuestan hasta tres veces más que en Europa.

del primer semestre, habla de perfecta unidad y de muchas ocupaciones, entre otras, el caso ascético y las conferencias de moral.¹³³

Hay quienes asignan a Didier el apelativo de «San Clemente del Nuevo Mundo», por haber llevado la CSSR a Ecuador, Chile y Perú, y por edificar siete conventos.¹³⁴ Desurmont le dio normas para que ejerciera bien el cargo de Visitador, asesorándose de cuatro consultores y comunicándose permanentemente.¹³⁵

3.3.5 Estabilidad jurídica

Los redentoristas, que habían ganado mucho crédito en Europa en el siglo XIX, iban a América sin otro objetivo esencial que imitar a Jesucristo según el carisma misionero de San Alfonso. Notando que los obispos habían prometido más de la cuenta, se quejan ante sus superiores y por eso reiteran que 'no hay que confiar en los americanos'. Esto sirvió para que Didier urgiera el contrato de adjudicación de los bienes de San Agustín (convento, iglesia, hacienda...). Se reconoce la disponibilidad de los obispos, pero el desconfiar de todos y el hacer generalizaciones gratuitas será la tónica de algunos redentoristas durante muchos años.

Documentos pontificios

a) El 25 de febrero de 1870, el obispo Ordóñez pidió a Pío IX la facultad de suprimir los conventillos de San Agustín, San Francisco y La Merced, y llevar otros religiosos. (Ver DOCUMENTO 5).

b) Breve Pontificio para Cuenca. (Ver DOCUMENTO 6).

Auto de adjudicación en Cuenca

El 30 de mayo de 1870 se expidió el auto de adjudicación del convento a los redentoristas en Cuenca. Estévez de Toral, apoyado en el breve pontificio del 8 de marzo, declaraba suprimido el conventillo

¹³³ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 15 enero 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0013.

¹³⁴ [G. GIRALDO], *Ochenta Años...*, 39.

¹³⁵ [A. DESURMONT], *Ordinatio pro domibus Americae Meridionalis quae provinciae gallicae subjiciuntur*, 1873, in AGHR, 30040201,0043.

de San Agustín y lo adjudicaba en propiedad a los redentoristas. Grisar no quería obligarse por contrato a atender a los enfermos ni a reparar la iglesia y el convento; el obispo lo tranquilizó diciéndole que las obligaciones se interpretaban conforme a las Reglas y usos CSSR; por eso Grisar añadió: «Salva la autoridad del Reverendísimo Padre General». El 31 de mayo tomaron posesión legal del convento de san Agustín.¹³⁶

Auto de adjudicación en Riobamba

Didier se queja de que el obispo es muy lento en definir la situación de los redentoristas en San Agustín de Riobamba.¹³⁷ Asegura que Ordóñez puso condiciones que Didier no aceptó, pero se pusieron de acuerdo y el mismo Didier redactó el proyecto de auto de adjudicación según las reglas de la CSSR; lo enviaron a Quito para la aprobación del Delegado.

Este 'auto' no le gustó a Mauron. Como guía de la CSSR muestra firmeza de principios y claridad en el manejo de estos asuntos. Con quince años de superior General, sabía cómo hay prelados y curas que quieren 'usar' a los religiosos.

Por eso, pone los puntos sobre las íes y se los comunica a Desurmont: el auto contiene condiciones que no puedo aceptar; de lo contrario, jamás hubiera enviado padres a Riobamba. Cuando monseñor estuvo en Roma me prometió iglesia, convento y renta suficiente, y yo le prometí enviar padres para ejercer el ministerio siguiendo estrictamente lo que ordenan nuestras Reglas, por medio de misiones, ejercicios espirituales y retiros al clero y a los fieles. No podemos aceptar parroquias ni seminarios. Jamás se habló de establecer noviciado en Riobamba, ni que ésta fuera la casa central, convento principal ni residencia del superior de la provincia en Ecuador. Allá no hemos ido más que a ejercer el ministerio apostólico donde nos permita el obispo, bajo la coordinación del superior. Pero parece que tendremos que dar misiones cada vez que el obispo de Riobamba ordene. Sería dema-

¹³⁶ *Crónica de Cuenca*, I, 23, en N. RIVERA, «Provincia de Quito - Ecuador»..., 66-68: en 1874, Toral y Didier cambian el auto, quedando sin valor el del 30 de mayo de 1870. (Ver DOCUMENTO 7).

¹³⁷ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 15 enero 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0013: «Il y a plus d'un mois que j'ai demandé à Mgr. la copie du Rescrit pontifical, et un document en règle comme qui il nous à cédé St. Augustin au lieu de la Merced, avec la moitié des biens des deux couvents, pour en prendre acte devant Notaire, mais rien d'avance». (Ver DOCUMENTO 8).

siado oneroso el acompañamiento a las visitas pastorales cada vez que sale el prelado, predicar retiros al clero *cada vez que lo solicite* y predicar *in perpetuum* en adviento y en cuaresma en la catedral. Estas condiciones atarían a los superiores, los cuales estarían sometidos exclusivamente al gusto de los obispos de Riobamba. Y todo porque la Congregación recibe un convento y una iglesia en ruinas, y una renta insuficiente. La Congregación se impuso deudas y sacrificios para enviar padres a Riobamba. Y todavía nos obliga a construir cuanto antes una casa de retiros. Tal como están expresadas las condiciones en el proyecto de auto de adjudicación, no las puedo firmar. Y en caso de que la autoridad diocesana insistiese, no nos queda más remedio que retirarnos para ir a trabajar a otra parte, pues gracias a Dios las peticiones de misioneros nuestros no nos faltan. Lo que se nos quiere imponer es absolutamente contrario a nuestro espíritu y a nuestra disciplina.¹³⁸

Didier se encontraba como atrapado entre el General, el provincial, el nuncio y el obispo. Trata de justificarse y culpa a 'los americanos'. Asegura que no es propiamente un contrato y que no lo ha firmado; que para tener más seguridad de permanencia insistió en la ejecución del rescripto pontificio para la cesión formal de San Agustín, pero que la adjudicación formal aún no se había cumplido. Parece que los agustinos habían hablado con algunos diputados para recuperar su convento y, por otra parte, el obispo no podía cambiar el rescripto que adjudicaba la Merced a la CSSR. Además, habían cobrado censos por adelantado. Didier le comunicó al obispo que necesitaba la aprobación del superior mayor. Al Delegado se le envió el proyecto del auto para que aprobara los cambios en nombre del Papa.

«Pero, Reverendísimo Padre, nosotros tenemos que tratar con los americanos, y todos lo son de arriba hasta abajo. Monseñor añade varias cosas a lo que yo había escrito, y sin decirme nada, lo envió al Delegado, el cual lo aprobó y me lo envió de nuevo...». En el documento señalé sus adiciones. Reclamé inútilmente, porque ya estaba firmado. El carácter doble y tramposo de los americanos me hace sufrir; no son leales ni francos. Todos son así, menos el Presidente.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ N. MAURON, carta a Desurmont, Roma, 8 junio 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0021; ID., carta a Didier, Roma, 2 julio 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0022: las condiciones de adjudicación de San Agustín son totalmente inaceptables. Espere instrucciones oportunas, pues se trata de un contrato perpetuo.

¹³⁹ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 14 agosto 1871, en AGHR, 30040201,0023; N. MAURON, carta a Didier, Roma, 3 noviembre 1871, en AGHR,

Pasan los meses. El superior General estudia el auto. Luego pide a Didier que lleve el asunto con prudencia y hable con el obispo para que rectifique, exponiéndole las razones de los redentoristas para establecerse en Riobamba: la Congregación tuvo que gastar sumas considerables para su establecimiento en el Ecuador; espero que comprenda que insisto por el deber de mi cargo y por responsabilidad ante Dios y ante la Congregación; adviértale que tomo las cosas en serio, ya que el auto puede traer tristes consecuencias que estoy obligado a prevenir. No firme nada sin mi autorización.¹⁴⁰

Didier responde: vivimos en el país de las arbitrariedades; hablé con el obispo, el cual ni siquiera tenía copia del contrato; cree que aún sin contrato podría adjudicar los bienes por rescripto y sin condiciones. Esto tiene sus más y sus menos. Con la consulta acordamos redactar un pequeño documento que indique que en virtud de esta adjudicación, nosotros nos obligaremos a trabajar por el bien de las almas de la diócesis según nuestras reglas, constituciones y costumbres; y que en caso de que tengamos que salir de la diócesis por fuerza mayor, sin poder regresar entre 6 y 10 años, los bienes serán devueltos a la diócesis.¹⁴¹ Cuatro meses después, Mauron acepta el siguiente auto:

«Auto de adjudicación del Convento y bienes del extinguido convento de S. Agustín de la Ciudad de Riobamba (Ecuador) a la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor.

Nos, el Dr. José Ignacio Ordóñez por la gracia de Dios y de la S. Sede Apostólica Obispo de Riobamba,

Por cuanto su Santidad el Papa Pío IX por Rescripto de 25 de febrero de 1870, nos dio la facultad para suprimir los antiguos Conventos de S. Agustín y de la Merced de esta ciudad y para adjudicar la mitad de sus bienes a la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor; tenemos a bien ejecutar total y completamente lo dispuesto por el Sumo Pontífice.

Por tanto, suprimimos y declaramos por el presente auto suprimidos y extinguidos los dos mencionados Conventillos, adjudicando el primero a los P.P. Redentoristas, junto con el área de terreno que le es contiguo, los muebles, alhajas, paramentos y más cosas pertenecientes a él.

30040201,0024: once respuestas a diversos asuntos, entre otros, la del rescripto pontificio de supresión del antiguo convento de Riobamba.

¹⁴⁰ N. MAURON, carta a Didier. Roma, 8 y 9 marzo 1872, en AGHR, 30040201,0026.

¹⁴¹ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 12 mayo 1872, en AGHR, 30040201,0027.

Del mismo modo, declaramos pertenecer en adelante a la Congregación del Santísimo Redentor, la mitad de los bienes raíces, ganados, censos, acciones o rentas, de cualquiera clase que sean, pertenecientes a los dos Conventillos de la Merced y de S. Agustín; con excepción de la Iglesia y Conventillo de la Merced, todo el terreno adjunto a él, alhajas, paramentos y más cosas, que hemos adjudicado a las R.R. M.M. de los SS. Corazones de Jesús y de María.

La Congregación del SS. Redentor queda asimismo obligada, por mitades con el Seminario, a los gravámenes, que pesan sobre esos bienes, como son: el pago de la cuota destinada a costear la cátedra de gramática en S. Felipe, etc. Declaramos que en lo sucesivo la predicha Congregación del SS. Redentor queda en pacífica posesión de estos bienes; y que mientras tanto se pueda hacer la división de ellos, perciban y administren sus rentas según las prescripciones canónicas y en los términos que dejamos expresados.

Advertimos, que si por cualquier acontecimiento imprevisto los referidos Padres se vieren molestados en la pacífica posesión de los expresados bienes, o tuvieren que salir de la Diócesis, todos los bienes sean muebles o raíces, que por el presente auto les adjudicamos, por el mismo hecho, y por su carácter de bienes eclesiásticos, serán devueltos al Ordinario de la Diócesis; el cual se entenderá con el Superior General de los Redentoristas, para que les dé otro destino que fuera en bien de la Diócesis, en el caso de que dicho Superior viere que no puede ya restablecer la comunidad de Redentoristas.

Los P.P. del SS. Redentor están obligados, en virtud de la presente cesión, a vivir según las reglas de su Instituto, a predicar la palabra de Dios y a trabajar en la salvación de las almas de los fieles de nuestra Diócesis, por medio de misiones, renovaciones, ejercicios espirituales, explicación del catecismo y en general por el ejercicio de su ministerio, según lo prescriben sus reglas, aprobadas por la S. Sede Apostólica.

Dado en nuestro Palacio Episcopal, firmado de nuestra mano, sellado y refrendado por nuestro Pro-Secretario. Riobamba, a diez y ocho de setiembre de mil ochocientos setenta y dos.

Loco sigilli
+
propria manu transcripsi
Agustín Barriga

José Ignacio
obispo de Riobamba +

P. Didier CSSR,
Prosecretario
Sup.».¹⁴²

¹⁴² José Ignacio ORDÓÑEZ, Auto de adjudicación, Riobamba, 18 septiembre 1872, en AGHR, 30040201,0033: tiene traducción al francés; cf. N. MAURON, carta a

EPÍLOGO

En 1870, poco después de la fundación en Surinam, los redentoristas pusieron pie firme en Suramérica. Un grupo heterogéneo de misioneros llegó al Ecuador, en circunstancias relativamente favorables, bien 'controlados' por los superiores, invitados por dos obispos y estimulados por la respuesta de la gente.

Los misioneros dieron y recibieron. *Dieron*: parte de su vida, tiempo, trabajo, dedicación, testimonio. *Recibieron*: terrenos, casas, iglesias, dinero, trabajo gratis (mingas), hospitalidad, aprecio y acatamiento, respaldo de las autoridades civiles y eclesiásticas, exenciones, etc.

Mientras eran expropiados y expulsados de España, de Italia y de Alemania, Suramérica los recibía. No obstante, algunos se quejaban y querían tenerlo todo desde el comienzo. Tenían razón en cuanto a que los obispos no cumplían todas sus promesas, pero pocos fundadores han encontrado tantas ventajas iniciales como los redentoristas en los dos escenarios de Cuenca y Riobamba. Recibieron, por así decirlo, un inmenso terreno semi-abandonado, para cultivarlo social y pastoralmente.

Es difícil equilibrar el juicio histórico, reconociendo lo bueno y lo malo de las diversas partes. No se puede olvidar, por ejemplo, la respuesta de la gente común que contribuye con tanta generosidad. Una señora de Bélgica obsequia ornamentos y objetos para la Misión del Ecuador; el padre Lojodice envía libros y objetos; las empresas navieras regalan boletos. ¿De dónde sacaban los obispos, los curas, los religiosos, y las monjas los recursos para construir iglesias y conventos, para tener bibliotecas y terrenos? Por otra parte, para realizar un proyecto como el de la fundación en Ecuador, ¿cuántas personas, contactos, recursos, tiempo, preocupaciones, viajes? Mauron, Desurmont,¹⁴³ los obispos, los superiores, los primeros viajeros... hicieron su aportación indiscutible, pero no por esto hay que crearles aureolas o prota-

Desurmont, Roma, 19 diciembre 1872, en AGHR, 300400: está bien el contrato entre el obispo de Riobamba y Didier. Conviene esperar, para nombrar viceprovincial a Didier; A. DESURMONT, carta a Mauron, St. Nicolas, 23 diciembre 1872, en AGHR, 300400: Didier se tomó atribuciones de viceprovincial; hay que pensar en otra cualificación, pues nuestras colonias deben estar más unidas a la Provincia madre.

¹⁴³ N. RIVERA, «Provincia de Quito - Ecuador»..., 171-172: durante la gestión de Desurmont como provincial (1865-1887), se establecieron los redentoristas franceses en Ecuador, Chile, Perú, Colombia y Puerto Rico, y se fundaron veinte casas en Francia, España y América.

gonismos que no tuvieron. Lo sensato es olvidar al héroe de la leyenda para encontrar al hombre de la historia. El superior provincial, sintetiza bien la situación de la CSSR en Ecuador, un año y medio después de haber llegado a ese país:

«ECUADOR: todo está revuelto de bien y de mal... Padres en general muy disponibles... Superiores animados del espíritu alfonsiano; pero el Padre Didier se muestra cada vez más ardiente y un tanto intransigente. Hasta ahora mucho orden y observancia, pero grandes tensiones debido al trabajo y a las circunstancias del ministerio en la ciudad, exigente, fructuoso, pero difícil y peligroso; misiones muy arduas; apostolado con indígenas muy difícil a causa de la lengua; recursos económicos hasta ahora inseguros, por el desorden en los fondos; esterilidad casi segura en cuanto a vocaciones».¹⁴⁴

Se cristalizaba así otro proyecto misionero estable de la CSSR concebido para hacer más abundante la redención en Cristo.

DOCUMENTOS

DOCUMENTO 1

[*Declaración de Nicolás Mauron*]¹⁴⁵

Nicolaus Mauron

Cognis. Ssmi. Redemptoris Superior Generalis et Rector Major Plurimum Revdo. P. Achilles Desurmont, Superiori Prov. Gallico-Helveticae, Salutem in Domino.

Cum Illmi. et Rmi. Episcopi Conchensi et Bolivarensis in Republica Aequatoris, occasione Concilii Oecumenici in alma hac Urbe commorantes, iteratis vicibus a Nobis petierint, ut Congregationem nostram in suis Dioecibus stabiliamus: post enixas ad Deum preces, maturamque omnium, prout res postulabat, ponderationem, atque inito cum Consultoribus nostris consilio; ad promovendam, quantum in Nobis est, Dei gloriam et salutem animarum juxta finem Instituti nostri ac spiritum S. P. N. Alphonsi, hujusmodi desi-

¹⁴⁴ A. DESURMONT, Relatio Visitationis Prov. Gall., Landser, 8 diciembre 1871, en AGHR, 300400,02.

¹⁴⁵ N. MAURON, declaración enviada a Aquiles Desurmont, Roma, 8 abril 1870, en Roma, AGHR, 30040201,0003.

deriis et precibus Nobis porrectis annuere censuimus. Hoc autem consilium eo libentius inivimus, quod Ssmus. D. N. Pius PP. IX feliciter regnans illud plene approbare et commendare dignatus est; ideoque, benedicente Christi in terris Vicario, firmiter sperare possumus fore ut et ipse Deus, auspice Beata Maria Virgine de perpetuo Succursu, ac intercedente S. P. N. Alphonso, gratiarum et benedictionum ubertate susceptum hoc negotium ditare atque augere velit.

Pro majori vero ejusdem bono et incremento, opportunum judicavimus hanc Missionem in Republica Aequatoris Provinciae Gallico-Helveticae adnectere et adscribere, ipsamque per praesentes Litteras, donec aliter a Nobis provisum fuerit, eidem Provinciae adnectimus, adscribimus et subjicimus. Omnibus itaque Patribus et Fratribus praedictae Missioni adscriptis et in posterum adscribendis praecipimus, ut tibi debitam reverentiam et obedientiam exhibeant. Te autem in Domino monemus, ut huic tibi concreditae Missioni, pro tuo zelo ac prudentia, meliori quo poteris modo provideas, eamque secundum Regulam et Constitutiones nostras mentemque S. P. N. Alphonsi sedulo dirigas atque gubernes.

Datum Romae, in Collegio nostro ad Ssmum. Redemptorem et in honorem S. Alphonsi, die 8 Aprilis 1870, festo septem Dolorum Beatae Mariae Virginis.

(L. sig.) Nic. Mauron, C. SS. Red.
Sup. Gen. et Rect. Maj.

DOCUMENTO 2

[*Carta de Pedro López a Aquiles Desurmont*] ¹⁴⁰

J.M.J.A.T.

Cuenca 15 de Junio de 1870

M. Rdo. P. Provincial

A fin de poder decir mucho en poco papel, voy a escribir una especie de Boletín de noticias.

Todavía permanecemos en la casa del Obispo, y creo seguiremos aquí hasta fin de año. Esta fundación no es lo que nos dijeron, sino lo que algunos nos temíamos: Acerca de ella es de saberse lo siguiente:

¹⁴⁰ Pedro LÓPEZ, carta a Desurmont, Cuenca, 15 junio 1870, en Roma, AGHR, 30040201,0131.

1º el carácter general de estas gentes es el del [sic] doblez; desde el primero al último están todos más o menos tocados de este defecto; así que no se puede tener fe en lo que dicen, ni en lo que prometen, ni seguridad en su amistad y buen afecto; esto hace que a pesar de estar aquí mes y medio conversando con todos no podamos formar un juicio seguro acerca del porvenir. Se nos hacen muchas promesas pero nosotros tenemos muchos motivos para no estimarlas en nada.

2º La Iglesia de S. Agustín era cuando llegamos aquí la Parroquia del Sagrario; no nos dijeron sino después de muchos días; hicimos luego presente que así no podíamos aceptarla, y al fin con disgusto general de la población se trasladó a la Merced.

3º Todavía han quedado sin embargo en nuestra Iglesia dos Hermandades con sus respectivos Capellanes; estos cantan y tocan el órgano cuando bien les parece; celebran misas y novenas y procesiones sin dar cuenta a nadie; cantan el oficio de difuntos y nos llevan los muertos dejándolos de noche en el templo, porque, como dicen, es así la costumbre.

V. R. dirá ¿que por qué permite esto el P. Superior? A lo cual debo contestar, que el P. cree no debe chocarse en los principios, y además porque espera den a nuestra casa estas capellanías, que dan entre las dos unos quinientos escudos. Yo sin embargo, Padre mío, respetando el parecer del R. P. Superior, no creo conveniente esto último, porque sería motivo de grandes distracciones; pues las misas cantadas, y las visitas de enfermos (si bien esto lo hemos de hacer) y los entierros, y el son del órgano y mil otras cosas son bastante frecuentes; pues ¿qué sería si se instituyese la santa familia y otros ejercicios piadosos?

Es verdad que el P. Sup^r piensa de este modo porque prevé hemos de tener necesidad de dinero, mas no sé si esto pueda ser bastante motivo para comprometernos a tales obligaciones. V. R. verá lo mejor, y determinará lo más conveniente. Por lo demás, yo me acuerdo bien de las cuatro cosas que V. R. nos encargó y desearía que todos se acordasen también, pero la necesidad que se tiene hemos de experimentar, hace creer que es preciso principiar a trabajar mucho para captarnos la benevolencia del pueblo y que nos ayuden con limosnas. Yo no soy de este parecer.

4º El convento está en ruina; para recomponer el Convento y la Iglesia se necesitan cerca de 2.000 escudos: Las rentas son de 400 escudos nada más; y de éstos hay que pagar 100 a la escuela de huérfanas. Las haciendas o fundos no producirán más por espacio de 6 años, porque están arrendadas por todo ese tiempo y no se puede rescindir el contrato; una de sus huertas está arrendada por 4 años, de modo que tenemos que sufrir al arrendatario aunque no queramos, que entre en casa cuando le parezca.

También hay dentro de casa una escuela de párvulos que no sabemos cómo podrá trasladarse. El convento no tiene sino tres celdas regulares, en las cuales viviremos los 5; las mejores han servido a los criminales de calabozo.

zo. Se necesita, como he dicho, bastante dinero para arreglarlo, y el Sr. Obispo no nos promete dinero; la población no tiene más de 25.000 almas y es muy pobre; nuestros mismos amigos nos aseguran que la población no dará nada; desde que estamos aquí no nos han dado sino limosna de 5 misas; las demás hemos celebrado por la casa de Luxemburgo o por nuestra intención particular.

5º Aquí falta todo; lo poco que hay es caro; la arroba de arroz cuesta 15 y ½ francos; la de papas 5 francos. Tenemos necesidad de muebles para preparar la casa y ni el Sr. Obispo ni nadie se da prisa a hacer nada; aquí reina una apatía inexplicable. El Sr. Obispo no nos ha llamado ni una sola vez para hablar ex profeso de nuestra fundación. Esto no lo hace por nada, sino por apatía. Ellos han extendido el documento de entrega y aceptación del convento sin decirnos nada; de modo que lo han puesto como les ha parecido, y por esto se han debido hacer aclaraciones.

En resumen: esta fundación no es lo que decían; es mucho menos de lo que se esperaba; será muy trabajosa y para los que la compongan muy llena de distracciones. Yo juzgo así y me alegraré equivocarme.

Nosotros por lo demás estamos contentos *in spiritu*; esperamos en Dios y estamos dispuestos a todos los sacrificios por Dios. El P. Superior tiene más lisonjeras esperanzas que yo, pero no sé si tiene más motivos para esperar que para temer. ¡Allá veremos!

Si vienen más padres no sé cómo se van a poder colocar en el conventillo.

Por falta de lugar no escribo a esos mis queridos novicios y estudiantes, pero lo haré a otro correo. Salude V. R. a esa sta. Comunidad y encomiende al Sr. a su indigno siervo e hijo en J. C.

Pedro López
C.S.S.R.

N. Perdone V. R. las manchas de que va llena esta carta. No la transcribo por falta de tiempo. Todo lo que nos sucede tal vez sea una señal de que esta es obra de Dios; esto nos anima mucho.

Documento 3

[*Carta de Francisco Machín a Aquiles Desurmont*] ¹⁴⁷

J.M.J.A.T.

Cuenca 16 de Julio de 1870

Mi muy amado y querido R. P. Provincial del S.S. R.

Hayer [Ayer] nos leyó el R. P. Superior algunos puntos de una carta que escribe a V. R., acerca de nuestra posición en esta Ciudad.

Estamos conformes en lo que dice; pues según que ahora se presentan las cosas, nuestra existencia aquí no será muy ventajosa. Si hubiéramos dado una Misión en la Ciudad, sin duda que hubiera sido el mejor medio para mover los ánimos en favor nuestro, o al menos hubiéramos podido juzgar mejor del porvenir; nosotros le hemos instado al Señor Obispo, pero no quiere hasta la cuaresma.

Nosotros predicamos y confesamos en nuestras Iglesias, según se acostumbra hacer; pero como aquí hay tantos confesores, y se predica tanto todos los días en cualquier Iglesia; y por otra parte no están acostumbrados a dar; porque los religiosos que ha habido [...] de aquí en todos los conventos, tenían bastante con su finca; aquí había uno, y tenía bastante, pero ahora somos cinco. Yo no me detengo en hacerle relación de nuestras rentas, porque el R. P. Superior le dirá todo por menor. Con todo de tener tan poca renta, si tuviéramos estipendios de misas para todas las que celebramos, todo se remediaría, pero como hay tan pocos, esto es lo que más desconsuela; en este punto nos hemos llevado un grandísimo petardo. Todos, pues así se concibe la carta que escribió con fecha del 30 de Abril. Es muy diferente la América de lo que nosotros creíamos, no tiene comparación el espíritu Americano con el Europeo.

Nosotros estamos contentos y alegres; pues sabemos que esta es la voluntad de Dios, y que haciendo su voluntad, nada falta. Le diremos antes el estado en que se halla la Iglesia y el Convento.

Atendiendo a las actuales circunstancias, parece imposible podamos hacer semejante obra; porque nosotros no tenemos fondos ni aun para la manutención; las gentes naturalmente parece que son poco piadosas, tocante a dar; las personas acomodadas están por parte de los Jesuitas y Dominicos, y ambos van a hacer obras de mucha consideración. Por consiguiente, antes les ayudarán a ellos que a nosotros y como estas gentes tienen, por otra parte, formado tal concepto de los Europeos que vienen a la América, de no es más que para hacer dinero y mandarlo a su país, todo contribuye.

¹⁴⁷ Francisco MACHÍN, carta a Desurmont, Cuenca, 16 julio 1870, en Roma, AGHR, 30040201,0136.

Sin embargo, no me desanima todo esto, pues que si es obra de Dios, él lo remediará todo. Yo todavía no me atrevo a juzgar siniestramente de nuestra fundación en este punto. Antes, por el contrario, tengo esperanza, juzgando que tal vez lo dispone así, para probarnos y afianzar más la obra. Pero la mejor experiencia y más consoladora que tengo, es que en vista de la relación que hacemos, el Rmo. P. General y V. R. dispondrán inspirados de Dios, lo más [que] convenga, y yo lo aceptaré gustosísimo, así como hasta de [sic] aquí.

En la obra de la Iglesia hay alguna experiencia que nos ayuda alguna cosa; en lo demás no sabemos. De las cofradías que había en nuestra Iglesia, no ha quedado más que la de los pobres, y aun ésta, si tuviéramos estipendios de misas, o, por otra parte, lo necesario, sería conveniente dejarla. En fin, esperamos que Dios lo remediará todo. Nosotros estamos buenos todos; de los P.P. que han venido para Rio=Bamba, hemos sabido que sólo dos han llegado a Guayaquil y que tres quedaron en S. Nazario por no llegar a tiempo para la salida del vapor; hemos sentido semejante percance.

Comunique mis afcs a todos los P.P. y H.H. de esa casa y comunidad, y en particular a los P.P. López y Gandía, dándoles la enhorabuena por su profesión, y que los esperamos, si esto se consolida, así como también a los demás Españoles. En tanto V.R. reciba el corazón de este su humilde siervo que le ama en Jesucristo.

Francisco Machín

DOCUMENTO 4

[*Normas para el Superior de los redentoristas en Suramérica*]¹⁴⁸

Ordinatio pro domibus Americae Meridionalis quae provinciae gallicae subjiciuntur.

1º Vice-Provenciali, his domibus praeposito, attribuuntur, per delegationem, et salva jurisdictione Provincialis, facultates, praerogativae et officia quae sunt, juxta Constitutiones, Provinciali propria; excepto quod, absque recursu ad Provincialem, nec addere nec demere quidquam poterit ordinario nostrorum ministerio apostolico.

2º Praeter duos ordinarios consultores in eadem domo cum ipso commorantes, Vice-Provencialis duos alios habebit in alia domo degentes, consultores extraordinarios; quos consulere debebit in iis tantum pro quibus

¹⁴⁸ [A. DESURMONT], *Ordinatio pro domibus Americae Meridionalis...*

suffragium consultorum decisivum est; necnon in aliis casibus infra designatis.

3º In omnibus negotiis quae per seipsum expendere non potest (ut sunt: fundationes, constructiones, alienatio vel acquisitio bonorum, sumptus majores, conventiones cum auctoritate ecclesiastica vel civili; addita vel dempta ordinario nostrorum ministerio; quantulaecunque sint consuetudines vel desuetudines, vel derogationes, et similia Vice-Provincialis ordinarie primo se dirigit ad Provinciale; postquam, in his omnibus, quatuor consultorum sententiam expostulaverit, quam, cum sua, Provinciali semper exponet.

4º Quando, propter periculum in mora, quaedam hujusmodi majora negotia statim expendenda videbuntur, tria observentur oportet: a) non pronuntietur adesse periculum in mora, nisi ex unanimi quatuor consultorum sententia. b) Semper, in hujusmodi casibus, reservetur approbatio superiorum majorum. c) ac demum statim referatur ad superiores majores.

5º Ad Provinciale scribent quotiescumque voluerint, sed saltem: a) Vice-Provincialis, singulis duobus mensibus, de iis praesertim quae, vi delegationis suae, gesserit. b) Superiores locales, singulis quattuor mensibus, de iis praesertim quae spectant ad domum suam. c) Consultores tum vice-provincialis tum locales, singulis sex mensibus. d) alii subjecti omnes semel in anno.

6º Si Provincia domibus transatlanticis pecuniam commodaverit, haec pecunia statutis temporibus et statuto modo restituatur, prout quotannis provincialis cum vice-provinciali determinaverit.

7º Bis saltem in anno ex Gallia in Americam, et ex America in Galliam ad mutuam omnium consolationem, fraterne scribentur ea quae sunt aedificationis; revisentibus provinciali litteras ex Gallia mittendas, et Viceprovinciali litteras ex America expedendas.

DOCUMENTO 5

[*Petición de Ordóñez y Rescripto de Pío IX sobre supresión de los conventillos en Riobamba*].¹⁴⁹

«BEATÍSIMO PADRE. Existen en Riobamba tres conventillos de Regulares: San Agustín, San Francisco y la Merced. Ninguno de éstos tiene Religioso alguno fijamente establecido, porque o bien algunos fueron desterrados del

¹⁴⁹ José Ignacio ORDÓÑEZ, *Petición*, [Roma], 25 febrero 1870, en AGHR, 300400, Copia hecha por Didier; *Crónica de Riobamba*, I, 15, citada por N. RIVERA, «Provincia de Quito - Ecuador»..., 66.

convento Máximo de Quito por ser incorregibles y entonces el Obispo de Riobamba los saca de su Diócesis por esta misma razón; o viene algún Religioso a servir de Prelado sin comunidad a quien mandar o regir y entonces acabado su encargo se vuelve a Quito para que venga otro.

Y en estas variaciones constantes los que pierden son: la moral pública, por los malos ejemplos con que vienen a escandalizar los Religiosos; y los bienes de los mismos conventillos, porque cada Religioso procura dilapidarlos del mejor modo que le es posible.

En esta virtud y siendo tan difícil a la Diócesis proveerse de sus recursos para el Seminario, y deseando al mismo tiempo el Obispo llevar a uno de estos conventillos algunos Religiosos Redentoristas de Roma, y en el otro conventillo las Religiosas de los Sagrados Corazones, para que eduquen cristianamente a las niñas de Riobamba el Obispo de Riobamba pide:

1º Que Vuestra Santidad se sirva adjudicar a la Diócesis el conventillo de San Agustín para fundar el Seminario. Que el conventillo de la Merced se adjudique a los Redentoristas que llevará el obispo a su Diócesis. Que el conventillo de San Francisco se adjudique a las Religiosas de los Sagrados Corazones ya existentes en otras Diócesis del Ecuador.

2º Que se le conceda facultad al Obispo para hacer un monto total de los bienes de estos tres conventillos y que los reparta entre el Seminario y los dos nuevos Institutos mencionados, a fin de que todos queden proporcionalmente bien dotados; pues en el estado actual solo San Agustín posee bienes de consideración, siendo pobres los otros.

3º Para el efecto del artículo anterior pide a Vuestra Santidad, que al adjudicar los conventillos, sea con todos sus bienes raíces y muebles, sus Iglesias y alhajas y vasos sagrados, casa conventual y toda la area [sic] de terreno correspondiente y dependiente de los conventillos. Entendiéndose que aunque estén arrendados los bienes raíces el precio del arrendamiento corre en favor de la cesión que haga Vuestra Santidad a la Diócesis y a los nuevos Institutos.

Audiencia con el Santo Padre, 25 Febrero 1870».

[El mismo día recibe esta respuesta favorable]:

«Nuestro Santísimo Señor, por la divina Providencia el Papa Pío IX, recibida la información del infrascrito Secretario de la Sagrada Congregación para los negocios eclesiásticos extraordinarios, movido por lo expuesto en ella y por las especiales circunstancias, concedió benignamente al R. P. D. José Ignacio Obispo de Riobamba, la facultad de suprimir los tres conventos a los que se refiere la petición, y de asignar el convento de San Agustín al Seminario Diocesano, el de Nuestra Señora de la Merced a los Religiosos del Santísimo Redentor, y el de San Francisco a las monjas del Sagrado Corazón.

En cuanto a los bienes temporales que pertenecen a los conventos de San Agustín y a Nuestra Señora de la Merced, previa una congrua pensión vitalicia que ha de asignar el Obispo peticionario a los religiosos varones que los habitan, otorgó la facultad de disponer de la mitad de dichos bienes para el Seminario diocesano y de la otra mitad para los Religiosos del Santísimo Redentor, observados por lo demás los acuerdos existentes entre la Santa Sede y el Gobierno del Ecuador. Sin que obste nada en contra. Dado en Roma, en la Secretaría de la misma Sagrada Congregación, el día, mes y año indicados. Maximus [...].¹⁵⁰

DOCUMENTO 6

[*Breve de Pío IX sobre supresión de los conventillos en Cuenca*].¹⁵¹

«Ex audientia Ssmi. Die 8. Martii 1870. Ssmus. Dominus Noster Pius divina Providentia Papa IX referente me infrascripto S. Congregationis Negotiis Ecclesiasticis extraordinariis praeposito Secretario, attentis expositis et peculiaribus circumstantiis animum suum moventibus, R. P. D. Antonio Remigio Episcopo Conchensi in Republica Aequatoriana facultatem benigne concessit supprimendi quatuor Coenobia de quibus in precibus sermo est, et assignandi Coenobium S. Francisci Hospitio pro recipiendis pauperibus ecclesiasticis viris, praesertim illis qui visivae potentiae debilitate laborant vel alia infirmitas detinentur; Coenobium S. Maria de Mercede ejusque Ecclesiam Parocho pro tempore Ecclesiae Cathedralis; Coenobium S. Augustini Religiosis Ssmi. Redemptoris; et Coenobium S. Dominici Fratibus qui ex scholis christianis nomen ducunt. Quod vero spectat ad bona temporalia, quae ad Coenobia S. Mariae de Mercede, S. Augustini, et S. Dominici pertinent, Sanctitas Sua, praevia congrua pensione ab Episcopo Oratore assignanda quoad vixerint religiosi viri qui in iisdem commorantur, facultatem concessit assignandi eadem bona pro suo prudenti arbitrio partim Hospitio pro recipiendis presbyteris infirmis, et partim religiosi Ssmi. Redemptoris, et Scholarum Christianarum, unicuique pro ea quantitate quam in Domino expedire censerit. Praedicta autem bona naturam ecclesiasticam semper conservabunt. Contrariis quibuscumque minime obfuturis. Datum Romae e Secretaria ejusdem S. Congregationis, die, mense et anno praedictis».

¹⁵⁰ MAXIMUS, Archiepiscopo-Episcopus Urbinetanus Pro Secretarius, Rescripto de la Santa Sede, previa solicitud del obispo de Riobamba, acerca del convento de San Agustín y otros, 25.02.1870, copia en AGHR, 300400.

¹⁵¹ Cf. SANTA SEDE, Rescripto, 8 marzo 1870, copia en AGHR, 30040201,0122.

Documento 7

[*Auto de adjudicación del convento a los Redentoristas en Cuenca*].¹⁵²

«Nos el D. D. Remijio Estévez de Toral, Obispo de Cuenca por la gracia de Dios i de la Sta. Sede.

Por cuanto la Santa Sede, por razones cuya justicia reconocemos, ha tenido a bien suprimir el conventillo San Agustín de esta ciudad, adjudicando a los religiosos de la orden del Santísimo Redentor el local i las temporalidades que a él pertenecen, i considerando: primero que el Convento Máximo de San Agustín, desde años atrás, no ha enviado a esta Diócesis más que un solo religioso; razón por la que no ha habido comunidad; segundo que este religioso que ha hecho de Prelado, i en quien se han invertido todas las rentas, casi nada ha trabajado por el bien espiritual de los fieles; tercero que cuando ha tenido que predicar en la Catedral una vez en el año, casi siempre ha ocurrido a otros eclesiásticos, llegando el abandono en este punto hasta el extremo de suprimir el sermón en esta última cuaresma, con notable desedificación de todo el pueblo; cuarto que en los religiosos Agustinos que han venido a esta ciudad no hemos visto resplandecer las virtudes cristianas, que son el mayor ornamento de la vida monástica; ni la ciencia, ni otras cualidades que exigen el ministerio sacerdotal i la ilustración del siglo; quinto en fin, que algunos Prelados anteriores al P. Fr. Alejandro Espinel han enajenado varios terrenos i la plata labrada, sin que del producto de estas ventas haya resultado la más pequeña ventaja al conventillo.

Por tanto, convencidos como nos hallamos de las inmensas ventajas que, para el progreso de estos pueblos van a resultar con el establecimiento del Instituto de los PP. del Stsmo. Redentor, en quienes brillan todas las virtudes, la ciencia i la versación en todo lo concerniente a la vida práctica, i debiendo llenar las respetables órdenes de Nuestro Santísimo Padre el Señor Pío IX que con su buen corazón desea ardientemente mejorar la condición moral de la grey que la mano de Dios ha puesto bajo su cuidado, tenemos a bien, en cumplimiento de la superior disposición expresada en el Breve de 8 de marzo del presente año, declarar suprimido el conventillo de San Agustín de esta ciudad, adjudicando en propiedad a los PP. Redentoristas, en el modo i forma que los cánones ordenan, la iglesia con todos sus paramentos, el local con las tiendas a él anexas; las haciendas con todos sus aperos; los censos i demás cosas pertenecientes al mencionado conventillo, debiendo entregárse-

¹⁵² REMIGIO, obispo de Cuenca, Auto, Cuenca, 30 mayo 1870, firma el secretario Mariano Borja, en AGHR, 30040201,0006. Hay dos copias de traducciones francesas: "Traduction du contrat imposé par Mgnr. l'Evêque de Cuenca et signée par le R. P. Grisar".

les todo bajo formal inventario, por las personas que designaremos oportunamente.

Los Redentoristas están obligados a dar culto a la Virgen Santísima de la Consolación i al Gran P. San Agustín, que ocuparán siempre el lugar que la piedad de los fieles les ha designado; i a predicar en la Catedral en la dominica tercera de cuaresma; cuidarán de asear la iglesia, de edificar la parte del conventillo que está destruida por la incuria de los religiosos, i de refaccionar la otra parte que amenaza ruina; arreglarán las rentas, teniendo presente que las propiedades de San Agustín han pertenecido al ex-Prior, sólo hasta la fecha del presente Auto; fomentarán la piedad con su acostumbrado celo, i con arreglo a su Instituto, tanto en esta ciudad, como en los pueblos de la Diócesis, atendiendo preferentemente i con caridad a los enfermos que necesiten i pidan su asistencia.

Durante su permanencia en este Obispado de Fr. Alejandro Espinel, en calidad de religioso, le pasarán dos pesos por semana para su alimento i cincuenta pesos por año para su vestuario. Como S. Santidad en el Breve de extinción, hablando de las temporalidades, dice estas terminantes palabras: *Praedicta autem naturam ecclesiasticam semper conservabunt*, declaramos que si alguna vez por cualquier acontecimiento se separaren los Redentoristas del conventillo que se les asigna, este, con todas sus temporalidades, se conservará siempre bajo el dominio de la iglesia, sin que ninguna autoridad pueda disponer de cosa alguna, por santo i laudable que sea el fin que se proponga.

Para que el Supremo Gobierno tenga en este importante asunto la intervención de que habla el artículo 20 del Concordato, diríjase este auto a SE. el Presidente de la República con la nota de estilo i remítanse copias legalizadas al Exmo. Sor. Delegado Apostólico, al Señor Gobernador de la Provincia, al Rdo. P. General de la orden del Santísimo Redentor i al Rdo. P. Provincial de San Agustín.

Dése cuenta con todo lo obrado al Romano Pontífice, expresándole el respeto i exactitud con que se ha cumplido el Breve de extinción y adjudicación del conventillo ya mencionado.

Dado en el Palacio Episcopal, en Cuenca, a treinta de mayo de mil ochocientos setenta.

= Remijio, Obispo de Cuenca.

= Por mandado de S. Sría. Ilma. i Rdma. Mariano Borja, Secretario.

Es copia.

Mariano Borja, Srio.»

Documento 8

[*Auto de adjudicación del convento a los Redentoristas en Riobamba*].¹⁵³

«Nos el Doctor José Ignacio Ordóñez, por la gracia de Dios i de la Santa Sede Apostólica, Obispo de Riobamba &

Por cuanto nuestro Santísimo Padre Pío IX por Rescripto de 25 de Febrero de 1870 nos ha concedido la autorización necesaria para que podamos suprimir los conventillos de San Agustín, La Merced y San Francisco de nuestra Diócesis, autorizándonos al mismo tiempo para que en uno de ellos podamos establecer y establezcamos el instituto de los P. P. Redentoristas, adjudicando en favor de estos Religiosos una parte de los bienes raíces de los conventillos suprimidos; por tanto y en razón de que tenemos ya establecidos a los Religiosos Redentoristas en nuestra Diócesis, y de que hemos declarado y ejecutado la secularización de los predichos Conventillos, tenemos a bien, disponer lo siguiente:

1º Se adjudica a los P. P. Redentoristas el antiguo Conventillo de San Agustín de esta ciudad, con su Iglesia, paramentos, vasos sagrados y alhajas de la misma iglesia; igualmente que toda el área del terreno contiguo y perteneciente al conventillo.

2º De los bienes varios que pertenecían a los Conventillos de San Agustín y la Merced, se hará un monto total, cuya mitad corresponderá a los P. P. Redentoristas, y la otra mitad a nuestro Seminario Conciliar. Quedan por tanto los P. P. Redentoristas, con derecho a la enunciada mitad, y aunque el reparto real y efectivo se haga después, sus frutos y rentas les corresponden desde ahora.

3º La Comunidad de Redentoristas vivirá siempre en vida común y en estricta observancia de sus Reglas, como es su deber. En consecuencia se dedicarán con todo esmero a las tareas de su santo ministerio, evangelizando las ciudades, pueblos y aldeas de nuestra Diócesis, por medio de misiones, renovaciones, triduos, novenas y demás ejercicios de su santo ministerio; dando con frecuencia, según su voluntad (y en los casos que lo dispusiere el Prelado), ejercicios espirituales al clero y al pueblo, acompañando al Prelado

¹⁵³ P. DIDIER, carta a Mauron, Riobamba, 3 mayo 1871, en AGHR, 300400: «Ceci est l'auto du changement qu'à fait Mgr. nous donnant S. Augustin au lieu de la Merced, avec l'approbation de S. E. le Délégué Apostolique»; hay dos copias en español y una en francés ordenadas por Didier el 3 y 6 mayo 1871; cf. la nota del Delegado Apostólico Serafín Vannutelli, en AGHR, 30040201,0019; N. RIVERA, «Provincia de Quito - Ecuador»..., 69-70: se adjudicaba a los redentoristas el convento e iglesia de san Agustín, con el terreno contiguo, las haciendas de Galte y Atapo, cuyas rentas debían asegurar el establecimiento y progreso de la comunidad.

a las visitas pastorales de la Diócesis (sin perjuicio de las misiones), anunciando la palabra divina en sermones, pláticas doctrinales y morales, instrucciones, catecismos en la ciudad y pueblos de la Diócesis, celebrando en su propia iglesia todas aquellas sagradas funciones, fiestas, distribuciones, novenas y octavas que se acostumbran en su propia orden (las de costumbre en esta Diócesis) y las que fueren de mayor provecho espiritual de los fieles; asistiendo diaria y asiduamente al sagrado tribunal de la Penitencia; estableciendo y dirigiendo las Cofradías, Congregaciones y Asociaciones propias de su Orden y aprobadas por la Santa Sede.

En fin, se dedicarán a todos los trabajos de su santo ministerio según el fin, las reglas y constituciones de su Instituto; tributando siempre al Obispo la obediencia y respetuosa deferencia que exigen (su carácter sacerdotal) y sus reglas; así como será obligación del Obispo no exigir de los P. P. Redentoristas nada que fuera contrario a sus reglas y constituciones (a menos de que, por justas razones, pueda en algunos casos hacerse con dispensa del mismo Superior de la Comunidad).

4º Si por acaso sucediese que la Orden Redentorista se extinguiese o saliese de la Diócesis para no regresar, todas sus temporalidades, sus derechos y pertenencias, volverán al dominio y libre disposición del Obispo.

5º Siendo el convento de esta ciudad la casa principal y residencia del Superior de la Misión del Ecuador, se abrirá en él luego que se pueda, un noviciado y casa de estudios para los aspirantes que desean alistarse bajo las banderas de los hijos de San Alfonso María de Liguorio.

6º Luego que les sea posible, harán los reparos convenientes que necesita la Iglesia y edificarán el convento agregando a éste una casa de ejercicios para el Clero y los fieles a cuyo fin pedirán las autorizaciones necesarias al Rmo. P. General, lo más pronto que puedan.

En fin, como en el rescripto de secularización de los Conventillos consta que fue designado el Conventillo de la Merced para los P. P. Redentoristas, y como por el presente auto consta que les hemos adjudicado el de San Agustín, por ser el más a propósito para el servicio del público, y siendo aún más a propósito el Conventillo de San Francisco para establecer en él nuestro Seminario; tenemos a bien elevar el presente auto a conocimiento del Excmo Sor. Delegado Apostólico, para que se sirva aprobar este cambio.

Dado en Riobamba a tres de mayo de mil ochocientos setenta y uno.

José Ignacio

Loco sigilli

Obispo de Riobamba

Delegación Apostólica, Quito a 6 de mayo de 1871

En virtud de las facultades apostólicas que Nos ha concedido el Sumo Pontífice, aprobamos en todas sus partes el auto que antecede, y en vista de

la mayor comodidad para el servicio del público y el establecimiento del nuevo Seminario, que son los principales objetos a que miraba el Rescripto Pontificio de secularización de los Conventillos, ratificamos y confirmamos lo dispuesto en la última parte del auto mencionado relativa al cambio del Conventillo de La Merced en el de San Agustín para los R. R. P. P. Redentoristas y a la destinación del Conventillo de San Francisco para el Seminario Conciliar. En fe de que

Serafín, Arzobispo de Nicea
Delegado Aptico.

Loco sigilli

Concordat cum originali,

P. Didier CSSR. Sup.».

SUMMARY

In the context of the First Vatican Council, a foundation was made by the Redemptorists in the Republic of Ecuador. Two bishops of this country, in accord with Most Rev. Nicolas Mauron, decided that the Redemptorists of the then Province of Gallico-Helvetica should establish a mission in their dioceses of Cuenca and Riobamba in 1870. This article describes the discussions, preparations, voyage and early missionary activity of the sons of Saint Alphonsus. It is their first stable presence in the Ibero-American region.



MARIAN BRUDZISZ, CSSR

IL CONVENTO SEGRETO DEI REDENTORISTI A PIOTRKOWICE
(POLONIA) 1824-1834/41

Introduzione. 1. - *La nascita della casa segreta di Piotrkowice e la sua situazione giuridica e materiale*; 2. - *Gli inizi della comunità, lo sviluppo, la formazione e la vita quotidiana*; 3. - *L'attività apostolica, educativa e patriottica*; 4. - *La liquidazione del convento segreto*

INTRODUZIONE

Dopo la soppressione di San Bennone a Varsavia, Clemente Hofbauer non riuscì ad organizzare una comunità né a Pruszyn, né a Janów nella Podolia. Non riuscì nemmeno a partire per il Canada, né a mandare lì alcuni redentoristi, sogno che perseguiva verso la fine della sua vita. Ottenne invece l'approvazione della congregazione dalla monarchia degli Asburgo. Il convento di Vienna, in via Am Gestade, divenne la terza culla dei redentoristi d'oltralpe, accanto a quello di Varsavia e a quello in Svizzera. Proprio i redentoristi formati nei suddetti conventi diedero inizio all'"esplosione" dei redentoristi nell'Europa Centro-Occidentale e nei vari continenti.

1. - *La nascita della casa segreta di Piotrkowice e la sua situazione giuridica e materiale*

La nascita della casa segreta

Il successore di Clemente Hofbauer nel ruolo di Vicario dei redentoristi d'oltralpe, P. Giuseppe Amando Passerat¹, nominato dall'amministrazione generale, aveva assunto questo incarico già nel

¹ I dati su P. Giuseppe Passerat (1772-1858) vedi: A. DESURMONT, *Le R. P. J. Passerat et sous sa conduit les rédemptoristes pendant les guerres de l'Empire*, Montreuil-sur-Mer 1893; J. GENAUD, *Le R. P. Passerat, rédemptorist et son œuvre en Suisse*, Fribourg 1903; H. GIROUILLE, *Vie du vénérable P. Joseph Passerat*, Paris 1924; P. DEBOGNIE, *Joseph - Amand Passerat*, Paris 1938.

1820. Divenne uno dei membri del suo consiglio P. Giovanni Podgórski,² che arrivò a Vienna, alla sede del vicariato, verso la fine dell'anno³. Si può legittimamente supporre che subito dopo la costituzione del consiglio del vicariato d'oltralpe quest'ultimo si occupasse dei redentoristi-bennoniti dispersi sia nel Regno di Prussia che nel così detto Regno di Polonia rimasto sotto l'autorità dello zar russo. Lo conferma la lettera di P. Passerat all'amministrazione generale di Pagani che informava delle difficoltà relative alla presa di contatto con loro⁴. Gli ottimi rapporti con il P. Podgórski e i vescovi Giovanni Paolo Wo-

² P. Giovanni Podgórski, il primo Polacco redentorista, nato l'11 luglio 1775 nel paese Brewki. Frequentò la scuola dei bennoniti già dal 1790, entrò nella congregazione probabilmente nel 1793, emise i voti religiosi il 23 I 1794 e fu ordinato sacerdote il 10 VI 1797. Dotato di un particolare talento di predicatore, parlava molte lingue e tradusse in polacco almeno due opere di sant'Alfonso M. de Liguori. Verso la fine dell'esistenza del convento di San Bennone fu prefetto dei seminaristi e maestro dei novizi. Clemente Hofbauer vedeva in lui uno dei due candidati (oltre il P. Passerat), destinati ad essere un eventuale suo successore nell'ufficio di vicario generale. Nel 1815 al nunzio di Vienna lo propose tra l'altro per il vescovado di Skopje (Macedonia). Dalla fine del 1820 abitò a Vienna come membro del consiglio del vicario d'oltralpe, P. Giuseppe Passerat. In quel periodo si impegnò ad organizzare il convento segreto a Piotrkowice presso Kielce nel così detto Regno di Polonia per poter radunare almeno una parte dei redentoristi che dal 1808 costituivano la comunità di san Bennone. Nel 1834 dovette abbandonare questo posto e partire per la Repubblica di Cracovia. Non potendo partire per Vienna lavorò nella pastorale e morì il 6 marzo 1847. *Monumenta Hofbaueriana. Acta quae ad vitam S. Clementis Hofbauer referuntur*, [Ed. Ladislao Szoldrski], voll. I-XV. Kraków-Toruń-Rzym 1915-1951, passim; in modo particolare i volumi 9 e 10; Archivum Generale Historicum CSsR, Acta antiqua (in seguito: AG, AA), IX A 19, IX C 106; B. LUBIENSKI, *O. Jan Podgórski, redemptorysta, towarzysz św. Klemensa (1775-1847) (P. Giovanni Podgórski, compagno di Clemente Hofbauer, 1775-1847)*, Kraków 1913; M. BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze i w tajnym klasztorze w Piotrkowicach 1824-1834 (1841) (Nella diaspora e nel convento segreto di Piotrkowice)*, Kraków 1994; K. SZRANT, *Redemptoristae in Polonia dispersi post suppressionem conventus s. Bennonis an. 1808*, in: *SHCSR* 7 (1959) 119, 131-150; E. HOSP, *Erbe des hl. Klemens Maria Hofbauer*, Wien 1953, 45-46, 69-71, 245-248, 326-328.

³ MH IX 358, lettera di P. Passerat alle autorità statali del 5 II 1821 riguardo al "Nationalrecht" per P. Podgórski.

⁴ A. SAMPERS, *Epistularum commercium inter patres CSSR in Italia et trans Alpes a morte s. Clementis, 15 III 1820 usque ad electionem RM Cocle, 11 IV 1824*, in: *SHCSR* 9 (1961) 150; parte finale della lettera di Passerat al generale Mansioni, 18 XI 1821. Nel testo della lettera (*ibid.*, p. 141-142) elenca 15 redentoristi-bennoniti di Varsavia ai quali ha scritto lettere ricevendo soltanto tre risposte. In questa circostanza consiglia al P. Generale di non mettere nelle lettere d'occasione ai redentoristi, negli indirizzi, nessuna notizia né sul redentorista né sullo scopo della lettera. P. Podgórski doveva considerare ciò visto che era pedinato personalmente.

ronicz⁵, di Cracovia, e Adalberto Skarszewski⁶, di Lublino, e con altre famiglie nobili, che già in precedenza erano in relazione con Clemente

⁵ Giovanni Paolo Woronicz, nato nel 1743, nel 1773 si trovava nel noviziato dei gesuiti e dopo la loro soppressione passò al clero diocesano. Nel 1784 fu ordinato sacerdote, nel 1815 diventò vescovo di Cracovia e nel 1828 arcivescovo di Varsavia. Appoggiava decisamente i programmi di P. Podgórski. Morì il 6 XII 1829. Vedi *Hierarchia catholica Medii et Recentioris Aevi...*, ed. R. Ritzler e P. Sefrin, vol. VII, Patavii 1986, 166, 290; Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej Krakowskiej (Archivio della Curia Metropolitana di Cracovia), Akta parafialne (Atti parrocchiali) B (in seguito: AKMKr, APB), manoscritto n° 137 passim.

⁶ Adalberto Skarszewski, nato nel 1743, nel 1790 diventò vescovo di Chełm e nel 1805 vescovo di Lublino, nel 1824 arcivescovo di Varsavia. Vedi *Hierarchia catholica* (vedi nota 5), vol. VII, p. 162-163. Simpatizzò con la Russia e nel 1794 i rivoluzionari di Varsavia chiesero la sua impiccagione. Fu salvato dalla forza grazie all'intercessione di Lorenzo Litta, nunzio di Varsavia. Nutriva una simpatia per i redentoristi, accettò nella sua diocesi quattro di loro, anche se non appartenevano al suo territorio. Si trattava di Giovanni Podgórski, Carlo Jestershein, Michele Sadowski e Carlo Moneta. Per le informazioni biografiche sul P. Podgórski vedi la nota 2.

P. Carlo Jestershein merita maggiore attenzione. Nato a Gera in Sassonia, probabilmente nel 1765, era ultimo rettore del convento di San Bennone negli anni 1807-1808. Prima di entrare nella congregazione aveva studiato architettura all'Università di Breslavia e probabilmente anche musica, emise la professione nel 1789 e fu ordinato sacerdote il 27 febbraio 1791. Per lunghi anni fu economo nel convento di San Bennone dirigendo inoltre il coro e l'orchestra. Dopo aver ricevuto la libertà a Kostrzyn si recò in Sassonia, cercando aiuti presso la corte del suo monarca, il re Federico Augusto, principe anche del Ducato di Varsavia. La sua intenzione era quella di riabilitare i redentoristi bennoniti dalle diffamazioni delle autorità e della stampa e riacquistare le loro proprietà. A questo scopo scrisse una lettera al maresciallo L. Davout, uno speciale memoriale fino a oggi non ritrovato. Inoltre, probabilmente con il consenso del principe di Varsavia Federico Augusto, riuscì a raggiungere a Varsavia Giovanni Łuszczewski, ministro degli interni, per cercare di salvare le proprietà della congregazione. In definitiva si insediò non nella Sassonia o nella Slesia, dove si trovavano i possedimenti della sua famiglia, ma nella così detta Galizia Occidentale a Pruszyń (settembre 1808), che in quel periodo si trovava ancora sotto la dominazione austriaca. In seguito alla sconfitta dell'Austria nella campagna bellica del 1809, Pruszyń si trovò ai confini del Ducato di Varsavia. A Pruszyń diresse la costruzione della chiesa da lui precedentemente progettata, svolgendo varie funzioni sociali ed educative. Col tempo, ufficialmente autorizzato da Clemente Hofbauer (1811), riacquistò praticamente tutto il patrimonio dei redentoristi-bennoniti (1816). Negli anni seguenti si insediò a Varsavia, dove per un certo periodo svolse le funzioni di tesoriere della Fraternità di san Bennone e dal 1825 fino al 1827 fu provvisore del Seminario Principale presso l'Università di Varsavia. Verso la fine della sua vita si trasferì a Kozłówka presso Lublino dove amministrò la tenuta di Maddalena Lubomirska, benefattrice della congregazione e dove morì il 24 giugno 1844, vedi MH XV (Index alphabeticus...), e inoltre IX 77 e 79; Archiwum Diecezji Podlaskiej (Archivio Diocesano di Podlachia), Akta parafii (Atti parrocchiali), P IV 15, vol I (*Akta parafii w Pruszyńie 1830-1979*), senza impaginazione; Archiwum Parafialne w Pruszyńie (Ar-

Hofbauer a Vienna, crearono la possibilità di organizzare una comunità composta almeno in parte con i dispersi. La fondazione della casa di Piotrkowice si poté realizzare grazie all'appoggio particolare dei coniugi Stanisłao Tarnowski e Laura Potocka⁷, residenti a Tarnoskała presso Piotrkowice, che si recavano spesso a Vienna, perché specialmente la baronessa Laura subiva l'influenza di Hofbauer e in seguito

chivio parrocchiale di Pruszyn), Akta parafii (Atti parrocchiali), vol. III (qui tra l'altro *Notaty (Annotazioni)* dal testamento di *Carlo Jestershein*, e inoltre l'estratto dell'inventario fatto dopo la sua morte); Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (Archivio Centrale degli Atti Antichi) (in seguito: AGAD), Centralne Władze Wyznaniowe (Le Autorità Centrali per le Confessioni Religiose) (in seguito: CWW), manoscritto n° 370 passim; manoscritto n° 371, p. 63-93; R. MAĆZYŃSKI, *Koncerty u benonitów. Z dziejów życia muzycznego Warszawy na przełomie XVIII i XIX wieku (Concerti presso i benoniti. Della storia della vita di musica a Varsavia, a cavallo di XVIII e XIX secolo)*, in: *Muzyka*, 1989, q. 4, p. 65-102.

P. Michele Sadowski, nato nel 1777, emise la professione religiosa verso la fine del 1797 (13 novembre ?) e fu ordinato sacerdote nel 1800. Lavorò inizialmente nella chiesa di san Bennone, dal 1803 fino al 1808 come vicario nella parrocchia di Lutkówka. Dopo la soppressione del convento di san Bennone si recò a Pruszyn dove possedeva il patronato Elena Chrapowicka, benefattrice della congregazione e membro dell'Associazione degli Oblati del Santissimo Redentore. Inizialmente fu vicario e dal 1819 parroco. Morì il 28 XII 1829. MH II 23; IV 148, 151; VII 68, 69; VIII 61; IX 77-78, 356; XIII 251; A. SAMPERS, *Epistularum commercium inter RM Cocle et VG Passerat, Jan-Oct. 1830*, in: *SHCSR* 14 (1966) 128, 135-136 (le lettere del 23 marzo e 21 maggio 1830); BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), p. 19-20; SZRANT, *Redemptoristae* (vedi nota 2), p. 127; Archiwum Parafialne w Pruszyńcu (vedi sopra), *Księga aktów zejścia (Libro dei deceduti), 1826-1831*, sotto la data del 28 dicembre 1829.

Carlo Moneta, nato a Varsavia circa nel 1785, entrò nella congregazione nel 1806 oppure nel 1807, emise i voti religiosi prima del 20 giugno 1808. Completò gli studi nel Seminario della Santa Croce presso i Padri Missionari (Lazzaristi) e fu ordinato sacerdote nel 1809, intraprese il lavoro nella diocesi di Varsavia. Probabilmente nel 1814 si trasferì nella diocesi di Lublino governata dal vescovo Adalberto Skarszewski ben disposto verso i redentoristi. Nel 1816 diventò parroco di Kock ma nel 1827 rinunciò a questo incarico in seguito alle incomprensioni con le autorità ecclesiali e laiche. Ancora nel 1820 si presentava come redentorista che aveva rapporti con il governo della congregazione. Non sono finora note le sue ulteriori vicende come anche la data della sua morte. Archiwum Diecezjalne w Siedlcach (Archivio Diocesano di Siedlce), Fasc. 508: *Akta Diecezji Podlaskiej w sprawie zarzutów przeciwko osobom duchownym (Atti della Diocesi di Podlachia riguardanti le accuse contro i sacerdoti)*, p. 182, 201-203, 226-229, 252-253; *Ibid.*, *Akta parafii w Kocku (Atti della parrocchia a Kock)*, vol. 1 (1820-1916), senza impaginazione) vedi: *Inwentarz probostwa Kocka w czasie objęcia przez X. Monetę i po rezygnacji Jego (Inventario della parrocchia a Kock)*; MH XV 192 (Index alphabeticus...); BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 16.

⁷ Laura Potocka (morta nel 1868) figlia di Giovanni Potocki, fratello di Stanisłao, che partecipò all'espulsione dei redentoristi da Varsavia, e di Ludovica d'Aloy. Probabilmente apparteneva agli Oblati del Santissimo Redentore.

di Passerat. Tutti si impegnarono in quest'opera rischiosa perché molti dei nemici dei redentoristi erano ancora vivi e occupavano posizioni di rilievo anche nel governo. Ufficialmente, all'inizio, l'opera intrapresa non doveva risultare come convento dei redentoristi, ma come un grande centro pastorale, che includesse la parrocchia, il santuario locale e la gestione di una scuola elementare e di una scuola per la preparazione ai mestieri (la copia di san Bennone). D'accordo con l'ordinario della diocesi di Cracovia, sul cui territorio si trovava Piotrkowice, e con la Commissione Governativa per le Confessioni Religiose e l'Educazione Pubblica, si decise di liquidare il convento quasi vuoto dei Frati Minori (bernardini) e di trasferire la parrocchia nella loro chiesa. Poiché qualche anno prima il governo del Regno di Polonia aveva liquidato alcuni conventi, specialmente le abbazie, questo programma fu considerato positivamente dai governanti, perché sembrò loro che entrasse nel quadro di un'azione politica anti-religiosa. Stanisłao Grabowski⁸, in base a una documentazione scritta, "ufficialmente" sapeva che la parrocchia riformata sarebbe stata assegnata a "sacerdoti secolari". Veniva usato abitualmente questo termine compreso nel titolo della costituzione della congregazione, allo scopo preciso di mascherare la realtà. Probabilmente egli capì il gioco dei termini e di che cosa si trattasse realmente, ma grazie a Laura Tarnowska e a P. Giovanni Podgórski, non approfondì. Con un tale appoggio, nell'arco degli anni dal 1823 al 1825, si maturò la proposta dei coniugi benefattori Tarnowski relativa al trasferimento della parrocchia da una piccola chiesa ad una più grande e in muratura, presso la quale si trovava il convento dei Frati Minori (bernardini) che era abitato da un solo padre e un fratello. Questo progetto fu firmato dai benefattori il 16 XI 1823 ed in seguito è stato accettato dal vescovo di Cracovia, Giovanni Woronicz. Il 23 I 1824 il vescovo inoltrò la petizione di chiudere il convento dei bernardini alla Commissione Governativa per le Confessioni e l'Educazione Pubblica, che fu accolta il 5

⁸ Stanisłao Grabowski (1780-1845), figlio naturale del re della Polonia Stanisłao Augusto Poniatowski, inizialmente liberale e massone, convertitosi dopo il 1812, probabilmente sotto l'influenza della sua amica Laura Potocka, futura moglie di Stanisłao Tarnowski. Dal 1821 fino al 1831 svolse la funzione di ministro della Commissione per le Confessioni Religiose e l'Educazione Pubblica. Nel 1830 cercò di difendere la casa dei redentoristi a Piotrkowice. Gli storici liberali lo considerarono "retrivo". Vedi J. ZANOWA, *Grabowski Stanisław (1780-1845)*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny (Dizionario biografico dei Polacchi)*, in seguito: PSB), vol. VIII (1959-1960) 508-511; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 87-94; *Monumenta Hofbaueriana*, Bd. XVI, herausgegeben von M. Brudzisz und H. Schermann, Innsbruck 1998, 74.

VIII 1824. Una commissione speciale eseguì la chiusura del convento e nei giorni 29 VIII - 2 IX 1824 stese un rapporto di presa-consegna⁹. Dopo questo atto il collatore Stanislao Tarnowski, il 4 IX 1824, redasse un documento con cui proponeva alla Commissione per i Culti Religiosi e l'Educazione Pubblica la candidatura del P. Podgórski a parroco di Piotrkowice. Il 2 X 1824 la proposta fu accettata

Visto che la costituzione proibiva ai redentoristi di prendere possesso delle parrocchie, il vicario generale P. Giuseppe Passerat già il 24 XI 1823 si rivolse all'amministrazione generale di Pagani chiedendo una deroga a quella regola, che fu concessa mediante lettera del 20 gennaio 1824, con la riserva che si trattasse di un consenso temporaneo¹⁰. Su questa base P. Podgórski poteva agire e perciò il 27 VIII 1824 dopo la rinuncia di Don Giovanni Reynowicz, parroco di allora, nello stesso giorno P. Simone Majewski¹¹, redentorista, subentrò nel lavoro pastorale, quindi prima ancora della nomina formale da parte dell'ufficio di P. Podgórski. Con questi precedenti, il vescovo di Cracovia Giovanni Woronicz nominò un nuovo parroco, che assunse l'incarico il 29 XI 1824 e questa data deve essere considerata come l'inizio del convento segreto a Piotrkowice¹². Insieme a P. Podgórski

⁹ AGAD (vedi nota 6), manoscritto n° 454, p. 9-12; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 12-14, 311-320; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 27-29.

¹⁰ SAMPERS, *Epistularum commercium inter Patres CSsR in Italia et trans Alpes a morte S. Clementis, 15 III 1820, usque ad electionem RM Cocle* (vedi nota 4), 194.

¹¹ Simone Majewski, nato il 20 X 1778 a Bodzanów, entrò nella congregazione nel 1799, inizialmente fratello, fu ordinato sacerdote il 10 VIII 1807. Dopo il ritorno da Kostrzyn lavorò come vicario a Kutno e dal 1820 come amministratore della parrocchia di Łąkoszyn. Nel 1822 si licenziò e secondo P. Szoldrski partì per la Svizzera. Nel 1825 attraverso Cracovia si recò nel convento segreto dei redentoristi a Piotrkowice. Lì morì asfissiato il 4 marzo 1826.

Vedi MH I 86, IX 114, 170, 221, XV 190-191 (Index alphabeticus...); [I. Dylewski], *Rys krótki powożeń i osobliwych zdarzeń w Zgromadzeniu naszym wypadłych od roku tysiąc osiemset dwudziestego czwartego, to jest od początku ufundowania tego zgromadzenia w Piotrkowicach (Breve storia dei successi e dei particolari avvenimenti nella nostra Congregazione dall'anno mille ottocento venti quattro, allora dalla fondazione di codesta Congregazione a Piotrkowice)* (in seguito: *Rys krótki*), manoscritto in: Archiwum Warszawskiej Prowincji Redemptorystów (Archivio dei Redentoristi della Provincia di Varsavia) (in seguito: AWPR), p. 44, 45, 65, 66; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 18.

¹² AGAD (vedi nota 6), Komisja Rządowa Spraw Wewnętrznych (Commissione Statale per gli Affari Interni) (in seguito: KRSW), manoscritto n° 7125, k. 28v-31r; *ibid.*, CWW, manoscritto n° 454, p. 5-12; ADK, AK, PP-10/1, k. 13r-18r, 25r-26r, 36v, 49r, 51r-53r; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 147-150, 311-317; *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 44-46; SZRANT, *Redemptoristae* (vedi nota 2), 135-137;

venne a Piotrkowice il neo-presbitero Paulino Trepka, che probabilmente emise la professione religiosa soltanto nella nuova casa¹³.

Nella documentazione sia della curia della diocesi di Cracovia che della Commissione Governativa per i Culti Religiosi e l'Educazione Pubblica, non viene detto nemmeno una volta che la parrocchia e il convento erano stati presi dai redentoristi.

La situazione giuridica

Ci si rendeva però conto che la nuova casa nata con il consenso del vescovo di Cracovia, del vicario dei redentoristi d'oltralpe e delle autorità supreme della congregazione non poteva esistere senza il consenso dello zar russo, Alessandro I, che nello stesso tempo era re del così detto Regno di Polonia. Si contava sulla sua presunta tolleranza e su Adalberto Skarszewski, dal 24 IX 1824 vescovo di Varsavia, amico dei redentoristi e in buoni rapporti con lo zar. Proprio lui il 24 VI 1824 inviò allo zar una domanda scritta chiedendo che nel Regno di Polonia si riprendessero le attività "dell'Associazione dei Sacerdoti Secolari in Comunità Viventi, secondo la regola del beato Liguori, ...il cui scopo era l'educazione gratuita religiosa e professionale dei componenti dello stato sociale più povero per farli diventare buoni cristiani e cittadini. L'odio dei nemici della religione ha provocato già tanto male ...e ha condotto alla loro soppressione nel 1808"¹⁴. Lo zar Alessandro I che morì subito dopo, e cioè il 1 XII 1825, non diede il consenso al ritorno dei redentoristi nelle terre polacche. Il suo successore, lo zar Nicola I mise la richiesta agli atti. Si può però dubitare che lo zar Alessandro I avrebbe dato il suo beneplacito, poiché già il 18 III 1817 aveva proclamato il decreto "Sul grado della sorveglianza e della

E. JABŁOŃSKA-DEPTUŁA, *Przystosowanie i opór. Zakony męskie w Królestwie Kongresowym (Adattamento e resistenza. Ordini maschili nel Regno di Polonia)*, Warszawa 1983, 192-193.

¹³ Paulino Trepka nato il 22 VI 1801 a Bichniewo presso Secemin. (voivodato di Kielce); studiò per quattro anni nel "seminario esterno" dai Padri Missionari a Varsavia e fu ordinato sacerdote il 1. VI 1824. A mio parere fu redentorista, lo fanno dedurre le informazioni nel *Rys krótki*. Dopo la Pasqua del 1827, con l'appoggio di P. Podgórski diventò amministratore della parrocchia di Kurozwęki i cui "patroni" erano i signori Sołtyk, amici cordiali dei redentoristi. P. Trepka partecipò all'insurrezione di novembre 1830-1831, in seguito emigrò in Francia e morì a Parigi il 30 VIII 1876. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 44, 77, 89-97, 106-107, 125, 138, 191, 263-264, 302; MH IX 110, 193, 207, 223; *Catalogus cleri secularis et regularis Archidioecesis Varsaviensis*, in *Ordo Divini Officii ad usum Dioecesis Cracoviensis...*; BRUDZISZ, *W dia-sporze* (vedi nota 2), 29, 71-72, 77, 121-122, nota 78.

¹⁴ MH IX 118-119; X 143.

tutela del governo sui religiosi romano-cattolici”, decreto che tra l’altro introduceva il divieto di ammettere agli ordini religiosi i candidati prima del 24° anno di vita e senza un esame preliminare e il consenso delle autorità civili. Di più, l’anno seguente, 1818, si era cominciato a liquidare molti conventi. Non bisogna anche dimenticare che erano ancora vivi molti nemici dei redentoristi che avevano contribuito alla loro espulsione nel 1808, i quali godevano di grandi influenze sul governo del Regno. Vale la pena di ricordare che non potevano tornare nel Regno nemmeno i gesuiti, che venivano inseguiti ed espulsi inesorabilmente.

Del resto i redentoristi stessi peggiorarono la loro situazione. Credendo che le loro cose andassero bene, durante le missioni giubilari del 1826 ostentarono eccessivamente di essere redentoristi. La mancanza di prudenza da parte di un chierico, Ignazio Dylewski¹⁵, predicatore durante le missioni, che dopo la predica fatta il 1 XI 1826 fu accusato di incitare il popolo contro le autorità e gli impiegati statali, provocò l’accusa di “delitto di istigazione”, cioè l’accusa di fomentare la rivoluzione contro l’ordine stabilito. Era una delle accuse più gravi in quei tempi quando, soprattutto i giovani polacchi, avevano

¹⁵ Ignazio Dylewski nato il 15 X 1805 a Zielona presso Żuromin (oggi voivodato di Masovia), nel 1824 entrò nel seminario “esterno” dei Padri Missionari dove studiava anche il chierico Paulino Trepka (vedi nota 13). Qui nel 1825 lo incontrò P. G. Podgórski. Spinto da lui decise di recarsi a Piotrkowice dove arrivò il 1 VII 1825. La sua vestizione ebbe luogo il 4 XI 1825. L’ordinazione minore il 2 IV 1826 e la professione religiosa l’8 XII 1826. Ancora novizio nell’avvento dell’anno 1825 “teneva prediche nella chiesa”, insegnava nella scuola locale e dal settembre 1826 fu uno dei predicatori principali durante le missioni giubilari svolte dalla comunità di Piotrkowice. Dopo “l’incidente” di cui si parla nel testo, le sue prediche furono limitate e in seguito alla partenza per il seminario di Cracovia, tra settembre e ottobre del 1827, furono interrotte completamente. Dopo due anni di studi nel seminario dei Padri Missionari, il 16 VII 1829 fu ordinato sacerdote. Ritornato a Piotrkowice, fu nominato maestro del noviziato e prefetto dei chierici. Fu un buon predicatore. La liquidazione della casa di Piotrkowice cambiò essenzialmente la sua vita. Nel 1834 fu nominato amministratore della parrocchia di Lisów e nel 1836 ne divenne parroco, poi anche amministratore della parrocchia di Piotrkowice, dove continuava a svolgere le funzioni di vicario un altro redentorista, P. Valentino Abramski. Morì a Lisów il 17 III 1843. Lì probabilmente redasse *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim; Archiwum Diecezjalne w Kielcach, Akta Konsystorskie (Archivio Diocesano a Kielce, Atti del Consistorio) (in seguito: ADK, AK), OP-X, p. 38; *ibid.*, PL-3/1b, f.3v-4r, 6r, 12r-13r, 14r, 16r-16v, 21r-24r, 39r, 51r-52v; Archiwum Księży Misjonarzy w Krakowie (Archivio dei Padri Missionari-Lazzaristi a Cracovia), H I 5a: *Nauczanie w Seminarium Diecezjalnym na Stradomiu, 1821-1895 (Insegnamento nel Seminario Diocesano di Stradom, 1821-1895)*, posiz. 8; MH IX passim; X passim; AKMKr, Akta seminarium (Atti del seminario) 1, 1806-1857, p. 155.

iniziato ad organizzare associazioni segrete contro l'occupazione russa. Il chierico Dylewski rischiava gravi conseguenze penali. Di più, durante l'interrogatorio risultò che a Piotrkowice esisteva una comunità illegale di "bennoniti"¹⁶. Le missioni giubilari consentite dal governo dovevano contribuire a tranquillizzare gli animi, invece le prediche del chierico Dylewski, secondo i delatori e il governo, alimentavano le tensioni. Poi, grazie alla presa di posizione del vescovo Giovanni Woronicz, grazie alle conoscenze e all'appoggio di persone influenti del governo e grazie alla benevolenza degli impiegati di rango minore, la grave accusa di istigazione alla rivolta fu minimizzata. Venne dimostrato alle autorità governative che il giovane e inesperto chierico si era attenuto troppo rigidamente alle prediche autorizzate, e l'autore principale chiese scusa per le parole inadeguate che aveva usato nella predica¹⁷. Anche Laura Tarnowska difese i redentoristi di Piotrkowice, e avendo numerose conoscenze altolocate a Varsavia probabilmente riuscì a presentare una domanda anche allo stesso zar Nicola I per l'approvazione dei redentoristi¹⁸. E' possibile che si fosse inserita nella difesa anche Giovanna Grudzińska, moglie del principe Costantino, fratello dell'imperatore e governatore di Varsavia. Nonostante ciò, il "caso Dylewski" e il relativo interrogatorio scossero la comunità di Piotrkowice. Due chierici furono mandati via, tra cui Ilario Sternicki¹⁹, che aveva fatto ben sperare. P. Nicola Koziński prese in considerazione un suo ritorno in Svizzera e anche lo stesso chierico Ignazio Dylewski aveva intenzione di andarsene via²⁰.

La mancanza dell'approvazione statale preoccupò P. G. Podgórski, il vicario generale P. G. Passerat e l'amministrazione generale di Pagani. Ciononostante gli anni dalla metà del 1827 fino alla metà del 1830 furono relativamente tranquilli. P. Podgórski ammetteva i nuovi

¹⁶ AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 103, 165-166; MH IX 121, 125.

¹⁷ AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 181-183, 185-187, 201-202; MH IX 126-129, 151-153, 159-161.

¹⁸ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 128, 133, 138.

¹⁹ Ilario Sternicki, nato il 13 I 1804, l'autunno del 1824 arrivò a Piotrkowice e nel marzo del 1825 P. Podgórski lo portò con sé a Vienna perché vi studiasse e completasse la formazione religiosa. Le preoccupazioni eccessive di sua madre costrinsero P. Podgórski a farlo ritornare a Piotrkowice nel 1827. La situazione difficile della comunità segreta, causata "dall'affare di Dylewski", e inoltre l'attività eversiva di don Winczakiewicz di Kielce furono la causa della sua rinuncia. A Piotrkowice si rimpianse questo candidato. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 51, 52, 113, 133, 158, 169; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 355.

²⁰ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 129, 131, 135, 142.

candidati alla professione avendo lo stesso potere che in precedenza, nel 1803, Clemente Hofbauer aveva conferito a P. Passerat, nominandolo superiore a Jestetten. A Piotrkowice esisteva la consapevolezza di queste autorizzazioni, dal momento che l'autore del *Rys krótki* presentando lo stato della comunità per il giorno 15 XI 1829, scrive che P. Podgórski "è parroco e nello stesso tempo superiore col grado di Rector Major"²¹. Queste autorizzazioni erano indispensabili perché i paesi che occupavano la Polonia non soltanto proibivano ai vescovi, ma anche ai superiori religiosi qualsiasi tipo di rapporto con i superiori maggiori con sede all'estero. P. Podgórski non poteva quindi avere contatti ufficiali con il generale della congregazione di Pagani, né con il vicario generale P. Passerat di Vienna. Era già tanto se poteva partire legalmente per Vienna e di tanto in tanto scambiare qualche lettera che veniva recapitata segretamente con l'aiuto di persone di fiducia. La polizia ne era al corrente, ma non riusciva a intercettarla. Invece la lontana amministrazione generale non comprendeva la situazione, chiedeva contatti diretti e restringeva i poteri del vicario generale, quindi anche di P. Podgórski che soprattutto dopo il 1831 si trovò in una difficile situazione, non soltanto politica, ma anche giuridica all'interno della propria congregazione²².

²¹ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 197. Le autorizzazioni concesse da P. Passerat a P. Podgórski provocarono le critiche del suo consiglio. Vedi AG, AA (vedi nota 2), IX C 83 *Libellus queribundus contra Vic. Gen. P. Passerat* (fine del 1832?), C. 8: *Eadem indulgentia concessit R-o Patri Podgurski facultatem in Polonia assumendi alumnos pro Congregatione, omnibus fere consultoribus contrarium sentientibus*. Questa notizia, giunta anonima da Vienna, provocò discussioni nell'amministrazione generale che diventarono subito inutili perché la casa di Piotrkowice aveva cessato di esistere. Per conoscere meglio le facoltà dei vicari generali, Clemente Hofbauer e Giuseppe Passerat, vedi: E. HOSP, *St. Klemens und das Generalat*, in: *SHCSR* 2 (1954) 150-190; ID., *Dokumente über die Anerkennung des P. Passerat als Generalvikar CSsR, 1820-1822*, in: *SHCSR* 1 (1953) 83-101; A. SAMPERS, *Nominatio et facultates Patri Passerat a S. Clemente collatae, an. 1803*, in: *SHCSR* 10 (1962) 269-277; A. OWCZARSKI, *Le relazioni tra il Vicariato Transalpino (di Varsavia) e il Governo Generale dei Redentoristi durante il soggiorno di S. Clemente a Varsavia (1787-1808)*, in: *SHCSR* 46 (1998) 311-313; ID., *Redemptoryści-Benonici w Warszawie, 1787-1808 (Redentoristi-Benoniti a Varsavia, 1787-1808)*, Kraków 2000, 93-96.

²² AG, AA (vedi nota 2), *Epistulae Patris Passerat*: 12X 1831, 30 XII 1831; *ibid.*, AA, IX C 74, C 78, C 83 (*Libellus queribundus contra Vic. Gen. P. Passerat*); *ibid.*, AA, X B 18; MH IX 355 (lettera del 1 XII 1827) 356 (lettera del 5 XII 1829), 357 (lettera del 22 IX 1831); dovrebbe essere: 12 X 1831); SAMPERS, *Nominatio et facultates* (vedi nota 21), in: *SHCSR* 10 (1962) 272, 273, 277; ID., *Epistolarum commercium inter Rect. Mai. ac Vic. Gen. Congreg. Panzuti et Vic. Gen. transalp. Passerat, iul. 1831* -

La situazione materiale

La comunità segreta dei redentoristi a Piotrkowice, che nelle intenzioni dei superiori doveva diventare una comunità ufficiale, approvata dalle autorità statali, ebbe a disposizione l'ex convento dei bernardini e il suo arredamento. Il convento era grande, ma distrutto e senza la biblioteca, privo della maggior parte degli arredi domestici e della chiesa, che i bernardini, andando via, avevano portato con sé. La chiesa costruita negli anni 1635-1652 possedeva il "Loreto" (una cappella mariana costruita nel 1788), alla quale si recavano gli abitanti della zona. Questo fatto doveva giustificare il numero maggiore di sacerdoti subentrati ai bernardini. I redentoristi fino al 1829 operarono le ristrutturazioni necessarie. Il convento possedeva soltanto due camere abitabili. La sua sistemazione iniziò già nell'autunno del 1824, i lavori li eseguiva principalmente Giuseppe Daubicz (Ceco?, fratello?) arrivato a Piotrkowice insieme a P. Podgórski, e li finanziavano principalmente Laura e Stanisław Tarnowski e P. Podgórski con risorse soltanto a lui conosciute.

L'introito della parrocchia era molto basso perché non raggiungeva 500 zł. Quello del convento dei bernardini nel 1827 ammontava alla somma di 878 zł, che tutto insieme doveva bastare per mantenere il parroco e alcuni vicari. In realtà la comunità era più numerosa, perché appartenevano ad essa anche i chierici, gli alunni del convitto e la servitù, perciò sia la gente, che le autorità si domandavano dove il parroco prendesse il denaro per mantenere una comunità di circa 40 persone. P. Podgórski indicava i benefattori reali: i vescovi di Cracovia, le famiglie nobili e i benefattori anonimi²³. Certe somme arriva-

1832, in: SHCSR 15 (1967) 13, 17, 29; *Id.*, *La corrispondenza tra i superiori maggiori Ripoli e Passerat, giugno 1832 - aprile 1833*, in: SHCSR 28 (1980) 261.

²³ Archiwum Prowincji Bernardynów w Krakowie (Archivio della Provincia dei Frati Minori-Bernardini a Cracovia), M-13 (*Akta Małopolskiej Provincji Bernardynów, 1628-1850, Atti della provincia dei bernardini della Piccola Polonia 1628-1850*), p. 359-364, 370-378, 423-426, 435, 439-441 (il bilancio dei fondi dei bernardini di Piotrkowice fatto nel 1824); Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach (Archivio Statale di Kielce) (in seguito: APK), Rząd Gubernialny Radomski (Governatorato di Radom) (in seguito: RGR) manoscritto n° 4466, p. 13, 43-45, 48-51, 67-70, manoscritto n° 6256, p. 1-50; AGAD, CWW (vedi nota 6), manoscritto n° 454, p. 311-315; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 3-11 (bilancio dei fondi dei bernardini del 1818), p. 90, 115-117, 311, 391-392, 429-435, 647-651 (elenco dell'allestimento della chiesa parrocchiale di San Stanisław fatto nel 1818); *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 12), passim; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 43-47; B. J. WANAT, *Sanktuarium maryjne w Piotrkowicach k. Buska* (*Santuario mariano a Piotrkowice presso Busk*), Kraków 1987, 20, 21, 31-81, 106-115.

vano anche da Vienna. Inoltre P. Podgórski aveva ricevuto 60.000 zł. dei 103.000 zł. che P. Jestershein aveva ricavato dalla vendita del patrimonio dei redentoristi-bennoniti. In quel periodo si trovava a Varsavia e negli anni 1825-1827 svolse la funzione di economo del Seminario Principale²⁴.

2. - *Gli inizi della comunità, lo sviluppo, la formazione e la vita quotidiana*

Gli inizi

Non si sa su quali redentoristi potessero contare i Padri Passerat e Podgórski, sui Polacchi che lavoravano in Svizzera, oppure sui redentoristi impegnati nel lavoro pastorale delle parrocchie del Regno di Polonia. Quando Clemente Hofbauer sperava di insediarsi nella Podolia, nell'impero degli zar, faceva affidamento soprattutto sui primi, rendendosi perfettamente conto che i vescovi del Regno non avrebbero liberato i redentoristi dai loro incarichi. Il fatto è che dal Regno proveniva soltanto P. Simone Majewski, il quale nel 1822 aveva consegnato l'amministrazione della sua parrocchia ed era arrivato a Piotrkowice già nell'agosto del 1824. Non veniva però direttamente dal Regno, ma "dalla libera città di Cracovia", cioè dalla così detta Repubblica di Cracovia governata dai residenti dei tre paesi occupanti: Prussia, Russia e Austria. Probabilmente prima aveva soggiornato per un breve periodo in Svizzera²⁵. Insieme a lui arrivò il neo-presbitero Paulino Trepka²⁶. E quando il 29 XI 1824 P. Podgórski diventò parroco si era già creata una piccola comunità di redentoristi, che nel marzo del 1825 si accrebbe di un altro "bennonita", P. Nicola Koziński, venuto dalla Svizzera, che a Cracovia aveva sostenuto gli esami necessari per ricevere l'investitura giuridica²⁷. Ai tre Padri: Podgórski, Koziński e

²⁴ AG, Provincia Austriaca, vol. XIV, fasc. 3a (lettera di P. Koziński del 21 VI 1857); AGAD, CWW (vedi nota 6), manoscritto n° 370, p. 44, 46-48, 59-63, 214, 385, 451-452, 522-527; manoscritto n° 371, p. 63, 71, 74-75.

²⁵ Vedi MH IX 114, 170, 221; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 29.

²⁶ Vedi p. 4 e nota 13.

²⁷ Nicola Agostino Koziński (Koziński, Coshinski, Cozinski, P. "Augustino") nato il 9 XII 1775 a Baków presso Lowicz, entrò nella congregazione nel 1796. Emise la professione religiosa probabilmente il 18 VIII 1806. Nel convento di San Bennone faceva il sarto. Dopo la liberazione da Kostrzyn il 28 VIII 1808 si presentò, senza il consenso delle autorità statali agli agostiniani di Varsavia, dove fu imprigionato. Probabilmente nel 1809 riuscì a fuggire in Svizzera, dove P. Passerat gli dette il permesso

Majewski, che prima della soppressione del convento appartenevano alla comunità di San Bennone di Varsavia, non si associò nessuno dei "bennoniti" viventi, anche se oltre a quelli della Svizzera e della Varmia (nella Prussia), nello stesso Ducato di Varsavia ce n'erano alcuni altri: Giovanni Darewski, Carlo Jestershein, Carlo Blumenau-Kwiatkowski, Carlo Moneta, Michele Sadowski e Adalberto Schroetter²⁸. Al

di studiare teologia. Come chierico nell'ospedale di Berna faceva da interprete per i soldati slavi (polacchi, cechi, slovacchi - "hungari", perché in quel periodo la Slovacchia apparteneva all'Ungheria), arruolati nell'esercito austriaco battuto nelle battaglie contro Napoleone (1809), che desideravano confessarsi. Fu ordinato sacerdote nel 1814, in seguito lavorò tra l'altro a Valsainte e Bischenberg. Probabilmente già verso la fine del 1824 si recò a Cracovia dove superò gli esami richiesti (7 II 1825) e fu nominato vicario a Piotrkowice. Perché gli mancava il talento oratorio, faceva il confessore zelante sia a Piotrkowice che nelle vicine chiese parrocchiali. Nel 1833 le autorità occupanti russe gli ordinarono di lasciare Piotrkowice in quanto sacerdote non necessario. Alla fine del 1834, probabilmente insieme a P. Podgórski si recò nella Repubblica di Cracovia. Lavorò al suo fianco inizialmente nella parrocchia di Nowa Góra e poi a Kościelec. Nel 1843 si insediò a Cracovia nella Casa dei Padri Emeriti. Morì il 3 V 1859 e fu sepolto nel cimitero Rakowicki. Lasciò una bellissima lettera scritta al generale della congregazione il 21 VI 1857, breve autobiografia ed espressione di fedeltà alla sua vocazione. E' la risposta alla notizia del 1855 relativa alla sua espulsione dalla congregazione ad opera di P. Passerat.

Vedi AKMKr (vedi nota 5), Pers. A 996, p. 8-9, 59 (breve informazione biografica); Pers. A 1000, p. 28-29; *ibid.*, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 469-475, 509; Archives de la Province de Lyon et de Paris CSsR, *Catalogus novitiorum, 1823-1894*, nota nell'allegato all'inizio, posiz. 21; *ibid.*, *Transalpinae: lettres au P. Passerat* (lettera senza la data, scritta dopo il 19 XI 1824) *ibid.*, *Catalogue du personnel 1796-1965*, posiz. 21; *ibid.*, *Chronique de la maison de Fribourg*, p. 26, 38, 40, 41; *ibid.*, *Catalogus oblatorum fratrum servientium Provinciae Helveticae - Catalogus oblatorum clericorum Provinciae Helveticae ab anno 1807*, k. 3r-3v; AGAD, CWW (vedi nota 6), manoscritto n° 454, p. 257; AG, Provincia Austriaca, vol. XIV, fasc. 3a (*Antiqui dispensati*); *ibid.*, AA, Epistulae P. Passerat ad Superiores Majores: *Status actualis Congregationis Ssmi Redemptoris in Helvetia et Alsatia stabilitae. Anno...1820*, p. 14; *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), *passim*; MH XV 188 (index alphabeticus...); T. LANDTWING, *Die Redemptoristen in Freiburg in der Schweiz, 1811-1847*, Freiburg (Schweiz) 1955, 92-93.

²⁸ Sui padri Jestershein, Moneta et Sadowski vedi la nota 6.

P. Giovanni Darewski, nato il 6 II 1780 a Varsavia (secondo MH VII 74 nel voivodato di Cracovia) emise i voti nel 1796 e fu ordinato sacerdote il 26 VIII 1804. Dopo il ritorno da Kostrzyn fu vicario a Nadarzyn (1809), a Jasieniec (dal 1810) e dal 1814 fu parroco a Worów dove morì il 2 V 1860. Vedi MH XV 181 (Index alphabeticus...); *Elenchus universi cleri (Archi)dioecesis Varsaviensis*, in: *Ordo Divini Officii ad usum universi cleri (Archi)dioecesis Varsaviensis*, Varsaviae, Apud Sanctam Crucem, gli anni: 1809-1860.

P. Carlo Blumenau-Kwiatkowski, nato in Varmia nel 1766, entrò nella congregazione nel 1795, emise i voti religiosi verso la fine del 1796 (13 novembre ?) e fu ordinato sacerdote nel 1799. Morì come parroco della parrocchia a Nowe Miasto sul

gruppo dei tre si unirono all'inizio del 1826 due sacerdoti non benno-niti: Paulino Trepka e Giuseppe Hofmann, di cui almeno il secondo era già redentorista. Quando però il 4 III 1826 morì tragicamente per asfissia P. Simone Majewski, le possibilità di tramandare la tradizione dei redentoristi e dei bennoniti divennero ancora più limitate. P. Podgórski, educatore dei chierici e vicedirettore di San Bennone non riusciva a cavarsela da solo in tutto, soprattutto dopo la morte di P. Majewski.

Lo sviluppo della comunità

I candidati non mancavano, alcuni li cercava lo stesso P. Podgórski, altri venivano a sapere della comunità di Piotrkowice attraverso vie a loro conosciute. Da chi l'avevano appreso i Cechi? Come facevano a saperlo i giovani della zona occupata dall'Austria e cioè della così detta Galizia? Come giungevano nel Regno di Polonia (nella zona occupata dai Russi)?

Dall'inizio di agosto del 1824 fino alla fine del 1829, si presentarono a Piotrkowice almeno 32 candidati, di cui 19 del Regno di Polonia, 6 Cechi (due provenienti da Vienna), 4 della zona sotto l'occupazione austriaca, un Ungherese, uno della zona della Slesia nello stato prussiano e uno che veniva chiamato Tedesco.

Pilica il 22 agosto 1837. Vedi MH I 85; III 73; IV 148; VII 45, 46, 73; X 210-214, 225-226; Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Olsztynie (Archivio Archidieceziano di Olsztyn): *Presbyterologia Warmiensis*, segn. AB H 295, k. 51v-52; *Elenchus cleri dioecesis Warmiensis*, in: *Directorium Divini Officii ad usum ecclesiae Dioecesis Warmiensis*, Regiomontis 1809-1814 e Brunsbergae 1815; AGAD (vedi nota 6), Komisja Województwa Mazowieckiego-Rząd Gubernialny Warszawski (Commissione del Voivodato di Masovia-Governo del Governatorato di Varsavia), sign. 6714, doc. *Dozór kościoła parafialnego w Nowemmiście nad Pilicą do Wielmożnego Komisarza Obwodu Rawskiego, 4 listopada /16 listopada 1841*; SZRANT, *Redemptoristae* (vedi nota 2), 124-125.

P. Adalberto Schroetter (Schrötter), nato nel 1772 oppure 1773, emise la professione religiosa il 15 IX 1793 e fu ordinato sacerdote prima dell'11 luglio 1797. Dall'inizio del 1803 lavorò come vice commendatario a Lutkówka. Dopo la soppressione del convento di san Bennone fu deportato nella Varmia da dove riuscì presto a partire per Wierzbolów nella diocesi di Wigry (dal 1807 nel Ducato di Varsavia), dove era parroco il suo parente Francesco Salesio Schroetter. Inizialmente fu vicario di questa parrocchia e dal 1820 parroco. Morì il 12 V 1839. MH XV 198 (Index alphabeticus...); SZRANT, *Redemptoristae* (vedi nota 2), 128.

Nel 1825 P. Podgórski invitò il P. Giovanni Szulski (Schulski), soggiornante in Svizzera, nella comunità di Piotrkowice, ma senza effetto. Vedi Arcives Provinciales de Lyon et de Paris, Lettres du V. P. Passerat, p. 225: *Lettre du P. Passerat au P. Czech du 6 avril 1825*.

I candidati del Regno che non sempre erano diplomati non ebbero alcuna difficoltà a raggiungere Piotrkowice. Tra di loro c'erano persone molto dotate, come il già nominato neo presbitero Paulino Trepka, il chierico Ignazio Dylewski e il candidato Ilario Sternicki. Altri sei possedevano tali capacità e valori morali da poter sperare che sarebbero diventati redentoristi di valore. Due di loro emisero la professione religiosa e quattro facevano il noviziato negli anni 1829-1830. Questi non poterono arrivare alla professione religiosa perché le autorità statali già nel luglio 1830 iniziarono la liquidazione degli istituti educativi segreti di Piotrkowice²⁹.

C'erano però anche candidati con scarse qualità morali e i danni recati alla comunità di Piotrkowice durante il loro soggiorno e anche dopo la loro espulsione furono molto grandi. Proprio loro tra l'altro erano spie e delatori presso le gerarchie statali. Il gruppo dei sei Cechi era molto diversificato, il chierico Giuseppe Hofmann, portato da P. Podgórski da Vienna nel marzo del 1825 e ordinato a Cracovia già il

²⁹ Emisero la professione Stanisław Bieńkowski e Giuseppe Zaydler: Stanisław Bieńkowski, nato l'8 V 1807, che arrivò a Piotrkowice verso la fine del 1826, viene annotato nel 1830; emise la professione religiosa il 4 XI 1829 insieme a Bartolomeo Faron e Giuseppe Zaydler oppure il 6 I 1830 con Francesco Sobolewski. Iniziò gli studi nel seminario di Piotrkowice e continuò a Cracovia e a Kielce, dove il 2 VIII 1835 fu ordinato sacerdote. Durante il soggiorno a Piotrkowice rinnovò alcuni altari nella chiesa del santuario. Morì il 30 IV 1870 come parroco di Strążyska. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim dalla p. 115 alla p. 467; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 579-580; ibid., *Liber ordinationum*, n° 19, p. 35-36; AGAD, KRSW (vedi nota 12), manoscritto n° 7125, f. 8v-9r; ADK, AK (vedi nota 5), OP/13, p. 46-47. - Giuseppe Zaydler (Zajdler), nato il 4 II 1808, si presentò a Piotrkowice il 28 VII 1828, il 15 X dello stesso anno ebbe luogo la sua vestizione. Emise la professione religiosa il 4 XI 1829. L'ordinazione minore il 18 IX 1830 e in seguito alla liquidazione del seminario segreto fu mandato nel seminario dei Padri Missionari a Cracovia. Lasciò i redentoristi probabilmente nel 1831. Fu ordinato sacerdote il 22 IX 1832. In seguito lavorò come vicario e parroco in diverse parrocchie; dal 1859 come vicario della collegiata di Kielce. Le autorità zariste lo espulsero da Kielce a causa delle sue prediche a sfondo patriottico. Morì il 28 II 1882 come emerito della parrocchia Zrembice presso Częstochowa. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim dalla p. 165 alla p. 468; ADK, AK (vedi nota 15), OP-X/, p. 1248-1249 e la cartoteca dei religiosi; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 580; ibid., *Liber ordinationum*, n° 17, p. 10, 16, 17, n° 19, p. 29; MH IX 244. Dopo la vestizione ma senza professione erano i seguenti candidati: - Francesco Wroński (1 II 1810-6 XI 1870; ordinazione 28 VII 1833); - Ignazio Kowalski (3 VIII 1812-26 III 1859; 13 III 1836 ordinato sacerdote "ad titulum Communitatis Clericorum Saecularium in Commune Viventium", istituto di Bartolomeo Halzhauser); Adalberto Latosiński (9 IV 1809-10 II 1878; fu ordinato sacerdote il 28 VIII 1833); - Ladisław Roźnowski (5 VII ? 1807-17 XI 1849; fu ordinato il 13 III 1836).

21 agosto 1825, deluse tutte le speranze e fu espulso nel 1826. Proprio lui causò tra l'altro diversi problemi a P. Passerat nei confronti delle autorità ecclesiali nella diocesi di Litomierzyce e delle autorità statali di Vienna³⁰. Invece Giuseppe Daubicz portato da Vienna nel 1825 "come fratello falegname", eseguì molti lavori di falegnameria e rimase fedele alla congregazione e a P. Podgórski, che accompagnò in vari posti, quando quest'ultimo verso la fine del 1834 dovette fuggire dalla Repubblica di Cracovia³¹. Due altri Cechi: Venceslao Pekarz (Pekař) [Piekarz]³² e Francesco Bernard³³, erano musicisti e cantanti di talento e con i loro canti davano lustro alle funzioni religiose, specialmente durante la liturgia della Settimana Santa. Purtroppo il primo lasciò la congregazione nel 1830, il secondo morì nel 1833.

Il terzo gruppo era costituito dai quattro candidati provenienti dai territori occupati dall'Austria. Avevano superato illegalmente la

³⁰ AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 317, 413-414, 415, 419, 421-422, 425-427; AG, AA (vedi nota 2), IX C, 83, f. 7v-8r; *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 42, 58-60, 62; MH IX 171.

³¹ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 55-436 passim; MH X 147, 250 (lettera di P. Podgórski a P. Passerat del 21 X 1835); LUBIENSKI, *O. Jan Podgórski* (vedi nota 2), 245, nota 1.

³² Venceslao Pekarz, nato nel 1803 a Rochorzec, Boemia. A Praga completò l'"Academia" (scuola superiore). Arrivò a Piotrkowice alla fine del 1825, vestizione il 22 I 1826, professione religiosa il 31 X 1827, ordinato sacerdote il 10 IV 1828 a Miechów. La congregazione non lo soddisfaceva e già a cavallo degli anni 1828/1829 progettava di uscirne. Nel luglio del 1830 diventò vicario nella parrocchia Niwka. Il 27 VIII 1830 fu liberato dai voti. In seguito lavorò in varie parrocchie, verso la fine della vita partì per la Boemia, dove morì il 24 I 1894. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim dalla p. 60 alla p. 252; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 118 (Atti della parrocchia di Niwka), p. 745, 747-749; *ibid.*, manoscritto n° 137, p. 385; *ibid.*, Pers. A., 1000, p. 50-51; *ibid.*, *Liber ordinandorum*, n° 16, p. 23-24; ADK, AK (vedi nota 15), OP-X/4, p. 165; *ibid.*, OP-X/13, p. 804-805; MH IX 188, 189-190, 243, X 107, 108, 248.

³³ Francesco Bernard (de Bernardi), nato nel 1796 oppure il 2 XII 1802 a Weystadt, Boemia. Come Pekarz completò l'"Academia" di Praga e all'inizio del 1826 arrivò a Piotrkowice, il 25 III 1826 ebbe la vestizione, emise la professione religiosa il 31 X 1827, fu ordinato sacerdote il 10 IV 1828 a Miechów insieme a Pekarz. Fu non soltanto un buon cantante ma anche organista e durante il noviziato svolgeva le funzioni di direttore della scuola dei redentoristi. Dopo l'ordinazione divenne maestro dei novizi. Fu affetto da una malattia non bene conosciuta (tubercolosi?) e forse per questo motivo nella vita quotidiana non mostrava un carattere facile. Morì a Cracovia nella Casa dei Sacerdoti Emeriti il 5 V 1833. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim dalla p. 63; AG, AA (vedi nota 2), IX C 94, p. 1; *ibid.*, CB, *Scripta et littera P. J. Passerat* (Passerat a Giovanni Sabelli, VII 1834); AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 353-355; *ibid.*, Pers. A 1000, p. 6-7; *ibid.*, *Liber ordinandorum*, n° 16, p. 23, 24; MH IX e X secondo l'indice nel volume XV.

frontiera del Regno di Polonia. Soltanto uno di loro, Bartolomeo Faron emise la professione religiosa (4 XI 1829). In precedenza si era diplomato presso i Padri Scolopi ed aveva studiato filosofia a Koszyce. Molto dotato, si nutrivano molte speranze su di lui, purtroppo morì giovane come suddiacono il 2 IV 1833³⁴. Il secondo che emise la professione a Piotrkowice fu Francesco Sobolewski³⁵.

Negli anni 1828 e 1829 i redentoristi godettero di un periodo relativamente tranquillo, durante il quale si presentarono alla congregazione tanti nuovi candidati. Lo stato della comunità nel giorno 15 XI 1829 era il seguente: P. Giovanni Podgórski, parroco e superiore; P. Nicola Koziński, vicario; P. Valentino Abramski, procuratore, P. Ignazio Dylewski, maestro del noviziato, prefetto degli studenti e direttore della scuola; O. Venceslao Pekarz, vicario; P. Francesco Bernard, vicario. Gli aspiranti e i "chierici" che emisero la professione furono i seguenti: Stanislao Bieńkowski, Bartolomeo Faron, Ignazio Kowalski, Adalberto Latosiński, Ladislao Roźnowski (chierico del seminario di Sandomierz), Giuseppe Semeczyński. I candidati prima della vestizione: Stanislao Sobolewski, Francesco Wroński, Giacomo Zawilski, chierico del seminario di Kielce e Giuseppe Zaydler³⁶. Dopo questa data nessun altro fu ammesso alla comunità di Piotrkowice perché nel luglio del 1830, e cioè prima del nuovo anno scolastico, il governo iniziò la liquidazione di questo seminario segreto.

Del gruppo di 16 persone, dopo la prima tappa della liquidazione avvenuta il 6 IX 1830, verso la fine dell'anno 1832 rimanevano nella comunità di Piotrkowice cinque padri: Giovanni Podgórski, Nicola Koziński, Valentino Abramski, Ignazio Dylewski e Francesco Bernard, che si trovava a Cracovia per cure, e quattro chierici: Bartolomeo

³⁴ Bartolomeo Faron, nato a Maszkowice nella parrocchia di Łącko presso Nowy Sącz: arrivò a Piotrkowice il 18 VIII 1828, la sua vestizione ebbe luogo il 25 X 1828 e la professione religiosa il 4 XI 1829. La precaria salute non gli permise di completare il seminario. Morì il 2 IV 1833 nella residenza della baronessa Tarnowska a Tarnoskała presso Piotrkowice. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim dalla p. 166 alla p. 455; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 472, 581; MH IX, 244, 250, 301; LUBIENSKI, *O. Jan Podgórski* (vedi nota 2), 81.

³⁵ Francesco Sobolewski, nato nel 1804 a Nowy Sącz, dove si diplomò. Arrivò a Piotrkowice il 23 VII 1828. Ebbe la vestizione il 24 IX dello stesso anno ma la professione religiosa fu emessa soltanto 6 I 1830. Era indeciso nella vocazione. Nel 1830 grazie alle cure di P. Podgórski fu accettato nel seminario di Kielce. Mancano ulteriori notizie sulla sua sorte. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim dalla p. 164 alla p. 465; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 473, 581; MH IX 244, 302-303.

³⁶ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 196-197.

Faron (gravemente malato), Francesco Sobolewski, Ignazio Kowalski e Ladislao Rożnowski³⁷. Il morale di questi ultimi non era buono.

P. Giovanni Podgórski stava a capo della comunità religiosa che il 15 XI 1829 contava 16 persone. Fu un predicatore e missionario eccezionale, un pastore zelante, uomo di preghiera e umile; redentorista dedito sinceramente alla sua congregazione, uomo santo, saggio, attivo e pronto a dare aiuto a tutti, uomo di grande cuore, tanto da farsi rimproverare da P. Dylewski e da altri per essere troppo indulgente nei confronti di coloro che compivano chiaramente abusi seri. Nei candidati egli vedeva piuttosto il poco di bene che mostravano, anziché qualsiasi tipo di male³⁸. Di fronte alle autorità statali la sua vera "colpa" era di aver fatto parte nel passato della comunità dei redentoristi nel convento di San Bennone, quindi di essere stato "ben-nonita", di aver combattuto il male e l'indifferentismo sotto la guida di Clemente Hofbauer, di essersi opposto all'azione della massoneria, anche tramite l'Associazione segreta degli Oblati del Santissimo Redentore e soprattutto di continuare a comportarsi nello stesso modo anche a Piotrkowice. Questo non gli fu perdonato dai massoni e dal governo ostile alla Chiesa.

La formazione e la vita della comunitaria

Non mancavano i candidati a P. Podgórski, anche se la loro qualità era spesso scarsa. Chi si presentava alla congregazione doveva sostenere un colloquio preliminare con il superiore competente, e non tutti venivano ammessi. Troviamo tracce di questa prassi a Piotrkowice. Il candidato ammesso, solitamente, per un breve periodo faceva l'aspirante, dopo avveniva la vestizione in una data non stabilita. Dopo esercizi spirituali di dieci giorni iniziava il noviziato che generalmente aveva la durata di un anno³⁹. Invece l'emissione della

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 424-427.

³⁸ LUBIENSKI, *O. Jan Podgórski* (vedi nota 2), 98-99, 238-239, su queste pagine P. Lubieński dà le testimonianze degli ex alunni della scuola di Piotrkowice, divenute in seguito persone famose.

³⁹ Le norme più precise relative a questo colloquio-esame le presenta P. generale C.M. Cocle nella lettera al P. Passerat del 4 XI 1830. Vedi AG, AA (vedi nota 22), IX C, p. 67; A. SAMPERS, *Epistularum commercium inter RM Cocle et VG Passerat, nov. 1830 - mai. 1831*, in: *SHCSR* 14 (1966) 240. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), p. 194. Per quanto riguarda i ritiri - *ibid.*, p. 196. Invece per quanto riguarda l'ammissione dei candidati, soltanto verso la fine del settembre del 1829 se ne presentarono quattro, di cui due della zona sotto l'occupazione austriaca (dalla Galizia), ma non furono assunti. Anche a ottobre non furono ammessi altri due candidati. Vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi

professione era di solito legata a qualche festa, per esempio: di S. Carlo Borromeo (4-XI), dell'Immacolata Concezione di Maria Vergine (8-XII) o dell'Epifania del Signore (6-I), ed era presieduta da P. Podgórski con la testimonianza di almeno due padri. Inizialmente Padre Podgórski fu sicuramente maestro del noviziato, come lo faceva in precedenza da San Bennone. Dall'autunno del 1828 però fu sostituito da P. Bernard e dall'inizio di agosto del 1829 dal neo-presbitero P. Dylewski che diventò anche prefetto dei chierici⁴⁰; questi era giovane ma dotato, buon predicatore e dedito alla congregazione, ma cominciò a introdurre certi rigori e ordini che non piacquero ad alcuni chierici.

Il seminario costituiva la seconda tappa della formazione religioso-sacerdotale, ma quello di Piotrkowice ne era soltanto un surrogato, perché mancavano i professori e il programma di studio, in confronto a quello dei seminari diocesani, era molto ridotto e il suo livello lasciava molto a desiderare. Si trattava di un modesto "studium domesticum" dove i chierici imparavano soprattutto il Catechismo romano, la teologia morale e pastorale ed anche l'ermeneutica, la retorica, le cerimonie liturgiche e i canti ecclesiali⁴¹. P. Dylewski che assunse l'incarico di prefetto all'inizio di agosto del 1829, cercò di organizzare questo studio al meglio possibile. Nel 1830 ebbe luogo anche lì l'esame dei chierici con una commissione⁴². Ai chierici mancavano i libri di testo delle materie che dovevano essere "impartite" nel seguente semestre ed essi li copiavano durante le vacanze dai libri loro forniti⁴³. Padre Podgórski si serviva del libro di Collet, invece P. Pekarz nel 1828 usava il compendio di Francesco Preiss⁴⁴, e P. Dylewski probabilmente si serviva della *Theologia moralis* di Alfonso M. de Liguori

nota 11), 193, 194. L'argomentazione era del tipo: mancanza di capacità, mancanza di posto, o forse P. Podgórski sapeva già che non esisteva la possibilità dell'approvazione del convento a Piotrkowice e perciò non voleva dare vane speranze ai candidati.

⁴⁰ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim e specialmente p. 170 e 196; assunzione nell'ufficio di maestro del noviziato e prefetto dei chierici, vedi p. 189; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 55-56.

⁴¹ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 192.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 205-206.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁴ Francesco Erasmo Preiss, gesuita fino alla cassazione dell'ordine, in seguito membro dell'Istituto dei Padri Insieme Viventi, fondato da Bartolomeo Holzhauser, è l'autore di due compendi: *Examen trinum ordinandorum...*, Cracoviae 1760, e *Examen ordinandorum...*, Posnaniae 1770. Quale dei due usasse P. Pekarz non si sa.

e del suo *Praxis confessari*, perché queste opere tra l'altro furono annotate nell'elenco dei libri stilato dopo la sua morte⁴⁵.

Per le autorità statali si trattava di un vero seminario, anche se illegale e perciò durante l'estate del 1830 fu iniziata la sua liquidazione, per cui il funzionamento del seminario fu limitato notevolmente e in fine interrotto nel 1834.

Tutta la vita della comunità di Piotrkowice aveva funzionato in base alle *Constitutiones sive statuta et regulae Congregationis Presbyterorum Sanctissimi Redemptoris, approbatae a Benedicto Papa XIV, Varsaviae, Typis Petri Dufor, 1789*, ma erano anche note le: *Constitutiones et regulae Congregationis Presbyterorum sub invocatione Sanctissimi Redemptoris, approbatae a Sanctissimo Domino Nostro S. M. Benedicto XIV, Romae, Archangelus Casaletti, 1782*. Inoltre nell'aprile del 1830 da Vienna erano giunte le nuove "regole" che certamente erano le stesse costituzioni del 1764 portate a Vienna da P. Springer nel 1824, perché contengono tra l'altro un'ampia costituzione sul testo della regola sulle missioni che P. Pekarz doveva tradurre in polacco⁴⁶. Non conosciamo il preciso ordine del giorno della comunità di Piotrkowice, ma le informazioni relative agli esercizi concreti conventuali testimoniano che venivano praticati secondo la regola, anche se non mancavano le omissioni. Il giorno iniziava con la meditazione, durante la quale P. Podgórski almeno qualche volta prendeva la parola e suggeriva diverse riflessioni ascetiche: la meditazione si svolgeva anche di sera, quando si servivano dei testi del beato (allora) Alfonso M. de Liguori, non sappiamo precisamente di quali di essi si servissero, comunque nel 1830 furono tradotti da P. Dylewski in polacco. Fino al 22 XII 1829 le preghiere mattutine, pomeridiane e serali venivano recitate in latino, dopo quella data nella versione polacca, su traduzione di P. Dylewski. Viene segnalata anche la recita comunitaria del breviario, la lettura spirituale comune e la recita del rosario. Durante i pasti c'era "la lettura al tavolo".

Nel programma settimanale vengono annotate le conferenze ascetiche del superiore che si svolgevano di venerdì o di sabato alle quali fu unita l'autoaccusa delle mancanze alla regola; di venerdì venivano recitati i "gradi della Passione del Signore" (*gradus Passionis*). Nel programma mensile sono annotati gli esercizi spirituali. E la loro mancanza dal 1830 (probabilmente da settembre) viene annotata nel

⁴⁵ ADK, AK (vedi nota 15), PL-3/1b, p. 82-86; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 56-59.

⁴⁶ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 213.

resoconto annuale dall'autore di *Rys krótki* con rammarico. Anche P. Trepka essendo parroco nella vicina parrocchia si recava nel convento per predicare. Si svolgevano gli esercizi annuali, ma si è riusciti a sapere soltanto che avevano la durata di 14 giorni; inoltre c'era la "lotta dei patroni" e il rinnovo dei voti durante la festa del Santissimo Redentore e a Natale. Viene annotata anche la prassi del cambio delle stanze tra i chierici. Venivano in particolare festeggiate solennemente le feste del Santissimo Redentore, del Cuore di Gesù, la Nascita della Santissima Maria Vergine (grande sagra), di San Stanislao Kostka e del beato Alfonso M. de Liguori⁴⁷.

La comunità di Piotrkowice non era perfetta, alcuni dei suoi membri mostravano anche difetti gravi, ma vale la pena di citare le parole di un cronista scritte nel 1826: "Questo tempo può essere annoverato tra i più felici, perché quando abitavamo in sei nel seminario, sperimentavamo varie scomodità, come il fumo e la puzza della stufa e le carenze dell'alimentazione, a causa dell'avarizia senza senso ed eccessiva del procuratore ma questa povertà e miseria veniva sostituita dall'amore e dalla concordia tra il clero; dall'osservanza strettissima delle regole scaturiva la tranquillità delle coscienze che regnava dentro la casa"⁴⁸.

3. - *L'attività apostolica, educativa e patriottica*

L'attività pastorale ed educativa della comunità di Piotrkowice nelle intenzioni dei superiori doveva servire da copertura di fronte alle autorità statali. Clemente Hofbauer aveva accettato la pastorale parrocchiale di Lutkówka sotto la pressione del proprietario di questa località, protestante e amministratore della diocesi di Varsavia, invece l'attività educativa era compresa nelle decisioni del capitolo di Scifelli del 1785. La loro revoca avvenne nel 1793, ma la notizia giunse a Varsavia con un grosso ritardo, quando la comunità di San Bennone già gestiva la scuola. Ai tempi prussiani, quindi fin dall'inizio del 1796 la

⁴⁷ Per un'analisi più approfondita relativa a questo argomento vedi BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 60-61. Vedi anche *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 213; *Codex regularum et constitutionum Congregationis SS. Redemptoris necnon statutorum a capitulis generalibus annis 1764, 1855, 1894 editorum*, Romae 1896, 29-484; E. Hosp, *Geschichte der Redemptoristen-Regel in Österreich (1819-1848)*, Wien 1939, 24-26.

⁴⁸ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim; il testo citato si trova alle p. 63-65.

direzione di un istituto scholastico fu in realtà l'unico titolo che giustificava l'esistenza della comunità. Invece a Piotrkowice venne accettata la gestione della parrocchia e del santuario mariano come anche della scuola parrocchiale, per creare una copertura per una comunità di religiosi più numerosa. Il santuario e soprattutto la scuola dovevano servire da copertura per l'ammissione e l'educazione dei chierici, che ufficialmente costituivano il corpo insegnante. La dissimulazione era abile, ma non bastò per l'attiva polizia dello zar.

La pastorale

La pastorale parrocchiale e del santuario accettata con il consenso delle supreme autorità della congregazione occupava la maggior parte del tempo dei Padri che lavoravano a Piotrkowice. Dall'inizio fino all'agosto 1829 il pastore principale della parrocchia e del santuario fu il parroco P. Podgórski, e quando il P. Dylewski tornò dal seminario a Cracovia lui fu particolarmente impegnato nella pastorale. Il programma del lavoro pastorale era uguale a quello delle altre parrocchie: comprendeva le sante Messe quotidiane, domenicali e festive insieme alle omelie, la confessione e le funzioni paraliturgiche. Di domenica il lavoro cominciava alle ore 7 con il mattutino e le altre preghiere, seguiva la santa Messa mattutina con l'omelia. Alle ore 9 iniziava la catechesi dei bambini nella chiesa, dopo la quale si cantavano i canti religiosi. Verso le ore 11 aveva luogo la santa Messa principale insieme all'omelia che si concludeva con i canti e con l'"Angelus". Di pomeriggio, verso le 15 cominciava la recita della coroncina alla Santissima Trinità, cui seguivano la seconda catechesi dei bambini, i vesperi, le preghiere serali e infine l'"Angelus". I predicatori principali erano P. Podgórski e il chierico, in seguito sacerdote, Ignazio Dylewski, mentre la catechesi veniva svolta dai chierici che in tal modo avevano l'occasione per esercitarsi nella pastorale. Malgrado i vari problemi, la qualità del lavoro apostolico a Piotrkowice procurava ai redentoristi un riconoscimento, la cui eco giungeva fino a Vienna⁴⁹.

Il santuario mariano possedeva un "Loreto" speciale, una cappella costruita nel 1788 dai padri bernardini. I redentoristi lo rinnovarono insieme a tutta la chiesa e le feste mariane, soprattutto la Nascita

⁴⁹ A. SAMPERS, *Epistularum commercium inter RM Cocle et VG Passerat, ann.1826-1828*, in: *SHCSR* 13 (1965) 46: Passerat ad Cocle, Wien 23 I 1827; ID., *Epistularum commercium inter Rect. Mai. Cocle ac Vic. Gen. Congreg. Panzuti et Vic. Gen. Transalp. Passerat, iul. 1831 - apr. 1832*, in: *SHCSR* 15 (1967) 34: Passerat ad V.G. Panzuti, Wien 30 XII 1831.

della Santissima Maria Vergine, veniva celebrata molto solennemente. In questo giorno (di sagra annuale) arrivavano diversi pellegrini dalle parrocchie vicine e numerosi sacerdoti che aiutavano nel sacramento della penitenza. Quando arrivavano meno di venti sacerdoti, la sagra veniva considerata non riuscita. A questa festa, come anche al "Triduum sacrum", al "Corpus Domini e al Natale del Signore", dal 1827 davano lustro l'orchestra e i canti dei chierici e poi dei Padri Pekarz e soprattutto Bernard, dei Cechi. Per i padri Podgórski e Koziński questo costituì in un certo senso il ritorno alla celebrazione solenne della liturgia nella chiesa di San Bennone a Varsavia, alla meravigliosa orchestra e ai concerti di allora organizzati da Padre Carlo Jestershein⁵⁰.

L'assistenza pastorale occupava molto tempo tra le omelie circostanziali, le sostituzioni, le confessioni. Le prediche erano compito soprattutto dei padri Podgórski e Dylewski, ma nel servizio del sacramento della penitenza occupava decisamente il primo posto P. Koziński, che non possedeva talento di predicatore. Si servivano delle capacità e della fama di predicatore eminente di P. Podgórski anche i vescovi di Cracovia: Giovanni Woronicz e Carlo Skórkowski, che lo portavano con loro nelle visite pastorali, il che non era ben visto da alcuni sacerdoti diocesani⁵¹.

Le missioni

Un grande avvenimento nella vita della comunità di Piotrkowice furono le missioni giubiliari. L'anno santo 1825, proclamato dal papa Leone XII il 24 maggio e aperto il 24 dicembre nel Regno di Polonia per grazia dello zar, fu festeggiato dal 2 IX 1826. Lo zar già nel 1824 aveva acconsentito all'organizzazione delle missioni parrocchiali con la speranza di placare le spinte rivoluzionarie. Intrapresero il compito molti ordini e in particolare i cappuccini. P. Podgórski, famoso predicatore che negli anni precedenti partecipava alle missioni organizzate dai Padri Missionari di San Vincenzo de' Paoli non voleva essere messo da parte nell'anno giubilare. Aveva a disposizione appena due sacerdoti: Paolino Trepka e Tommaso Cempiel (vestito alla fine del 1825, ordinato il 23 IV 1826, deceduto il 25 VI 1831) e il chierico Dylewski, ma nessuno di loro possedeva esperienze missionarie. Il peso princi-

⁵⁰ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim; MH IX 109-113, 232-233, 298, 305, 319; X 13-14; WANAT, *Sanktuarium maryjne* (vedi nota 23), 63-64, 72-73.

⁵¹ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim soprattutto dalla p. 139; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 487-490, 499-500; MH IX 296, 298, 305, 309, 318-332.

pale di proclamare la Parola di Dio, che era grande, toccò a P. Podgórski e al chierico Dylewski. Quest'ultimo, nel solo periodo dal 7 IX fino al 2 X 1826, durante la sagra mariana, le missioni e le feste giubilari a Piotrkowice, tenne 64 prediche. Piccolo, perché composto di appena quattro persone, il gruppo missionario, appoggiato dai sacerdoti diocesani, soprattutto durante il sacramento della riconciliazione nell'autunno del 1826, compì 10 missioni oppure funzioni giubilari, tre altre nella primavera del 1827. La più grande fu la missione e la cerimonia giubilare a Piotrkowice che impegnarono anche le parrocchie vicine per più di tre settimane. P. Podgórski preparava alla santa comunione unita al perdono reciproco ("niente altro riempiva l'aria che il pianto; i parrocchiani si prostravano ai piedi dei loro parroci, i figli ai piedi dei genitori, ecc."). Si accostarono alla comunione, secondo i calcoli del decano locale, 10000 fedeli e durante tutti i giorni giubilari 14000. Nello stesso tempo al sacramento della cresima si accostarono circa 7000 fedeli⁵².

Le associazioni religiose segrete

Clemente Hofbauer durante il suo soggiorno a Vienna era rimasto in stretto contatto con Nicola Diessbach (†1798), fondatore di alcune associazioni religiose, soprattutto di "Amicizia cristiana"⁵³ e con i suoi diretti collaboratori: Luigi Virginio (†1805) e il barone Giuseppe Penckler (†1830). E' molto probabile che fosse stato membro di "Amicizia Cristiana". Rimane il fatto che dopo l'arrivo a Varsavia già nel 1788 fondò l'Associazione segreta degli Oblati del Santissimo Redentore, i cui statuti furono approvati nel 1803 da Pio VII⁵⁴. I suoi scopi erano in linea di massima identici agli scopi di "Amicizia Cristiana". P. Podgórski fu sicuramente impegnato nel suo segreto funzionamento nel contesto di Varsavia, che radunava i cattolici delle classi superiori. I suoi membri non dovevano soltanto vivere personalmente i principi cristiani, ma realizzarli con la parola, con le buone letture e con il proprio esempio nei loro ambienti per attirare a Dio i liberali, gli atei e gli indifferenti. Accanto all'Associazione degli Oblati esisteva la Fra-

⁵² AG, AA (vedi nota 2), IX A 21, p. 15; *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 77-125, 142-144; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 185; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 68-73; A. BAZIELICH, *Missioni popolari dei redentoristi in Polonia (1800-1985)*, in: *SHCSR* 23 (1985) 152-155; JABŁOŃSKA-DEPTUŁA, *Przystosowanie i opór* (vedi nota 12), 137-138, 324-325.

⁵³ Vedi C. BONA, *Le "Amicizie". Società segrete e rinascita religiosa (1770-1830)*, Torino 1962, ed in particolare p. 61-89, 117-153, 223-225.

⁵⁴ MH II 51-61; VIII 272-273; XIV 145; XV 127-131.

ternità del Dolcissimo Cuore di Gesù e la Congregazione dell'Agnello di Dio. Si può legittimamente supporre che proprio agli Oblati appartenesse Laura Tarnowska, forse insieme al marito Stanislao. Le scarse notizie, tra cui anche i rapporti delle spie e le delazioni alla polizia, indicano P. Podgórski e Piotrkowice come appoggi di queste associazioni, i cui centri si trovavano a Cracovia e a Varsavia. Qui il punto d'appoggio fu Giovanna Grudzińska, moglie del principe Costantino, fratello dello zar Alessandro I, e probabilmente anche Maria Gutakowska (centro "Grzybów"). Esistono prove sufficienti che P. Podgórski fosse impegnato nella guida dell'Associazione degli Oblati. Nell'ambiente di Piotrkowice appartenevano agli Oblati la signora Soltk da Kurozwęki, insieme alle sue figlie. Poiché queste erano associazioni segrete, P. Podgórski organizzandole o soltanto appoggiandole, commetteva per le autorità un ulteriore reato. La denuncia da Cracovia al Grande Principe Costantino, a cavallo tra il maggio e il giugno 1830, generò una ulteriore lotta del governo e soprattutto di Costantino contro i redentoristi di Piotrkowice⁵⁵.

L'attività educativa

La gestione della scuola con l'aiuto dei chierici doveva essere uno degli elementi che mascherasse l'esistenza della comunità religiosa. La scuola elementare esisteva a Piotrkowice già nel 1818, ma dopo questa data cessò di funzionare. Stanislao Tarnowski decise di farla funzionare, ma la domanda alla Commissione Governativa per i Culti Religiosi e l'Educazione Pubblica non si limitava soltanto alla richiesta della scuola elementare, chiedeva anche una scuola che preparasse allo stato religioso. Il progetto di creare "una scuola gratuita per la gente più povera" nei beni di Stanislao Tarnowski fu approvato dalla suddetta Commissione il 5 VI 1835⁵⁶. Poiché non venne usato il termine: scuola media, il ministro Stanislao Grabowski firmò il documento, ma al P. Podgórski la formulazione generica diede la possibilità di una interpretazione vantaggiosa per lui. Grazie ad essa, a Piotrkowice sorse una scuola media inferiore di tre (dal 1828) ed anche quattro classi, il che la rendeva simile alla scuola dei bennoniti di

⁵⁵ BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 79-85; JABŁONSKA-DEPTUŁA, *Przystosowanie i opór* (vedi nota 12), 191-217.

⁵⁶ APK (vedi nota 23), Dyrekcja Szkolna Kielcka (Distretto Scolastico di Kielce), manoscritto n° 1734, p. 1-2; AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 299-304; AGAD, KRSW (vedi nota 12), manoscritto n° 7125, k. 28r-28v.; MH IX 115-117, 172-173, 220, 233, 268.

Varsavia⁵⁷. L'esistenza di tre classi venne scoperta durante il controllo della commissione statale nel settembre del 1830⁵⁸.

In questa scuola il cui direttore fu uno dei padri (dall'agosto 1829 P. Dylewski), insegnavano i chierici ed anche i novizi; non si studiavano soltanto le materie del programma della scuola media inferiore, ma anche diversi mestieri: l'arte del vasaio, del sarto, del ciabattino, del falegname, della selleria e della musica. I laici istruivano su questi mestieri⁵⁹. Inizialmente frequentavano questa scuola i ragazzi di Piotrkowice e dei dintorni, ma con il tempo si presentarono anche ragazzi di zone più lontane, questi ultimi venivano ospitati nel convento come così detti convittori. Le autorità statali su cui non gravavano i costi del mantenimento, nel settembre del 1830 ordinarono la sua soppressione. La contemporanea liquidazione del seminario e il trasferimento di alcuni chierici e insegnanti al seminario diocesano, causò una grande confusione, ma a causa dello scoppio dell'insurrezione di novembre contro le autorità russe occupanti (1830), la scuola continuava a funzionare. Fu però chiusa il 18 V 1833 dalle nuove autorità russe di Varsavia⁶⁰. I suoi alunni svolsero in seguito varie funzioni. Michele Kleczkowski partì per la Francia e fu tra l'altro console di questo paese in Cina⁶¹; Antonio Piramowicz entrò nei riformati e lavorò nelle missioni in Cina e Romania⁶², alcuni altri entrarono nel seminario diocesano.

Attività patriottica

Il popolo polacco fu sottomesso da tre Potenze: Russia, Prussia e Austria. Non poteva accettare supinamente la liquidazione della propria identità nazionale mediante un processo forzato di "russifica-

⁵⁷ Vedi L. GROCHOLSKI, *L'œuvre d'éducation et de bienfaisance des Pères Rédemptoristes-Bennonites à Varsovie (1787-1808)*, in: *SHCSR* 34 (1986) 297-318. Della formazione della terza classe 14 X 1828 vedi *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 169.

⁵⁸ MH IX 298, 306, 310-314, 322; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 73-74.

⁵⁹ MH IX 300, 310-314. Si trova qui il programma particolare dell'insegnamento relativo al 1830. Invece il programma particolare dell'insegnamento negli anni 1832 e 1833 si può trovare nei MH X 47, 58, 129, 135, 147-148.

⁶⁰ AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 487-490, 499-500; APK, Dyrekcja Szkolna w Kielcach (vedi nota 23), manoscritto n° 1722, k. 2-6; *ibid.*, manoscritto n° 1734, k. 18r-30v; *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), passim dalla p. 412; MH IX 198-203, 252-262, 265-275, 318-322, 326, 331-332; MH X 113-119, 124-126, 131-139, 153-154, 163-164, 169, 173.

⁶¹ BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 75 e 140, nota 201.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 75-76, 141, nota 205.

zione” e “germanizzazione”. Una delle dimostrazioni di opposizione del popolo polacco fu l’insurrezione di novembre, 1830-1831, che fu appoggiata anche dal clero che svegliava lo spirito nazionale, durante le omelie, con aiuti economici, con l’aiuto ai soldati feriti e anche con informazioni per l’armata polacca. A Piotrkowice, come in tante altre chiese, venivano celebrate funzioni speciali per l’armata degli insorti. Si facevano prediche che incoraggiavano alla lotta per la libertà, illustrando quali sarebbero stati gli effetti fatali della perdita della guerra e quelli invece positivi della vittoria⁶³. Dopo la sconfitta il nuovo governatore dello zar, Ivan Paskiewicz, organizzò una indagine molto severa, il cui effetto fu la scoperta dei religiosi che avevano appoggiato “la rivoluzione anti russa”⁶⁴. L’indagine non tralasciò Piotrkowice, dove la commissione investigativa fece ad ogni padre la seguente domanda: “quale fu il suo comportamento durante l’insurrezione?”⁶⁵. P. Podgórski rischiò l’arresto e il soggiorno obbligato in uno dei conventi, ma riuscì a partire per la Repubblica di Cracovia.

4. - *La liquidazione del convento segreto*

Il popolo polacco che a causa del complotto dei tre vicini: Austria, Prussia e Russia perse l’indipendenza nel 1795, (come risultato delle successive spartizioni, 1772, 1793 e 1795), e di nuovo nel 1815 per effetto del Congresso di Vienna, non voleva accettare questo dato di fatto. Così fu anche per il Regno di Polonia, formatosi con una parte del Ducato di Varsavia e assegnato all’autorità degli zar russi. La costituzione relativamente liberale, concessa a questo Regno dallo zar Alessandro I, fu gradualmente limitata, il che dopo il 1815, come del resto in tutta l’Europa, causò la nascita di organizzazioni segrete cospirative aventi come scopo la conquista di maggiori libertà cittadine e anche il rovesciamento del potere. I numerosi club politici nascenti, spesso di natura rivoluzionaria, come l’Associazione Patriottica fondata nel 1821, la Panta Koina (Associazione degli Amici), i Filomati, i Filareti e tanti altri, non sfuggirono all’attenzione della polizia. Gli

⁶³ AGAD, KRSW (vedi nota 12), manoscritto n° 7125, k. 63v-64. Cfr. anche *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 300, 302.

⁶⁴ A. WRÓŃSKI, *Duchowieństwo i Kościoł katolicki w Królestwie Polskim wobec sprawy narodowej w latach 1832-1860 (Religiosi e la Chiesa cattolica nel Regno di Polonia di fronte al problema nazionale negli anni 1832-1869)*, Warszawa 1994.

⁶⁵ AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 473.

arresti cominciarono già nel 1822 e divennero numerosi nel 1826. Durante i processi venivano emesse gravi condanne, pena di morte compresa. In tal modo lo zar Alessandro I, si tolse la maschera di liberale e lo zar Nicola I, un mediocre satrapo, subito dopo aver preso il potere mandò nel Regno di Polonia schiere di suoi agenti, sotto la guida del russo Nicola Nowosilcow, per spiare e investigare su qualsiasi tipo di associazione segreta e su tutti i sintomi di avversione verso le autorità costituite⁶⁶.

E' in questo contesto che bisogna considerare il convento di Piotrkowice. Le autorità non avevano dato il permesso per la sua fondazione. Esisteva segretamente, apparteneva ai bennoniti (cripto gesuiti) espulsi da Varsavia; era stato fondato "l'istituto teologico" segreto; aveva rapporti segreti con l'estero; gestiva una associazione religiosa segreta e inoltre appoggiava l'insurrezione, "la rivoluzione" di ottobre. I redentoristi-bennoniti di Piotrkowice e soprattutto P. Podgórski furono quindi considerati nemici pericolosi dello Stato e dovevano essere assolutamente liquidati. Già l'omelia di P. Dylewski del 1 XI 1826, che secondo la denuncia istigava alla resistenza contro l'ordine stabilito, alla rivoluzione, suggeriva che a Piotrkowice agivano pericolosi nemici dell'autorità regnante e del sistema politico-sociale. Con un tal fardello di accuse i redentoristi non ebbero alcuna possibilità di sopravvivere. Il fatto che erano rimasti dopo "l'affare" di Dylewski, novembre-dicembre 1826, quando ebbe luogo il processo contro i membri dell'Associazione Patriottica segreta, fu incomprensibile per molti rappresentanti delle autorità.

La liquidazione del seminario, 1830

Malgrado una pace apparente, a Piotrkowice dal 1827 fino all'estate del 1830, le autorità statali e i suoi agenti non smisero mai di osservare che cosa stesse accadendo e che cosa facesse P. Podgórski. Non poteva essere diversamente, poiché nel 1827 le autorità zariste, che nello stesso anno avevano espulso dalla Bielorussia 317 gesuiti, intimarono ai responsabili del Regno di Polonia di non permettere loro di insediarsi su quel territorio. Per questo motivo il governo ordinò alle amministrazioni e ai parroci di non accettarli nel loro territorio e di non permettere la nascita di club o di associazioni⁶⁷. Di più nello

⁶⁶ N. DAVIES, *God's playground. A history of Poland. Vol. II: 1795 to the present*. Oxford 1981, cap. 13; qui l'ulteriore biografia fondamentale.

⁶⁷ AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 543.

stesso anno 1827 il cancelliere dell'impero russo, Carlo Roberto Nesselrode, si rivolse ai governi italiani, avvertendoli di stare in guardia non soltanto contro i rivoluzionari dichiarati, ma anche contro le associazioni religiose segrete che con i loro metodi cercavano di guadagnare influenze presso di loro, anzi, di coinvolgerli rendendoseli amici⁶⁸. Se con questo comportamento il governo russo osava ingerirsi in campo internazionale, cosa ci si poteva aspettare nei paesi che rimanevano sotto il suo dominio?

L'attacco partì dalla delazione che il residente russo (Zarzecki ?) a Cracovia fece al Grande Duca Costantino (fratello di Alessandro I) a Varsavia, con la quale denunciava che nella Repubblica di Cracovia esisteva un'associazione segreta di signore, associazione che abbracciava con il suo raggio anche il Regno di Polonia, di cui egli per volontà di Dio era un capo supremo, e aggiungeva che il promotore di quella associazione era P. Podgórski e che la signora Laura Rostworska, anche di Piotrkowice (di "Tarnoskała", la residenza di Rostworowski) era la sua dirigente. Inoltre l'agente russo informava che a Piotrkowice esisteva un seminario segreto⁶⁹. La denuncia, che può essere datata a cavallo dei mesi di maggio e giugno 1830, provocò a Varsavia una reazione immediata delle autorità; infatti già il 16 giugno il segretario di stato, il generale Francesco Kossecki all'ordine del Grande Duca, impartì direttive precise a Samuele Różycki, commissario della regione di Stopnica, affinché conducesse le relative indagini⁷⁰ che ebbero luogo il 24 giugno. Poiché in quel giorno P. Podgórski e P. Dylewski erano assenti da casa (erano partiti aiutati dalle parrocchie vicine), i Padri e i chierici rimasti, spaventati e disorientati fornirono alla commissione presieduta da Samuele Różycki, molti dati che compromettevano la comunità agli occhi delle autorità. Innanzitutto la commissione venne a sapere che a Piorkowice veramente si trovava un seminario con i seminaristi. Il commissario riferiva inoltre al suo superiore dell'esistenza di un'associazione segreta religiosa che doveva essere la Fraternità (l'associazione) del Cuore di Gesù, e dei contatti segreti di P. Podgórski con i gesuiti di Tyniec presso Cracovia, di Vienna e della Svizzera⁷¹. Poiché le informazioni di una tale fraternità legata ai redentoristi si riferivano al territorio del Regno di Polonia e

⁶⁸ BONA, *Le "Amicizie"* (vedi nota 53), 437-445.

⁶⁹ Biblioteka Raczyńskich (Poznań), manoscritto n° 1050, p. 1-5; MH IX 183-185, 218-219; AGAD, CWW (vedi nota 6), manoscritto n° 454, p. 52-53.

⁷⁰ MH IX 185-188.

⁷¹ AGAD, KRSW (vedi nota 12), manoscritto n° 7125, k. 6-14; MH IX 188-193.

della Repubblica di Cracovia, non potevano essere sottovalutate⁷². In occasione di questa indagine i commissari avrebbero appreso che Giovanna Grudzińska, Granduchessa di Łowicz e moglie del Granduca Costantino appoggiava la comunità di Piotrkowice⁷³. Lascia però perplessi il fatto che dopo il secondo rapporto di Różycki (26 VI 1830) le autorità statali non accusarono Piotrkowice di appoggiare il congregazionalismo ma soltanto di gestire un seminario segreto e una scuola elementare. Nei mesi seguenti le scuole non approvate dallo Stato divennero un problema serio. Di fronte ai detti rapporti il convento segreto di Piotrkowice poteva aspettarsi le peggiori decisioni da parte del governo del Regno di Polonia, controllato completamente dallo zar, e cioè un'assoluta e completa liquidazione.

Carlo Skórkowski, vescovo di Cracovia, appoggiato da alcuni membri del governo a Varsavia (G. C. Szaniawski, M. Woźnicki e in una certa misura S. Grabowski), cercò di difendere il seminario spiegando che in realtà non era un vero e proprio seminario, ma corsi propedeutici al seminario⁷⁴. Naturalmente lo stesso P. Podgórski, oltre alle pressioni presso il vescovo di Cracovia, cercò aiuto a Varsavia⁷⁵. I membri del Consiglio Amministrativo furono quasi tutti per la liquidazione del seminario e della scuola: presero tale decisione durante la seduta del 13 VII 1830⁷⁶. La difesa di Piotrkowice provocò l'arrivo di un'altra commissione investigativa presieduta da Giuseppe

⁷² Oltre ai dati citati nel testo vedi anche AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 521: A. SAMPERS, *Epistularum commercium inter Patres CSSR in Italia et trans Alpes tempore S. Clementis, 1786-1820*, in: SHCSR 7 (1959) 49: i redentoristi sono i promotori di questa fraternità nel territorio della diocesi di Costanza.

⁷³ J. U. NIEMCEWICZ, *Pamiętniki z lat 1830-1831 (Diari degli anni 1830-1831)*, Kraków 1909, 34-35. I diari malgrado le diverse inesattezze, forniscono i particolari di quello che si sussurrava a Varsavia.

⁷⁴ AGAD, Protokoły Rady Administracyjnej (Protocolli del Consiglio Amministrativo), manoscritto n° 19, p. 571-575; MH X 201 (la presa di posizione del consigliere Woźnicki, 12 VII 1830). La difesa di Piotrkowice da parte del vescovo Carlo Skórkowski, vedi tra l'altro MH IX 205-206 (la lettera al vescovo Adamo Prazmowski, preside della sezione spirituale nella Commissione Governativa per le Confessioni religiose, 16VII 1830); IX 211-213 (lettera a Gaspare Wielogłowski, preside della Commissione del Voivodato di Cracovia, prima del 15 VIII 1830); IX 227-229 (lettera di G. C. Szaniawski, consigliere di stato nella Commissione Governativa per le Confessioni Religiose, 16 VIII 1830); IX 214-215 (lettera a Martino Zalewski, consigliere nella stessa Commissione, 28 VII 1830); IX 248-249 (lettera al Gran Duca Costantino, 23 VIII 1830) ed altre.

⁷⁵ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 231-232.

⁷⁶ MH IX 198-203; AGAD, CWW (vedi nota 6), manoscritto n° 454, p. 27-37.

C. Szaniawski bendisposto verso i redentoristi, ma il suo rapporto non ebbe più una grande importanza⁷⁷. Il Granduca Costantino il 29 VIII 1830 chiese che fosse eseguita la sua decisione del 13 VIII 1830⁷⁸. Stando così le cose, il vescovo Skórkowski decise di mandare due chierici al seminario di Cracovia gestito dai Padri Missionari di San Vincenzo de' Paoli, e quattro al seminario diocesano di Kielce. Questa decisione fu realizzata il 6 settembre 1830 e a Piotrkowice rimasero "soltanto il vuoto e la tristezza"⁷⁹. Questa decisione non soddisfece il Consiglio Amministrativo, che mandò una commissione investigativa il cui scopo questa volta era la liquidazione del convento a Piotrkowice. La commissione cominciò il lavoro il 21 IX 1830 e il suo rapporto divenne il 5 ottobre oggetto di dibattito del Consiglio, che decise che a Piotrkowice bastava soltanto la presenza di un parroco e la scuola doveva essere una normale scuola elementare⁸⁰. L'insurrezione scoppiata il 30 novembre del 1830 ostacolò momentaneamente la realizzazione di queste decisioni.

I rapporti delle autorità nazionali polacche con i redentoristi, 1830/1831

Fino al 30 XI 1830 si poteva attribuire la persecuzione contro i redentoristi al Granduca Costantino, fratello dello zar Alessandro I, capo dell'esercito nel Regno che pur non facendo parte del governo e non essendo plenipotenziario dello zar, "governava". Egli organizzò le indagini a Piotrkowice e costrinse il governo a liquidare definitivamente il seminario e la scuola postelementare. Quando però il 29 XI 1830 scoppiò contro la dominazione russa l'insurrezione nazionale, chiamata in seguito "di novembre", il Governo Provvisorio degli insorti, composto quasi esclusivamente da membri dell'ex Consiglio Amministrativo, permise al Duca Costantino di partire. Tale governo, che aveva dimostrato di non saper formulare un chiaro e moderno programma politico-sociale, che non aveva saputo organizzare subito una lotta armata contro l'esercito russo, trovò il tempo per occuparsi con molta spietatezza di un gruppo di pochi redentoristi di Piotrkowice, fatto passare come principale nemico dello Stato ora non

⁷⁷ MH IX 231-248; AGAD, CWW (vedi nota 6), manoscritto n° 454, p. 54-85.

⁷⁸ MH IX 262-263, 266-275, 276-278.

⁷⁹ BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 91-93.

⁸⁰ AGAD, *Protokoły Rady Administracyjnej* (Protocolli del Consiglio Amministrativo), manoscritto n° 19, p. 900-907; AKMKr, APB, manoscritto n° 137, p. 487-490, 499-500; MH IX 283-284, 292-317, 318-325.

più russo, ma del nascente stato polacco. Perciò dovevano essere annientati. La Commissione per gli Affari Interni già il 20 XII 1830 e in seguito il 19 I 1831 chiese alla Commissione Governativa per i Culti Religiosi e l'Educazione Pubblica di eseguire la decisione dell'ex Consiglio Amministrativo presa il 5 X 1830. Il seminario non esisteva più, ma c'erano ancora alcuni redentoristi con P. Podgórski a capo. Ora a P. Podgórski venivano formulate genericamente tre accuse. Il suo primo delitto consisteva nell'appartenenza alla comunità dei "bennoniti" di Varsavia, ostile a Napoleone e alle autorità del Ducato di Varsavia, e nella diffusione di una solida vita cristiana anche tra gli strati alti ed istruiti della società. La seconda accusa riguardava la fondazione di un convento segreto a Piotrkowice che preparava le nuove leve dei "bennoniti", cioè degli odiati gesuiti mascherati. La terza accusa riguardava l'organizzazione e la direzione di associazioni segrete religiose, delitto contro la legge considerato imperdonabile. Il fatto che esse avessero come scopo la rinascita religiosa di per sé era un fenomeno pericoloso, per le autorità significava anche una minaccia contro l'ordine politico stabilito. Bennonismo, gesuitismo e congregazionalismo avvolti nel mistero erano considerati una minaccia per lo stato polacco che stava nascendo. Il Governo Nazionale proclamato al posto del Governo Provvisorio non intendeva tollerare una tale attività che si svolgeva dal basso, tanto più che i suoi membri, nella maggioranza erano ex massoni (la massoneria come organizzazione segreta fu sciolta nel Regno nel 1821), liberali che non avevano intenzione di tollerare la Chiesa cattolica, e atei. Soltanto in piccolissima parte il governo era costituito da cattolici. Carlo Skórkowski, il vescovo di Cracovia che aveva appoggiato più di tutti l'insurrezione nazionale, difese decisamente i redentoristi di Piotrkowice, e a questo fine mandò alle autorità due lettere, il 5 e il 7 VII 1831. Lo stesso fece il 18 VII 1831 Ladislao Tarnowski, nipote di Stanislao, fondatore di Piotrkowice. Il governo che sapeva benissimo che il vescovo di Cracovia era stato impegnato nella difesa dell'indipendenza e che i redentoristi ma Piotrkowice avevano organizzato funzioni e pronunciato omeleie che mobilitavano la nazione all'autodifesa, continuava a nutrire un odio irremovibile nei riguardi di questi "bennoniti". Per distruggerli, il 18 VII 1831 organizzò un'ulteriore investigazione e il 5 e 14 VIII 1831 mandò alla commissione delle confessioni religiose e affari interni le istruzioni su come spiare e combattere il bennonismo, il gesuitismo e il

congregazionalismo. Ciò accadeva nel periodo in cui l'armata russa si avvicinava a Varsavia per porre fine all'insurrezione nazionale⁸¹.

Il governo russo - la definitiva liquidazione della comunità a Piotrkowice, 1831-1834

Il giorno 8 IX 1831 l'esercito russo invase Varsavia, subito dopo fallì l'insurrezione. Il Regno di Polonia ebbe un nuovo governatore, il russo Ivan Paskiewicz. Tutti gli incarichi chiave dell'amministrazione statale e della polizia furono dati anche ai Russi. Le autorità che nel 1831 avevano interrotto l'attività delle scuole superiori e delle Università studiavano la documentazione esistente ed osservavano la situazione. Per tutto l'anno, cominciando dal 1831 a Piotrkowice regnò la pace. Tornarono perfino da Cracovia i chierici Sobolewski e Faron che insieme a Roźnowski e Kowalski cominciarono a studiare teologia, 50 alunni frequentavano la scuola media inferiore. Le autorità statali ricominciarono l'attacco contro la comunità di Piotrkowice accusandola di gestire "un istituto scientifico" oppure "un istituto teologico" all'ordine del governatore Ivan Paskiewicz. P. Podgórski che manteneva rapporti discreti con i gesuiti di Tyniec fu accusato di essere un gesuita segreto. Il compito degli agenti fu di scoprire che cosa pensavano e che cosa complottavano contro lo stato gli ex bennoniti: Podgórski, Koziński e il loro buon alunno Dylewski⁸². Durante tre mesi a Piotrkowice furono condotte tre indagini e furono fatti tre rapporti: il 4 X, il 4 XI e il 5 - 14 XII 1832. Il terzo rapporto fatto da un polacco fu piuttosto benevolo verso i redentoristi⁸³. Le commissioni dei culti e degli affari interni possedevano la documentazione dei governi precedenti e disponevano degli impiegati di grado inferiore (tra l'altro il generale Giuseppe Rautenstrauch), la cui ostilità verso i redentoristi era generalmente nota. Ora venivano poste due accuse: la gestione dell'"istituto scientifico" (teologico) segreto, cioè la gestione della

⁸¹ AKMKr, APB (vedi nota 5), manoscritto n° 137, p. 519, 619-620, 627-630; AGAD, CWW (vedi nota 6), manoscritto n° 454, p. 132, 134, 136, 138; AGAD, Centralne Władze Powstania Listopadowego (Comando Centrale dell'Insurrezione di Novembre), manoscritto n° 112, p. 6-12, 15; AGAD, KRSW (vedi nota 12), manoscritto n° 7125, k. 59-68; MH IX 330-333, 343-346, 366, 448; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 94-98. Per quanto riguarda la lotta contro i gesuiti vedi W. SZOŁDRSKI, *Z dziejów antyjezuickiego prądu w Królestwie Kongresowym (Dalla storia della corrente antiegeuitica nel Regno di Polonia)*, in: *Przegląd Powszechny* 53 (1936), vol. 211, p. 59-80.

⁸² MH X 1-2.

⁸³ MH X 4-7, 9-15, 17-61; *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 423-428.

scuola media e del seminario e inoltre la diffusione del gesuitismo. L'ispiratore di tutto sarebbe stato, secondo le autorità, il "gesuita" P. Podgórski. Alessandro Strogonow, preside della nuova Commissione Governativa per gli Affari Interni, Spirituali e dell'Educazione Pubblica mandò il 3 IV 1833 alla Direzione dei Culti una lettera con cui chiedeva la chiusura del seminario, la liquidazione della scuola postelementare e la limitazione del personale pastorale a tre persone e cioè al parroco e due vicari. Con lo stesso documento Strogonow chiedeva chiarimenti sul perché fino a quel momento non fossero stati eseguiti i decreti di cassazione del 13 VII e del 5 X 1830, e su quale base P. Podgórski e Koziński, benoniti espulsi nel 1808, fossero tornati nel paese⁸⁴. La difesa dei redentoristi intrapresa dal vescovo Carlo Skórkowski⁸⁵, non ebbe più importanza. Il 12 VI 1833 il delegato di Strogonow eseguì la liquidazione dei resti del seminario e della scuola. La scuola cessò di funzionare immediatamente e i quattro chierici furono mandati nel seminario di Kielce⁸⁶. A causa di una decisa opposizione del vescovo Skórkowski rimasero sul posto tutti i sacerdoti anche se la loro situazione non fu facile perché le autorità progettavano il loro internamento nei vari conventi, ciò riguardava in modo particolare P. Podgórski. Soltanto il timore della reazione della popolazione locale fermò l'esecuzione di questi progetti⁸⁷.

In definitiva, poiché il vescovo Skórkowski non riuscì a realizzare il piano di insediare i redentoristi di Piotrkowice presso la chiesa di Santa Barbara a Cracovia, impegnò P. Podgórski nella pastorale della Repubblica di Cracovia. Verso la fine del 1834 P. Podgórski ricevette la parrocchia di Nowa Góra, poi a Kościelec (1841), e infine la parrocchia del Santissimo Salvatore a Cracovia (Zwierzyniec) dove morì il 6 III 1847. Collaboravano con lui P. Nicola Koziński e il fratello Daubicz. L'abbandono di Piotrkowice da parte di P. Podgórski, superiore formale della comunità, nell'autunno del 1834 può essere considerato come fine dell'esistenza di questo convento "segreto". P. Dylewski, vicario e in seguito amministratore della parrocchia di Piotrkowice malgrado le ostilità da parte delle autorità, nel 1836 divenne parroco nella vicina Lisów dove morì il 17 III 1843. Poiché nel 1841 P. Dylewski cessò di svolgere la funzione di amministratore della

⁸⁴ GAD, CWW (vedi nota 6), manoscritto n° 454, p. 149-168; MH X 88-111 (insieme alla nota 2, p. 174), 113-119.

⁸⁵ MH X 126-127.

⁸⁶ MH X 151-157; *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 458, 465, 467.

⁸⁷ MH X 130-139.

parrocchia di Piotrkowice e P. Abramski cessò di svolgere la funzione di vicario, P. Dylewski scrisse che "la famosa congregazione di Piotrkowice... morì proprio in quell'anno"⁸⁸. I redentoristi d'oltralpe non ebbero fortuna con le autorità. Lo si vede particolarmente dall'esempio della storia del convento di San Bennone di Varsavia e del convento segreto di Piotrkowice.

SUMMARY

The suppression of the monastery of St. Benno's in Warsaw by Napoleon on 20 June 1808, caused the dispersal of a large community. The Redemptorists were deported to Kostrzyn near the river Oder. From there, about July 17 1808, they were separated: some were sent to Switzerland; the Redemptorists born in the Duchy of Warsaw were allowed to return home; Clement Hofbauer and a few confreres came to Vienna. Fr. J. Passerat, Vicar of the Transalpine Redemptorists since 1820, after his arrival in Vienna and Fr. Podgórski, a member of his Council, were concerned about the Redemptorists dispersed both in the Kingdom of Prussia and in the so called Kingdom of Poland. Fr. Podgórski took possession of the parish of Piotrkowice, near Kielce in the Kingdom of Poland, on November 1824. Only three Redemptorists from St. Benno's were able to take part in the work of this community. At the end of 1829 the community was composed of 6 priests and 16 professed students and aspirants. Their work was in parish ministry and in a Marian Sanctuary, elementary teaching, technical training, jubilee mission (1826-1827), assisting in neighbouring parishes, helping secret religious associations and finally the secret formation of new Redemptorists. However the community of Piotrkowice were always under police surveillance. This produced accusations that there was a secret community of Redemptorists from St. Benno's, that they had foreign contacts, that they supported secret associations. The legal proceedings of the Governor who was under Russian control, ended with the suppression of the seminary on October 6 1830 and of the whole community on June 12 1833. At the beginning of Autumn 1834, Fr. Podgórski left Piotrkowice. Finally in 1841, Fr. Valentino Abramski, the last Redemptorist, abandoned Piotrkowice.

⁸⁸ *Rys krótki* (vedi nota 11), 479-480; BRUDZISZ, *W diasporze* (vedi nota 2), 104-107.



SCHEDE BIBLIOGRAFICHE

HOEGERL Carl W., and STAMWITZ Alicia von, *A Life of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, Redemptorist, 1819-1867*, with a Foreword by Thomas D. Picton, Liguori Publications, Liguori (MO) 2000, XX-108 p.

This book is a popular presentation of the life of Francis X. Seelos (1819-1867). It came out just prior to his beatification by Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square, Vatican City on April 9, 2000 and was distributed to the honored guests at the official banquet following the ceremony. Its purpose is to introduce Seelos to those who know little or nothing about him and to secure in their minds a sense of his deep personal piety and holiness of life. It seeks what all good hagiographical literature is meant to do: edify the faithful. It does so with careful attention to the historical details of Seelos' life and steers clear of the mistakes of those hagiographical works which superimpose a pre-established pattern of holiness upon their subjects rather than eliciting one from the circumstances of their lives.

The authors of this pleasant little volume represent the best of this genre of hagiographical literature. Hoegerl, a noted historian of Redemptorist history and spirituality, is the author of the official *Positio* for the beatification process that critically examined the historical evidence to demonstrate Seelos' heroism of virtue. Von Stamwitz, in turn, is an Associate Redemptorist with years of experience in Catholic journalism and with particular expertise in writing popular lives of the saints. Their collaborative effort has produced a fine work of popular spirituality that combines historical and theological accuracy with a strong sensitivity to making the personality of Seelos come alive for today's reading audience.

The book is well-written, well-researched, and has a good eye for those stories and incidents from Seelos' life that would endear him to the hearts of the faithful. It is composed of an Introduction, seven chapters, and an Epilogue. The Introduction gives a general overview of Seelos' life. The chapters that follow deal with his childhood in Füssen, Germany, his early school days, his discernment of his priestly vocation, his decision to become a Redemptorist missionary to the New World, and his ministry in America as a parish priest, Redemptorist formator, and itinerant missionary. In the last chapter, special emphasis is given to his final year in New Orleans and his tragic death

in 1867 from an virulent outbreak of yellow fever. The Epilogue presents a brief history of devotion to this happy saint who eventually came to be known as the "Cheerful Ascetic" and traces the various steps in the process that led up to his recent beatification.

The text is further enhanced by a detailed biographical chronology of Seelos' life, a prayer to Blessed Francis Seelos by Byron Miller, C.Ss.R., the current director of the Seelos Center in New Orleans, and three very interesting appendices. The latter respectively contain excerpts from Seelos' letters, passages from the Redemptorist Mission Chronicles that reported his preaching engagements, and choice selections from his sermons. Also included is an excellent Foreward by Thomas D. Picton, C.Ss.R., Superior of the Vice Province of New Orleans, which sets the tone for the volume by depicting Seelos as someone who fulfilled Søren Kierkegaard's definition of being a saint as "someone who can will the one thing".

The book has limited goals and does not overreach them. It is a welcome addition to the admittedly scant amount of available literature on this zealous and faithful, but otherwise obscure nineteenth-century Redemptorist missionary to the New World. It is a brief but accurate biography with an extremely simple message: Seelos was a happy and holy missionary priest and religious who, with each new day, lived the ordinary demands of discipleship in an extraordinary way. This theme of the close relation between happiness and holiness permeates the book and is a badly needed message in a world that often views them in conflict or at least on opposite ends of life's spectrum of experience. For this reason alone, it deserves to be read by a wide audience and in as many languages as circumstances will permit.

Dennis J. Billy, C.SsR

Historia Zgromadzenia Najświętszego Odkupiciela. Vol. I: Powstanie i rozwój Zgromadzenia (1732-1793), pod redakcją Franciszka Chiovaro, przekład polski Stanisław Stańczyk, Tuchów 1997, 608 p. [Orig.: *Storia della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore. Vol. I/1: Le Origini (1732-1793)*, a cura di Francesco Chiovaro, Roma 1993].

«*Revertimini ad fontes*, quell'appello risuonava fortemente in tutti i circoli dell'aggiornamento del Concilio Vaticano Secondo. Però il ritorno alle sorgenti e la cura del passato dovrebbero essere vissuti

nella Chiesa incessantemente, poiché la tradizione nella Chiesa non significa il conservare delle ceneri, ma è il continuo nutrimento della fiamma». (Card. Joseph Höffner).

In quella corrente è situata la *Storia della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore. La fondazione e lo sviluppo della Congregazione (1732-1793)*, la cui redazione è stata curata dal P. Francesco Chiovaro e pubblicata a Tuchów grazie alla premura dei redentoristi polacchi. La traduzione in lingua polacca è stata fatta, con grande attenzione allo stile e fedeltà all'originale, dal P. Stanislaw Stańczyk. L'edizione originale, nel 1993, apparve in italiano e conteneva la prima parte del primo volume. La versione polacca è stata preceduta da quella spagnola e inglese.

L'opera citata avvia una particolare iniziativa editoriale nella storia della storiografia redentorista: è una globale e moderna presentazione della storia della Congregazione. Il primo volume è stato dedicato alla fondazione dell'Istituto e allo sviluppo dei primi anni, fino al 1793, quando la Congregazione, divisa per un periodo, si era unita. Nei volumi seguenti si tenta di ricostruire la storia tempestosa dei singoli periodi e di descrivere gli avvenimenti particolarmente significativi nella vita della Congregazione fino agli anni del rinnovamento del Concilio prima del 1967. A causa degli scopi molto ambiziosi del lavoro e della portata assai vasta, la struttura e l'ordine di tutta l'opera guida il lettore parallelamente in tre direzioni complementari. Il primo obiettivo è la fondamentale lezione storiografica, basata sulla "lettura corretta delle fonti e sulla loro interpretazione oggettiva" (p. 11). Il successivo impegno programmato dagli autori è la descrizione della "storia istituzionale" della Congregazione. Finalmente viene trattata la "storia della mentalità" nella vita quotidiana e nella spiritualità redentorista. Questa divisione dovrebbe essere conservata per ogni partizione temporale. Il lavoro discusso abbraccia solamente due aspetti riguardanti il primo periodo e costituisce la prima parte del primo volume di tutta la collana.

Nell'introduzione storica (p. 11-56) F. Chiovaro ci convince della tesi sorta inizialmente che i redentoristi da sempre mostravano l'interesse per la loro storia: "Fra i redentoristi, l'interesse per la storia, per la loro storia è una passione antica" (p. 5). Ciò è confermato dalla pleiade di grandi personaggi fra i redentoristi-storici e dalle loro opere, numerose nei due secoli passati, realizzate nonostante la legge severa riguardo alle pubblicazioni all'interno della Congregazione e spesso nonostante le condizioni poco favorevoli per le ricerche stori-

che concernenti la Chiesa nella fase dello sviluppo del suo pensiero storico. Vale la pena mettere in risalto il fatto che fino ad oggi vari anniversari diventano una occasione per ricerche approfondite e più ampie sul passato della Congregazione.

Il lavoro di cui parliamo è stato diviso in due parti. Tutte e due comprendono i relativi capitoli che in seguito sono divisi in sezioni più piccole. P. Giuseppe Orlandi e P. Theodule Rey-Mermet sviluppano i capitoli iniziali dal 1 al 5 (p. 57-320) e portando il lettore nel Regno di Napoli del Settecento, delineano il contesto storico della nascita della Congregazione e delle origini fino al 1793. G. Orlandi dipinge con vividi colori la situazione geopolitica della regione, prendendo particolarmente in considerazione le condizioni sociali e culturali. In quella problematica largamente descritta, l'Autore ha mostrato un'erudizione ragguardevole, non ha evitato però delle impostazioni troppo schematiche e talvolta incomprensibili. Per esempio il lettore polacco potrebbe essere sorpreso dall'incomprensibile e non chiarita relazione tra il fallimento del rinnovamento culturale nella Chiesa del Settecento e la guerra di successione nella lontana Polonia, che era in quel tempo solo un burattino nelle mani dei suoi potenti vicini. Sembra che facendo una tale ipotesi si dovrebbe applicare una misura giusta e una proporzione più esatta al riguardo dei vettori ambivalenti della politica europea.

T. Rey-Mermet invece ci presenta la personalità del fondatore – Sant'Alfonso Maria de Liguori –, la nascita della prima comunità a Scala (1732) fino all'approvazione papale della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore nel 1749. Negli ultimi capitoli del libro gli Autori guidano il lettore per i meandri intricati della storia dei Redentoristi legati alla dolorosa questione del "regolamento" fino alla "riunificazione" (1793) che il fondatore non ha raggiunto.

Nella seconda parte del volume (p. 321-599) troviamo una presentazione acuta ed arricchita da citazioni di fonti riguardanti l'attività apostolica e la struttura interna della Congregazione. Sono tre capitoli scritti da: Giuseppe Orlandi, Fabriciano Ferrero e Sabatino Majorano. Un rilievo particolare in quella premessa occupa la descrizione della metodologia e della specificità delle missioni popolari, che dall'inizio della Congregazione costituiscono il nocciolo della sua pastorale. L'identità d'ogni Istituto nella Chiesa è una continua ricerca, è "work in progress". "Lo scopo principale" per Sant'Alfonso e i suoi figli spirituali è invariabilmente la diretta predicazione della buona Novella ai poveri e ai più abbandonati. La caratteristica particolare dell'identità

redentorista è che essa “non si dirigeva solamente al rinnovamento spirituale degli individui, ma cercava di impegnare tutte le forze vitali di tutta la comunità” (p. 373). Quello “stare con il popolo” ed entrare con il messaggio evangelico negli ambienti delle persone che rimanevano al margine della società e della Chiesa, avendo a cuore dunque nei tempi “dell’Italia preindustriale” i contadini poveri, è sempre una caratteristica della missione redentorista.

Nei capitoli seguenti del libro troviamo una sezione precisa sull’attività pastorale dei primi redentoristi: le prove della missione “ad gentes”, lo sviluppo dell’apostolato interno e il contributo alle opere ascetico-teologiche dell’epoca, il cui carattere non si può sempre valutare in base alle situazioni oggettive, ma dipende da quello che viene assimilato dalla coscienza individuale dei contemporanei. S. Majorano presenta un’analisi critica del contenuto delle prime Regole della Congregazione e della regola papale dal 1749. Invece F. Ferrero approfondisce con acutezza le costituzioni, l’attività dei capitoli e le strutture dell’Istituto negli anni 1749-1793 (anche se nel titolo della sezione vi è la data - 1785 - come cesura finale). Molto spazio dedica lo stesso autore agli argomenti riguardanti la prima formazione permanente dei redentoristi. Egli presenta tra l’altro i criteri e il modo di ammettere i candidati, il corso del noviziato, i periodi della preparazione al sacerdozio e all’apostolato durante lo studentato, il compito dello studio continuo e i principi della formazione dei fratelli coadiutori. Alla fine del libro l’editore ha aggiunto anche una mappa con le prime case dei redentoristi in Italia e con le date della loro fondazione.

Alle soglie del terzo millennio, nell’era dei cambiamenti continui, l’uomo moderno sperimenta fortemente una crisi d’identità. Questa crisi ha investito anche molti istituti di vita consacrata. E’ già superato il principio “dell’osservanza senza cuore”, ma nei vari ambienti la “libertà senza scopo”, che è diventata di moda, ha sviato alcune comunità e ha fatto perdere la loro specificità nella Chiesa e nel mondo. L’opera qui presentata è importante ed utile non solo per i suoi valori scientifici e conoscitivi, ma anche per il progresso nella ricerca riguardo alla storia d’una significativa Congregazione religiosa nella Chiesa. Questa presentazione è soprattutto un contributo importante, che consente alla comunità redentorista, di “ridefinire la propria identità”. Gli autori, non perdendosi in sterili controversie apologetiche, hanno riletto la storia della Congregazione con i criteri storiografici dei nostri tempi. Nonostante le numerose difficoltà oggettive, gli autori di quest’opera hanno rischiato di scrivere la “storia viva, qualche

volta tempestosa, ma la storia delle persone, che profondamente credevano in ciò che facevano” (p. 8). Per un lettore polacco, e specialmente per le giovani generazioni dei redentoristi quest’opera non sarà il guardare alla storia come ad una specie di “scavi del passato” (p. 8), ma sarà il “ravvivare la fiamma” del carisma della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore per il prossimo millennio.

Maciej Sadowski, CSsR

CORSIUS Henricus Elisa Andreas (Eric), *Een vrij en bevrijdend leven. Een theologisch onderzoek naar de geschiedenis van de praktische en reflexieve arbeid der Redemptoristen in Nederland in het licht van de subjectdiscussie in de theologie, 1833-1990.* [*Une vie libre et qui rend libre. Recherche théologique concernant l'histoire de l'oeuvre pratique et théorique des Rédemptoristes en Hollande, à la lumière de la "problématique du sujet" en théologie, 1833-1990.*]. Ouvrage publié dans la série «Kerk en Theologie in Context» (n° 39) de l'Institut de Missiologie (Nijmegen), Edition Kok Kampen, Nijmegen 1999, 456 p.

Une fois surmontée l’appréhension à l’énoncé du titre – appréhension assez normale devant tout sujet de thèse universitaire – le lecteur ne regrettera pas d’avoir ouvert cet ouvrage. Il constitue une approche originale de l’histoire d’une importante Province rédemptoriste née il y a presque 150 ans. Toute son originalité et son intérêt est d’avoir su lire les événements et surtout la manière d’annoncer la Parole de Dieu dans la prédication et dans la pastorale en se servant d’une grille de lecture bien précise. L’ouvrage se présente en trois parties. Les cent premières pages abordent le thème du “sujet” dans l’histoire de la théologie et présente brièvement la pensée de théologiens et/ou de philosophes comme Guardini, Karl Adam, Chenu, Congar, de Lubac, Daniélou, Maréchal, Rahner, Mounier, Marcel, Schillebeeckx, etc. pour se concentrer surtout sur Emmanuel Levinas et sur celui qui – selon Corsius – a mieux assimilé sa pensée en milieu néerlandophone: le Flamand Roger Burggraeve. Il n’est pas question ici de rendre toutes les finesses de la pensée de Lévinas revue par Burggraeve, mais disons – pour faire très bref - que toute la problématique tourne autour du couple “hétéronomie vs autonomie”. Hétéronomie: la loi qui vient du dehors, qui s’impose au sujet; autonomie: celle qui vient du dedans, qui fait de lui un être libre. Apparente contradiction que

Burggraeve au contraire présente comme une cohérence qui permet à l'homme de se réaliser pleinement.

Une fois armé de ce système de pensée et muni de cette clé de lecture, l'heureux lecteur – après un temps de repos - peut aborder la seconde partie de l'ouvrage, à savoir l'histoire comme telle de la Province hollandaise, plus précisément la lente évolution des esprits et des méthodes dans l'annonce de la Parole et dans la direction des âmes. L'auteur part même d'assez loin, des prédicateurs du 13^{ème} siècle pour en arriver au fondateur, St Alphonse, à son système moral et surtout à son traité *De Conscientia*. Il souligne, après tant d'autres, le poids que donne Alphonse à l'amour infini de Dieu pour les hommes, même et surtout pour les pécheurs. Chez Lui l'amour est loi.

Nous arrivons alors à la Province rédemptoriste hollandaise et à son histoire que Corsius divise en trois tranches: 1833-1900; 1900-1960; 1960-1990, en ayant soin chaque fois de présenter le contexte social et ecclésial précis de l'époque, avant d'aborder l'activité des Rédemptoristes sous toutes ses formes: missions populaires, retraites, activités scientifiques, publications, figures dominantes,... Est également soulignée l'évolution du contenu des prédications: on est passé insensiblement de l'attitude de douceur et de patience de St Alphonse – il fut avocat, ne l'oublions pas - pour retomber dans une espèce de jansénisme rigoureux qui voit s'ouvrir les portes de l'enfer un peu partout, jansénisme qu'il est coutume d'attribuer un peu vite au Vicaire Général Passerat, successeur de St Clément Hofbauer. Puis, heureusement et après quelques résistances, les mentalités changeront, le sujet, la personne prend de l'importance, l'"hétéronomie" cède le pas à l'"autonomie". Des hommes comme Willem Duynstee et Leonard Buys par exemple ont perçu qu'il fallait accepter une lente croissance du sujet, comprendre que la maturité morale ne vient pas d'un seul coup et donc ne pas exiger de l'homme tout et tout de suite. L'"hétéronomie" ne signifie pas discontinuité dans le développement de la personne aussi longtemps qu'elle fait partie intégrante de la structure dynamique du sujet (p. 395).

La dernière période (1960-1990) est sans doute la plus intéressante, car étant plus actuelle, elle nous donne toute une série de portraits et de synthèses conçues par des Rédemptoristes toujours en vie ou décédés il y a peu; nous ne pouvons qu'en citer quelques-uns, tels Theo Fornoville, Marinus Krinkels, Wil Snels, Henk Manders, Ad Blijlevens, Herman Borgert, Jo Dankelman, Henri Boelaars, Jan Visser, Theo van Eupen, Walter van Benthem, Coen van Ouwerkerk, Piet Ne-

len etc. L'A. va également souligner l'importance qu'auront les deux Chapitres Généraux de la Congrégation des Rédemptoristes de 1979 et de 1985, le dernier surtout qui aura comme fil conducteur la fameuse devise: *evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari*.

Corsius conclut son ouvrage en revenant à son point de départ, à savoir la relecture des événements et de l'évolution des pensées à la lumière de Levinas revisité par Burggraeve. Les titres des paragraphes éclairent bien la démarche de l'A.: amour et liberté; la crainte et la loi; appel à la liberté vécue dans l'amour; entre autonomie et délivrance; émancipation du croyant par l'Autre; lien interne entre la réalisation de soi du sujet et une médiation objective.

Par ce bref compte-rendu – qui ne peut être que réducteur – nous pensons que chacun peut y trouver une lecture enrichissante, le philosophe, l'historien, le moraliste. Il nous reste à souhaiter que des études du même genre voient le jour et servent de modèles à l'histoire des autres Provinces de la Congrégation.

Note: *H. Corsius est né à Heerlen (Limbourg hollandais) en 1964. Travaille à l'Institut de Missiologie de Heerlen/Nimègue. Professeur invité à l'Université Catholique de Nimègue et à la Hogeschool de Enschede. Depuis 1985, travaille en collaboration avec les Rédemptoristes.*

Jean Beco, CSsR

KAVENADIAMBUKO NGEMBA NTIMA Alphonse, *La méthode d'évangélisation des Rédemptoristes belges au Bas-Congo (1899-1919)*. Étude historico-analytique, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma 1999, 402 p.

C'est en mars 1899 que des Rédemptoristes belges ont mis pied pour la première fois sur le territoire du Bas-Congo, dans la région de Matadi. Ce centenaire appelle une bonne monographie racontant cette arrivée et les premières années d'un apostolat qui allait s'avérer très fécond et donner naissance d'abord à un clergé local de plus en plus nombreux et à l'implantation d'une Vice-Province rédemptoriste. L'ouvrage que nous présentons ici ne provient pas d'un membre de la Congrégation mais d'un prêtre du diocèse de Matadi. On ne peut que s'en réjouir, car, africain de culture et membre du clergé séculier, l'auteur a pu prendre un peu plus de recul et surtout jeter un regard plus détaché sur cette période. A l'énoncé du titre, nous vient immanqua-

blement à l'esprit un autre ouvrage écrit et publié voici déjà trente ans par un Rédemptoriste allemand, le Père Michaël KRATZ *La mission des Rédemptoristes belges au Bas-Congo. La période des semailles (1899-1920)* (Bruxelles, 1970) (402 p.). Même période, même aire géographique et ... même nombre de pages! Donc un doublet? Certes non. L'auteur s'en explique: "*Nous n'avons pas voulu reprendre tous les détails historiques de fondation des centres de missions et des postes. Nous nous sommes proposé d'étudier l'aspect important laissé en friche par Kratz, à savoir la méthode d'évangélisation, ses composantes et son évolution historique*" (p. 12). Propos réussi. En effet, l'ouvrage reprend et développe certains points concernant l'évangélisation du début de ce siècle, questions qui ont fait couler tant d'encre et ne pourront jamais être tranchées définitivement. Ainsi: fallait-il adopter la méthode centripète ou centrifuge, c'est-à-dire faire venir les gens à la mission ou aller vers eux? Évangéliser les adultes ou les enfants d'abord? Suivre la méthode jésuite ou scheutiste? En créer une autre? Évangéliser par les Noirs, ou par les Européens? Fermes-chapelles ou écoles-chapelles? Collaborer avec ou lutter contre les Protestants déjà établis dans ce territoire? Faire œuvre d'évangélisation ou de civilisation? Autant de questions qui ont divisé les missionnaires eux-mêmes, et ont parfois conduit à des heurts regrettables, malgré la bonne volonté de chacun. L'auteur n'esquive aucun de ces sujets, parfois délicats mais si humains!

A souligner encore de beaux chapitres consacrés aux catéchistes africains qui méritaient de sortir de l'ombre. De belles pages également sur certains personnages, tels que le P. Achille Simpelaere (1859-1904), Mgr Joseph Heintz (1865-1940), le P. Georges Dufonteny (1882-1955), ainsi que de nombreux Frères dont la présence dans les postes de mission s'est révélée indispensable. Une phrase tirée de la conclusion nous semble bien résumer l'ouvrage et témoigner de l'équilibre de l'ensemble: "*Les Kongo se sont convertis nombreux au Christianisme, malgré les difficultés, les conflits mêmes qu'une telle conversion causait au plus intime de leur cœur. Et les Rédemptoristes ont renouvelé le milieu kongo en lui donnant une nouvelle identité.*" (pp. 329-330).

Le volume contient – comme il se doit – une abondante bibliographie des sources employées et des nombreux ouvrages consultés, des index précis des personnes et des lieux cités, de brèves notices biographiques sur les pionniers et une carte claire et détaillée de la région. Voilà bien une œuvre excellente, digne du centenaire que nous

célébrons. Un seul souhait: quand lirons-nous la suite de cette aventure missionnaire?

Dans la foulée, qu'il nous soit permis de signaler l'intéressant petit ouvrage du Père Charles KUSIKA NZAU *Voies d'avenir du ministère des catéchistes régionnaires à Matadi* (Éditions Aurore, 2000) (50 pages) qui retrace l'historique de ce ministère particulier et jette un regard sur le futur.

Jean Beco, CSSR

SZOPIŃSKI Emilio, *El amanecer de la Viceprovincia de Resistencia, Argentina*, s.e., s.l., [1999], 176 p.

Se trata de una monografía con abundantes datos sobre el trabajo de los redentoristas polacos en el noreste de Argentina desde el año 1938 hasta 1967. Basándose en su conocimiento personal y en diversas fuentes, el autor presenta cuatro temas principales:

1) *Antecedentes y orígenes* (p. 13-38): inicialmente, los redentoristas van de Polonia a Suramérica a trabajar con los emigrantes polacos; no pudiendo instalarse en Brasil, lo hacen en Argentina (p. 14); luego de varias idas y venidas de Alfredo Müller, monseñor Nicolás de Carlo los llama al Chaco, donde ya habían trabajado los franciscanos (p. 22-24). La Provincia CSSR alemana cedía a la Provincia CSSR polaca El Chaco, Formosa, Corrientes y Misiones (p. 25). La primera fundación se hace en Charata en 1938 (p. 28). El primer superior mayor fue Eduardo Hrymiewicki (p. 33); el consultor general P. Szrant verifica en 1951 la difícil situación de los polacos redentoristas y la escasez de vocaciones (p. 35-36). En 1955 la misión se convierte en Viceprovincia, dependiente del gobierno general CSSR, pues la cortina de hierro impedía las relaciones con Polonia (p. 37).

2) *Expansión* (p. 39-89): el autor describe la creación y actividades tanto de las ocho comunidades que se encuentran bajo la dirección de los redentoristas (Charata, Villa Ángela, Resistencia, Posadas, San Pedro, San Vicente, Quilmes y Ezpeleta), como de las seis entregadas (Bartolomé de las Casas, Las Lomitas, General Pinedo, Dos de Mayo, Bernardo de Irigoyen y Dionisio Cerqueira) (p. 39-85). Se destacan: la creación de parroquias; la construcción de templos, capillas, escuelas, viviendas y caminos; el trabajo con inmigrantes polacos; la organización de fiestas patronales, misas transmitidas por diversos medios de comunicación, catequesis (enseñanza directa y preparación

de catequistas), cursillos de cristiandad, teatro, cine móvil, filminas, pesebres y viacrucis al vivo, orquestas, coros polifónicos, conciertos, festivales, deporte, devoción mariana (novena perpetua), peregrinaciones, giras y visitas a hogares; la formación de comunidades y la promoción de la mujer; etc.

3) *Actividad apostólica y formación* (p. 91-132): en este apartado señala el autor nueve elementos: 1. Adaptación al ambiente (aprendizaje del idioma, adopción de la ciudadanía argentina, origen diverso de los inmigrantes); 2. Misioneros: la misión alfonsiana se predica sobre todo en la década de los '50; a este nivel se dinamiza la pastoral ordinaria, el apostolado de la pluma y muchas obras sociales; 3. La sensibilidad social: se dieron respuestas a problemas agrícolas y educativos; 4. El aborígen: pese a su inteligencia, padecía muchos problemas, pero encontró en el sacerdote su única salvación; 5. ¿Cuándo será la Pascua?: describe los problemas de los colonos: endeudamiento, divisiones, ausentismo escolar, política; 6. Religiosidad popular: enumera algunos aspectos que son tenidos en cuenta por los redentoristas para orientar, crear agentes de pastoral y construir lugares de culto; 7. Reclutamiento y formación: hay pocas vocaciones; se hacen varios intentos de prejuvenado; se crea el seminario en 1986 y el noviciado en 1988; 8. Los integrantes de la Viceprovincia: lista de 85 miembros; 9. Bodas de oro (1938-1988): se celebran en Charata, donde varias personas reconocen la obra de los redentoristas, entre otras: 165 capillas, 16 iglesias parroquiales, 12 salones parroquiales, 9 escuelas primarias y 4 secundarias, 6 periódicos, formación de líderes y de catequistas (p. 129).

4) *Difuntos* (p. 133-161): hermano Luis Firlejczyk; sacerdotes: Juan Gerardo Fyrnys, Eduardo Hryniewicki, Estanislao Idzi, Casimiro Kalemba, Francisco Kaweckí, Estanislao Misiaszek (primero que llegó al Brasil en 1935), Tadeo Mitera (primero que llegó a Argentina), Alfredo Müller (fundador de la Viceprovincia de Resistencia), y Luis Stando.

El amanecer de la Viceprovincia de Resistencia, escrito en lenguaje claro y sencillo, completado con fotografías y gráficos, ayuda a comprender un poco más la obra de los redentoristas en el continente latinoamericano desde mediados del siglo XIX. Si cada unidad CSSR publicara uno o varios escritos como éste, evitando en lo posible el enfoque heroico, se tendría una idea de lo que los hijos de San Alfonso han hecho por el pueblo y de lo que éste ha hecho por los misioneros. «Era admirable la colaboración de todos los feligreses, de todas las

comunidades» (p. 86). A veces puede aparecer el juicio histórico ambivalente, como en la referencia a Müller, cuando se dice que fueron tantas sus obras, que sería "más difícil que contar los árboles de un bosque", pero en la misma página se reconoce que cuidaba más los intereses de la curia que los de la CSSR y que «las misiones populares no le atraían y no las predicó» (p. 155).

Por lo que se escribe, los redentoristas polacos captaron las necesidades de la gente, le propusieron construir comunidades, hacer obras materiales, aprender, promoverse, ayudarse... y encontraron muchísimas respuestas. El latinoamericano aprecia enormemente al sacerdote; lo testimonian otros que han venido de diversos países durante 500 años.

El amanecer de la Viceprovincia se extiende casi hasta el atardecer: diez redentoristas polacos que fueron a Argentina han fallecido. Evidentemente, no es posible escribirlo todo en un libro. Lo sabe bien el autor, que ha hecho otras publicaciones. Pero una vez que ha pasado al dominio del lector, a éste le viene la inquietud de saber más sobre el tema en ese arco de tiempo (1938-1967) y sobre ciertas coordenadas históricas y su contexto que se hubieran podido intercalar, como: la situación política de Polonia y de Argentina, la incidencia del Concilio Vaticano II y de las conferencias de los obispos latinoamericanos, la relación con otros redentoristas de la región (Argentina, Brasil, Bolivia...), con los obispos y el clero diocesano, con otros religiosos, la vida común y religiosa interna, la procedencia de las ayudas económicas para las obras, los viajes, la formación, la crisis vocacional y muchos otros elementos positivos o negativos que han impulsado o frenado la acción evangelizadora.

Alvaro Córdoba Chaves, CSsR

SWANSTON Hamish F. G., *Singing a New Song. A Study of the Life and Works of Maria Celeste Crostarosa*, Liguori Publications, Liguori (MO) 1997, XXI-234 p.

«Cantando un cantico nuovo» è un titolo adatto a un libro che diventa inno di ammirazione verso la persona e la spiritualità di Maria Celeste Crostarosa (Napoli 1696 – Foggia 1755). Chiamata dal Signore «alla sua sequela sin dalla tenera età», Maria Celeste visse devotamente in famiglia fino ai 21 anni. Nel 1718 entrò nel conservatorio di Marigliano, dove professò la regola carmelitana secondo la riforma di Suor Serafina di Dio. Chiuso il conservatorio (1723), Maria Celeste

passò, nel 1724, al conservatorio della Concezione di Scala, che seguiva le regole visitandine. Un anno dopo il Signore le rivelò il progetto di un nuovo Istituto, che in seguito, con l'intervento di s. Alfonso Maria de Liguori, divenne l'Ordine femminile del Santissimo Redentore (1731) e la Congregazione missionaria dello stesso nome (1732). Espulsa dal monastero di Scala (1733) per le difficoltà insorte con il vescovo Tommaso Falcoia, direttore dell'Istituto, Maria Celeste riformò il conservatorio domenicano dell'Annunziata di Pareti (1733-1735), e cominciò a formare una propria comunità a Roccapiemonte (1735-1738). Trasferitasi a Foggia, fondò il monastero del Santissimo Salvatore, di cui fu superiora sino alla morte (1755). Nei suoi scritti (una dozzina di opere di alto contenuto mistico, solo parzialmente pubblicate) descrive il suo cammino spirituale come una chiamata a diventare «viva memoria» del Salvatore, vivendo in comunione d'amore trasformante con il Verbo, uomo Dio. I suoi scritti, malgrado le notevoli carenze redazionali, attestano un'ampia conoscenza sia della teologia mistica sia della sacra Scrittura, particolarmente nel suo commento al Vangelo di S. Giovanni, intitolato *Giardinetto interno del divino amore*.

Il cantico nuovo, annunciato nel titolo del libro di Swanston, si avverte con particolare intensità nelle ultime pagine, quando l'autore, in un vibrante finale, presenta il nuovo cantico degli eletti in paradiso con le parole della stessa Crostarosa. Questa infatti, nel commento ai versetti 3-4 del c. 14 dell'Apocalisse (*Giardinetto*, 2 marzo), spiega come quel canto, che i redenti elevano davanti al trono dell'Agnello, è stato loro insegnato dal Verbo, uomo Dio. Egli, con le sue ammirabili umiliazioni, durante tutta la vita, «ha cantato i cantici e le note del divino amore verso le anime sue care». Con bellissime espressioni, che ricordano il Cantico dei Cantici, Maria Celeste si rivolge al Signore: «Voi avete inventato tale sorte di canzoni amanti». «Tra le nostre notturne tenebre», «allo scuro di un silenzio profondo», «sotto spoglie mortali», «siete venuto a cantare canzoni nuove, di nuove note composte, alla porta del cuore amante». «Ferite da sì potente amore, vinte da questo amoroso amoreggiare», le anime seguono l'Agnello ovunque vada, e «giungono a cantare questo nuovo cantico d'amore». Questa meditazione su Ap 14,3-4 è un prezioso riassunto del cammino spirituale che Maria Celeste ha percorso e che nei suoi scritti, particolarmente nel *Giardinetto*, indica come un cammino aperto ad ogni anima.

Swanston ci guida lungo la vita e le opere di Maria Celeste con

la gioia e l'ammirazione di chi ha trovato un ricchissimo tesoro, che, pur essendo alla portata di tutti, è rimasto per tanti anni inesplorato. Come chi ha scoperto una preziosa miniera d'oro, egli procede speditamente, additando più filoni, senza limitarsi a uno solo, né fermarsi a estrarre ogni sua ricchezza.

Il lettore si sente contagiato dall'entusiasmo dell'autore, che con grande erudizione svela in ogni capitolo nuove ricchezze, che spingono a proseguire la lettura. Da esperto della letteratura spirituale e profana dei secoli XVII e XVIII, egli colloca Maria Celeste e i suoi scritti nell'ambiente religioso e culturale del Regno di Napoli della prima metà del Settecento, e suggerisce le possibili fonti e gli autori, a cui la Crostarosa avrebbe attinto nell'impegno personale di acquisire quel notevole livello di cultura, che appare dai suoi scritti. Le proposte di Swanston sono sempre stimolanti, in quanto scoprono possibili illazioni e letture parallele che difficilmente ci si immaginerebbe.

Il libro si legge con gusto. Peccato che vi si trovino parecchi imprecisioni facilmente evitabili. Per esempio, l'uscita di Maria Celeste dal conservatorio di Scala non fu in aprile (p. XVIII), ma in maggio (p. 92). Maria Celeste e sue sorelle professarono nel dicembre del 1726, non in novembre (p. 73). La verifica della legalità dell'avvenuta fondazione del monastero di Foggia fu eseguita dai ministri di Ferdinando IV nel 1766, non da quelli di «Carlo III» (cioè Carlo di Borbone) nel 1750 (p. 145). Le cose non sempre sono così semplici come ritiene l'autore. Le idee di suor Serafina di Dio riguardo alla perfetta uguaglianza fra coriste e converse (p. 28) sarebbero state un'importante novità in una società classista quale quella napoletana del secolo XVIII. In realtà le Regole di suor Serafina contengono norme discriminatorie che non è qui il caso di illustrare. L'autore immagina Maria Celeste, a Marigliano e a Foggia, nel ruolo di maestra di ragazze più destinate al matrimonio che alla professione dei voti. Quelle educande, invece, erano avviate solo alla vita religiosa, poiché le Regole di Maria Celeste, come quelle di suor Serafina, proibivano di ricevere educande che non avessero esplicitamente dichiarato l'intenzione di monacarsi.

Non essendo membro della Congregazione redentorista, (anche se «oblato»), l'autore si sente libero dalle reticenze che tanti storici della Congregazione hanno dimostrato verso la Crostarosa, con una voluta dimenticanza, che solo di recente con difficoltà comincia a superarsi. Egli nel prologo manifesta la sua sorpresa per il fatto che gli anonimi traduttori belgi della vita di s. Alfonso scritta dal Tannoia evi-

tarono di chiamare per nome Maria Celeste (*Mémoires sur la vie et la Congrégation de s. Alphonse-Marie de Liguori*, III, Paris 1842, p. 727). Nonostante essi attribuiscono erroneamente a s. Alfonso, d'accordo con mons. Falcoia, la redazione delle Regole dell'Ordine, pur riconoscono che «una delle sue figlie in Gesù Cristo, del monastero di Scala, fu lo strumento del quale si servì il Signore per fare conoscere ad Alfonso i suoi propositi sulla fondazione di una Congregazione di missionari». Temendo però che i lettori potessero meravigliarsi che Dio avesse voluto servirsi di una monaca per fare conoscere a s. Alfonso la sua volontà, i traduttori aggiungono una nota esplicativa per ricordare che «così è l'ammirabile condotta della Provvidenza». Infatti, «Dio mette la sua gloria in costruire sul niente, come dice s. Teresa, ammirata lei stessa delle grandi cose che faceva nella chiesa di Gesù Cristo».

L'autore si muove con facilità su di un terreno che del resto conosce assai bene. L'aveva già dimostrato nel suo primo libro su s. Alfonso, *Celebrating Eternity Now. A Study in the Theology of St Alphonsus de Liguori*, Bournemouth 1995 (cf la recensione su *SHCSR* 44 [1996] 567-569). E l'ha confermato recentemente con una nuova opera intitolata *Saint Alphonsus and His Brothers. A Study of the Lives and Works of Seven Redemptorists* (Liguori Publications, Liguori (MO) 2000, 407 p.). Fra queste due opere su s. Alfonso, Swanston ha opportunamente inserito il libro su Maria Celeste Crostarosa, *Singing a New Song*, un'opera che aiuterà certamente a scoprire e approfondire le ricchezze spirituali che offrono la vita e gli scritti di questa grande mistica del Settecento.

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La celebrazione nel 1996 del terzo centenario della nascita di s. Alfonso e di suor Maria Celeste Crostarosa è stato motivo di un'abbondante pubblicazione di libri e articoli su diverse riviste. Ampia informazione sulla celebrazione del terzo centenario della nascita di s. Alfonso si trova in *Spicilegium Historicum* 47 (1999) 463-495. Nella presente nota bibliografica, che non pretende di essere esauriente, vogliamo presentare i principali libri relativi alla Crostarosa, che in seguito all'opera fondamentale di Sabatino MAJORANO, *L'imitazione per la memoria del Salvatore. Il messaggio spirituale di Suor Maria Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755)*, sono stati pubblicati nell'ultimo decennio. In

questa nota bibliografica non si indicano i numerosi articoli apparsi su varie riviste, alcuni dei quali di notevole interesse, specialmente quelli pubblicati sulla rivista *Viva Memoria* dell'Ordine del Santissimo Redentore.

Particolarmente importante è la collana «Testi e Studi Crostarosiani», diretta da Sabatino Majorano, che si propone l'edizione critica di tutte le opere spirituali della Crostarosa. Nelle tre opere finora pubblicate (*Le Lettere*, *Autobiografia*, e *Gradi di orazione*) la trascrizione del testo manoscritto, fatta con criteri fortemente conservativi, riproduce con fedeltà l'originale, seguendo le norme della «trascrizione diplomatica». Essendo quasi inesistente negli scritti originali, la punteggiatura è stata introdotta con criteri attuali. Le introduzioni e le note di carattere storico e filologico accrescono il valore di questa edizione, che è un importante contributo anche alla storia della spiritualità italiana.

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- APNR = Archivio della Provincia Napoletana CSSR, Pagani (SA)
- ASNA = Archivio di Stato, Napoli
- ASV = Archivio Segreto Vaticano
- BAV = Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana
- Bibl. Hist. = Bibliotheca Historica CSSR, edita dall'Istituto Storico CSSR, Roma 1955 ss.
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